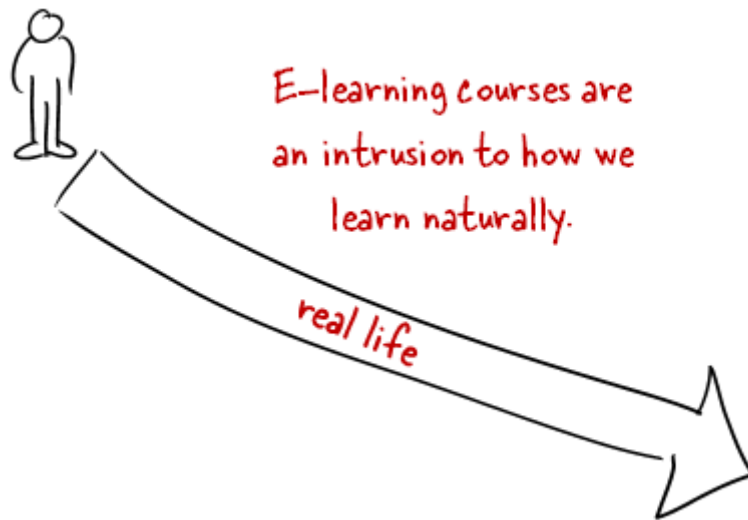


# If you want e-Learning success, are you prepared to Go All the Way?

Many of us take a 'Field of Dreams' approach to e-Learning.

***“If we build it, they will learn”***

But the reality is that e-Learning is just an event in the timeline of learning and not the entire learning process. And in some ways, the e-Learning course is an intrusion on the person's natural learning process. Because of this, we want to make sure that the investment we make in e-Learning produces the results we desire.

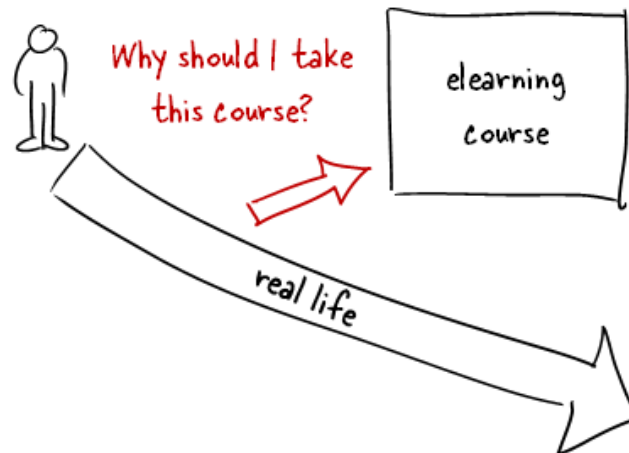


Sure enough, the e-Learning course is important because it can compress time and save resources. But the reality is that most of a person's learning happens in the time before and after the e-Learning course.

Let's look at some things to consider before and after you build an e-Learning course. We'll look at three core parts of the process.

- **Motivated to Learn:** How do you get people interested in what you have to offer?
- **The E-Learning Course:** Design the right instruction, visuals, and interactivity.
- **Support Ongoing Learning:** What happens the morning after?

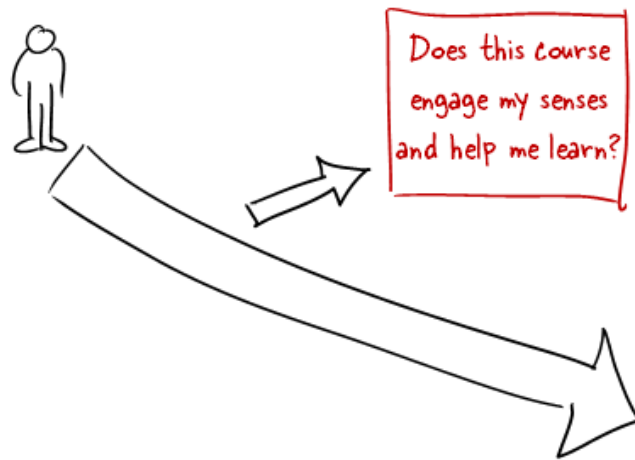
## 1. Motivated to Learn



The e-Learning course is going to stick if the learners are motivated to learn. If they're not, then odds are that while they complete the course, they'll walk away from it without having learned much. There's a lot that can be written about what motivates learners.

