HOW TO USE VIDEO TO MOTIVATE LEARNING

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How do you use video to motivate learning? If you are considering using video as part of your online and classroom-based learning provision, or already have video content available, this guide is for you. Video is everywhere and nowadays there is an expectation that video will form part of your learning mix. But simply having video content is not enough. How do you devise a strategy which optimises video as an effective learning tool? In this guide we'll be exploring what makes video an excellent tool for motivating learning and examining some key ideas for developing a positive video learning culture.

MAKING VIDEO AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING TOOL

Nowadays you can watch a video on almost any topic. You can watch videos on YouTube to show you how to change the battery in your car key fob, or to replace the screen on your smartphone, and a lot more besides! Increasingly, there is an expectation that if you want to know how to do something, quickly and easily, there's a video to show you.

''What's important about video is that it illustrates how to do something. And video is particularly good at illustrating human skills and behaviour. So if we take changing the car key fob battery in the example above, it's not just a written series of steps to take or someone telling us what to do; it is a practical demonstration, complete with all the likely pitfalls you're likely to encounter and how to overcome them. We see a human being doing what we're about to attempt ourselves.''

What's more, you can watch this video just at the point at which you need to know how to do the very thing that's being demonstrated.

Think about this in relation to video for learning in the workplace. Everyone is time-starved and working under pressure. And even if they're not, their mind-set is that they are! So there is no available time to set aside for 'e-learning' as such. This is one of the reasons why expensive learning portals languish unloved and hardly used in lots of organisations. Video can transform this by completely changing the way your people regard learning online. Instead of being something that has to be 'fitted in' around a busy work schedule, appropriately timed and relevant videos, which enhance performance at work, simply become part of the daily routine. On demand, 'learning on the go' ceases to be a burden or extra activity for which there is never enough time. 'Watch & Go®' videos provide just the right input at just the right time - and if they are easy to access, easy to understand, and are immediately useful, the

"So there is a need, there is a desire to acquire the skill and the timing is spot-on for attentive learning"

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barriers to finding the time to watch them disappear. What's more, your learner is likely to come back for more the next time they want help.

For example, suppose you have a new manager who has a member of his or her team who is under-performing. They know they should do something about it but don't quite know where to start. A short video illustrating how to tackle the problem will provide instantly useful tips and a professional, practical approach to dealing with the situation. If the new manager is feeling particularly shy about starting the conversation, he or she might choose to sit down with the individual and watch a 2-3 minute video together, as a way of introducing the necessary discussion the manager needs to have about his or her concerns. Far better for the manager to have an instantly available video to demonstrate best practice behaviour, than have to wait until the next delivery of the appropriate training workshop, when the problem of the underperforming colleague is likely to have become far worse if left unchecked.

Incidentally, using video in a classroom-based context is also very powerful for illustrating skills and behaviour, but crucially, the perfectly timed benefit of on demand online video is lost. The one key advantage of using video in the classroom however is that the learning messages illustrated can be discussed and the delegates can engage in practical activities relating to what they have just observed in the video. This is why a 'blended' approach using video both in the classroom and online can be the perfect combination.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A VIDEO

Whether you are evaluating professionally produced video from a supplier or creating your own video footage in-house, there are two key questions you might want to ask yourself:

Is it short, simple and clear?

Everyone is in a hurry and attention span is suffering as a result. So although your Learning Management System will probably record whether a learner has watched a video to the end, you need to optimise the likelihood of complete viewing by ensuring that the video delivers its message succinctly and clearly. It's very tempting to want to include lots of useful and interesting things but you need to keep strictly to the point to avoid people switching off (both literally and metaphorically). The hardest part of creating an effective video is cutting out the non-essential parts. The more you cut and the more focused the message, the better the result. It is preferable to have two or three short videos which hold the learner's attention to the end, than to have one longer video which may cover more points but will lose learners along the way. This even applies to videos used in the classroom, which are typically much longer. It's far better to pause a video at key points to discuss and reflect on what's been illustrated, than to watch a 20 minute video all the way through without a break.

Is it practical? What will the learner be able to do differently after watching the video?

Ask yourself, 'What will the learner be able to do - or do better - which he or she couldn't do before watching the video?' The difference between watching video for entertainment and watching video for learning is outcome. What is the purpose of the video? Using video to motivate learning means doing more than providing entertainment. You need to be clear about why you want someone to watch a particular video and what you want them to take away and do differently as a result. In management development terms that often means improving interpersonal and communication

skills. For example, if a manager has a concern about a member of their team who is habitually late, what should they say? Watching a 2-3 minute video showing the importance of addressing the problem and illustrating handy phrases to use when someone is late does the job simply and effectively. Above all, the video is a practical way of showing a manager a useful skill which he or she can use immediately. It's easy for the manager to learn and it doesn't take much time. As with the key fob battery example, there is a problem that needs fixing, a desire to address it and a practical solution which the online video is ideally placed to deliver.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN YOUR LEARNERS' SHOES

The way video motivates learning is through delivering relevant solutions at the point of need, simply and clearly. Video works because it is an easy way to absorb information and to see how to do something. When a learner gets what he or she wants quickly and easily they are motivated to invest their time and want to repeat the experience.

"*Make it easy and rewarding for people to learn and they will come back for more*"

When selecting your video content it's really important to put yourself in your learners' shoes. This means the video has to pass the following tests.
- Am I interested?

Do I want to learn this right now? And does the subject engage me?
- Do I understand?

Is the message clear? If I am not really clear about what I'm supposed to do by the end, I've wasted my time.
- Does it require much effort?