- **Is this course relevant to the learners?** Relevance is the key to effective and engaging e-Learning. You can forego some of the bells and whistles (and even interactivity) if the content of the course is relevant to the learners. Think about the last time you needed to learn something and did a search online. Some sites probably just had text and images, and some may have offered more interactive media. In either case, the main point of engagement was relevance. Was the site providing what you needed to learn? You probably didn't stick around long if the site didn't offer what you needed.
- **Is this course practical?** Often courses were based on the client who had grand notions of what should be taught, but was completely disconnected from the learner's real world and how they used the information. A brilliant course is only brilliant if it works. Learn about your learners and build courses that make sense to them and their world.
- **How long is this going to take?** When looking at You Tube the first thing most people do is to look at how long it is. If it's less than two minutes, you will probably click on the link. Any longer than that and we have already decided it's a waste of time. Guess what? Your learners probably do the same thing. They're mentally doing a cost-benefit analysis. They want to know what type of commitment they have to make prior to taking the course. And they also want to understand what value they get. Can you provide that to them before they click next?

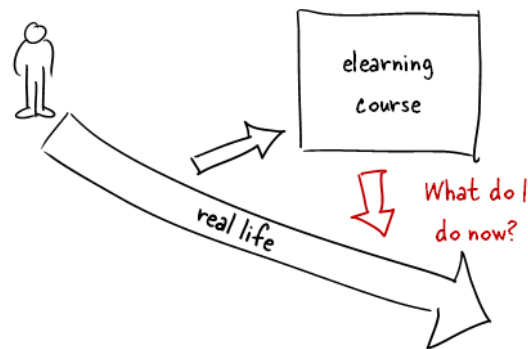
## 2. The E-Learning Course



E-Learning course design has three core parts. You design the content, the look and feel, and the interactivity.

- **What content needs to be in the course?** There's always more than enough content for most e-Learning courses. The challenge is usually figuring out what to get rid of more so than what to put it. You need to figure out how to make relevant courses without too much extra information.
- **What should the course look like?** The visual design of your course is multifaceted. You want a course that looks good. But you need more than a great looking course. It also needs to visually communicate the context of your content. Focus on solid instructional design, but don't neglect the aesthetic of the course. And remember, visual communication is an important part of instructional design when you work with a visual medium.
- **What is the learner supposed to do with the content?** You go through this process of building an e-Learning course and the ultimate question for the learner is, "So what?" How can you design the course so the learner has to use the content? You want them to interact with the course. In an ideal world, they get information, reflect on it, and practice using it all inside the course. This allows them to collect feedback and make the adjustments critical to the learning process.

### 3. Support Ongoing Learning



One of the biggest downfalls to e-Learning is the lack of support after the fact. If you want the course to be successful, you need to consider what happens once the course is completed. Here are a few thoughts:

- **Get the managers involved.** They should do more than just forward a link to complete a course prior to December 31. Use the course as an opportunity for managers to coach their employees. For example, if someone takes a course on leading effective meetings, that's probably a good time for the manager to assign some meetings to that person to see how well they do. She can then assess their understanding and provide ongoing feedback in a meaningful context.
- **Leverage your organization's social media technology.** We don't just learn through official channels. We learn from peers, managers, and customers. The problem is that many times this learning is lost to the organization. However, if you can create a shared practice community (or find other ways for people to regularly connect and share what they know) there's a good chance that the learning continues and remains for others to benefit.
- **Provide quick bursts of refresher training.** People will remember more if you space out some of the learning. You can provide little follow-up sessions to the course where they get refresher content. If you designed a course for project managers, you could send out a series of planned emails after the e-Learning course. They could include some quick scenarios which they have to solve and then discuss with their managers. This will help them retain the information and it also gives them an opportunity to dialogue with their managers.
- **Don't lock the course behind the LMS.** E-Learning's not cheap. The courses created are great resources but often are locked into the learning management system. Many times, you only get one shot at the course. Once you pass, it's no longer available. If your system doesn't provide access to the course after completing it, perhaps it makes sense to also make the course available somewhere else, like in a resource library.

Learning is a complex process. An e-Learning course is an important part of the process, but it isn't the entire process. The secret to e-Learning success is to know how to tap into the learner's need for the course content, to build the right type of course, and then to ensure that you have ongoing performance support.