I've got loads of other pressures on me. If this requires too much input from me, I'm not interested.
- What's my reward?

How does this help me right now? What is the pay-back on investing time in this?
- Is it worth doing again?

If it's relevant, if I understood and if I could apply the lesson straight away to solve a real problem, then I'll come back for more. Coming regularly to your video library is a learned behaviour which becomes stronger the more it's repeated. Give people positive experiences and they'll keep coming back. Give them a disappointing experience, and they'll rarely give you a second chance.

First-time online experiences are often disappointing for learners and frequently involve compliance or product training which is little better than electronic page turning. Even more advanced e-learning modules can include boring text or activities which insult the intelligence of the user. Video motivates learning because when executed well, it draws the learner in, is easy to watch and can illustrate practical solutions.

Enticing learners with engaging, short pieces of video means that you draw learners into a learning environment without them even realising they are learning. It needn't even be in a formal learning context and when accessed on smartphones and tablets video learning simply becomes a day-to-day activity rather than a structured time-consuming activity divorced from day-to-day realities. This 'pull' effect created by engaging video is much more effective than 'pushing' learning out to your employees, beseeching them to put time aside to 'go and do' some learning!

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VIDEO AS A FLEXIBLE LEARNING TOOL

Video is extremely versatile as a learning tool, providing a range of learning experiences to suit a range of needs.

Video for personal learning

Being able to access video whenever and wherever required suits the needs of the individual learner. A manager who is just about to have a difficult conversation with a colleague can quickly review some useful skills before going to the meeting. Viewing online via mobile devices means being able to watch videos during time which otherwise might be wasted, whilst travelling or waiting for a meeting to begin. And because watching a video doesn't feel like work, being able to watch at home even during personal time is not out of the question either - when perhaps logging on to a more formal e-learning module probably would be!

The manager who feels slightly uneasy about admitting that he or she needs some help with something will use the opportunity afforded by private learning to view a video on the subject. So in addition to the 'perfectly timed' benefits, personal learning can also offer 'just for me' benefits too.
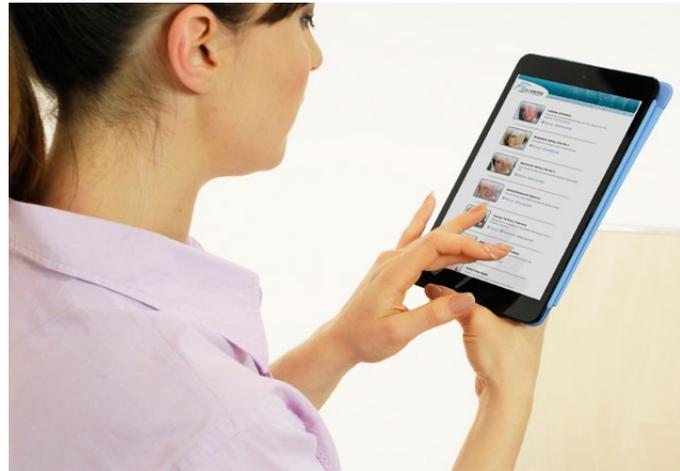
Video for one-on-one learning

When you want to talk to an individual about a particular area of concern, it makes it much easier to begin a conversation by sitting down together to watch a short video. Sharing the video watching experience helps to trigger the necessary discussion in a positive way and prompts a way forward.

And for coaching and one-to-one training sessions, the video can be a useful starting point for covering a topic in more depth via a structured discussion and follow up.

Video for group learning

For decades video has been used in the classroom for group learning. The power of video to illustrate a great deal in a short space of time means that it is the perfect resource for workshops when delegates can debate the topics illustrated and go on to participate in activities which relate to what they have just observed in the video.

MEASURING RETURN

To invest in video learning you need to be able to demonstrate that this medium delivers a return for your organisation. And that means being able to show that video significantly increases learning engagement and that the videos themselves are responsible for improving performance. For example, a video about reducing absence, which shows managers simply and effectively what they should do when someone is absent, will enable managers to act appropriately and reduce absence, with the associated payback. Likewise, a simple video showing managers what to do when someone is late, will also provide tangible evidence of impact. Videos which illustrate interpersonal skills will be more difficult to measure in terms of outcome but reductions in discipline and grievance procedures can be tracked and results from regular surveys canvassing opinion from all employees will provide further measurement. These results will indicate not only performance improvements but also financial benefits for your organisation.

Any good video streaming service will deliver detailed usage reports making it possible to analyse which video titles are the most popular and when learners watch videos to the end (or not!). Using video to spearhead wider learning and development initiatives can also be very successful and video can be used as a promotional tool, raising awareness and interest in the wider objectives of the Learning and Development Department. Being able to measure the level of engagement in this way means that these results can also be incorporated into your return on investment calculation.

USING VIDEO TO KEEP LEARNERS MOTIVATED

Video is a deceptively simple gateway to learning. It can engage, inspire, illustrate and entice people to want to learn more. It's easy to absorb, easy to watch and delivers quick solutions when a particular problem needs solving.

And since video is everywhere, in all aspects of our lives whether social or professional, watching a video doesn't even feel like learning. So harnessing its special effectiveness as a learning tool is an essential element, indeed a pivotal part of corporate learning in the modern world. Video is easy to watch, easy to access and communicates learning messages effectively.

The one irony is that this guide about the benefits of using video to motivate learning is written in words. No amount of images and beautifully designed layout of this text can begin to compete with the power of video. Video is your tool to promote corporate learning.

Video has the power to transform the way your people perceive learning. Use it wisely and it will repay itself many times over.

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