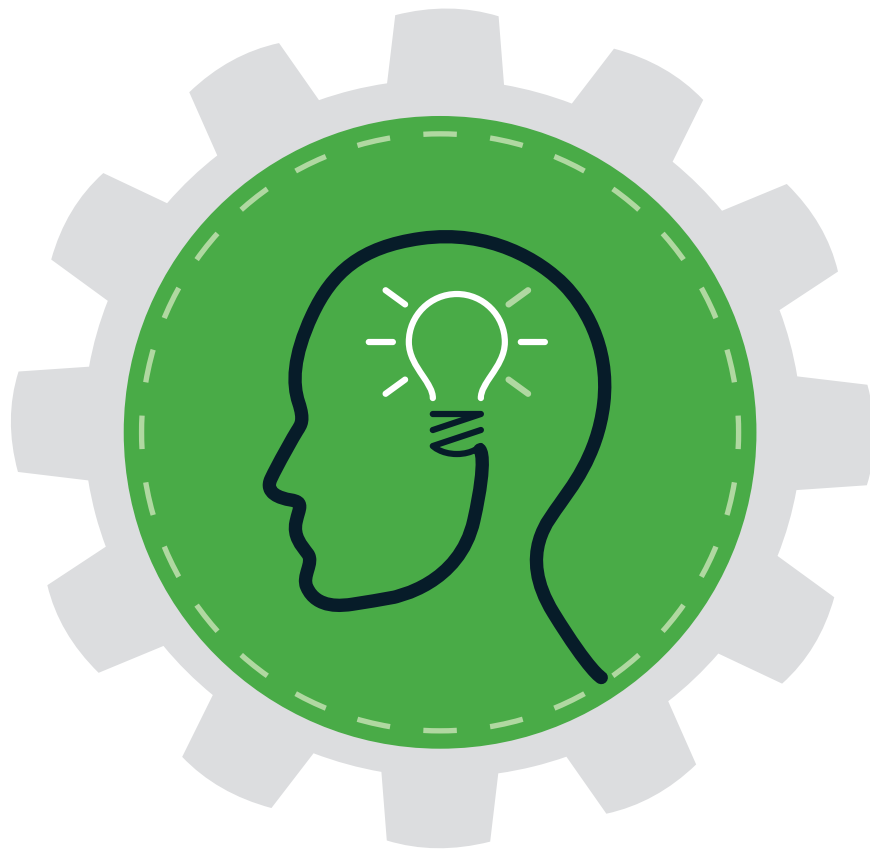


--- HOW TO ---
MOTIVATE
THE ONLINE LEARNER



23 power-packed pages covering all aspects of
motivation in eLearning environments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

PART I

Defining Motivation.....	1
The Importance of Motivation.....	2
Motivation Barriers.....	3
Two Types of Motivation.....	4

2

PART II

Motivation Theories.....	5
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3

PART III

Creative Ideas to Motivate Learners Before, During and After an eLearning Courses.....	11
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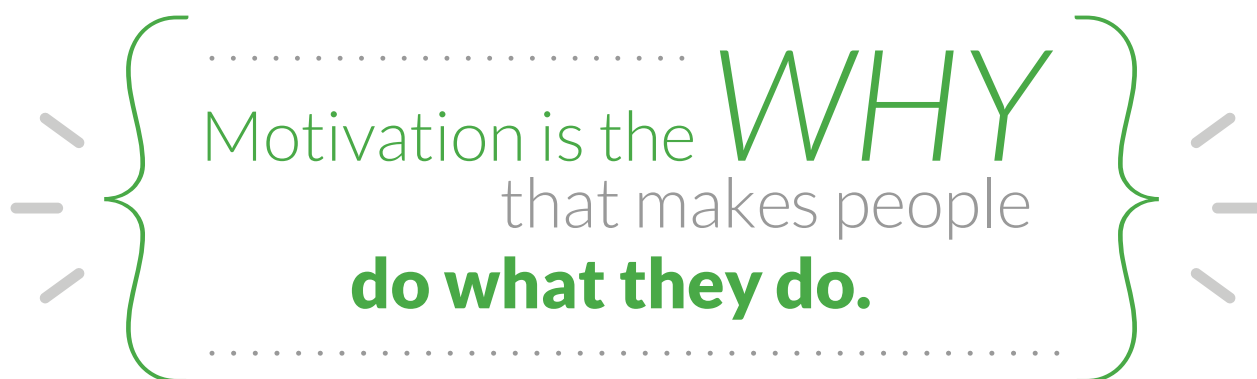
UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

What is Motivation?

Simply stated, motivation is what people WANT to do, CHOOSE to do, and COMMIT to do. Motivation is the WHY that makes people do what they do. It is the WHY that makes people choose an object or a goal over another.

You can spot a motivated person from a distance. Apart from the proverbial glint in the eyes, the choices, actions, focus, and perseverance point to a strong inner urge that drives him/her.

As an eLearning designer, you want your learners to be motivated about taking a training program and keep alive the motivation throughout the course.



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Motivation is the **WHY**
that makes people
do what they do.

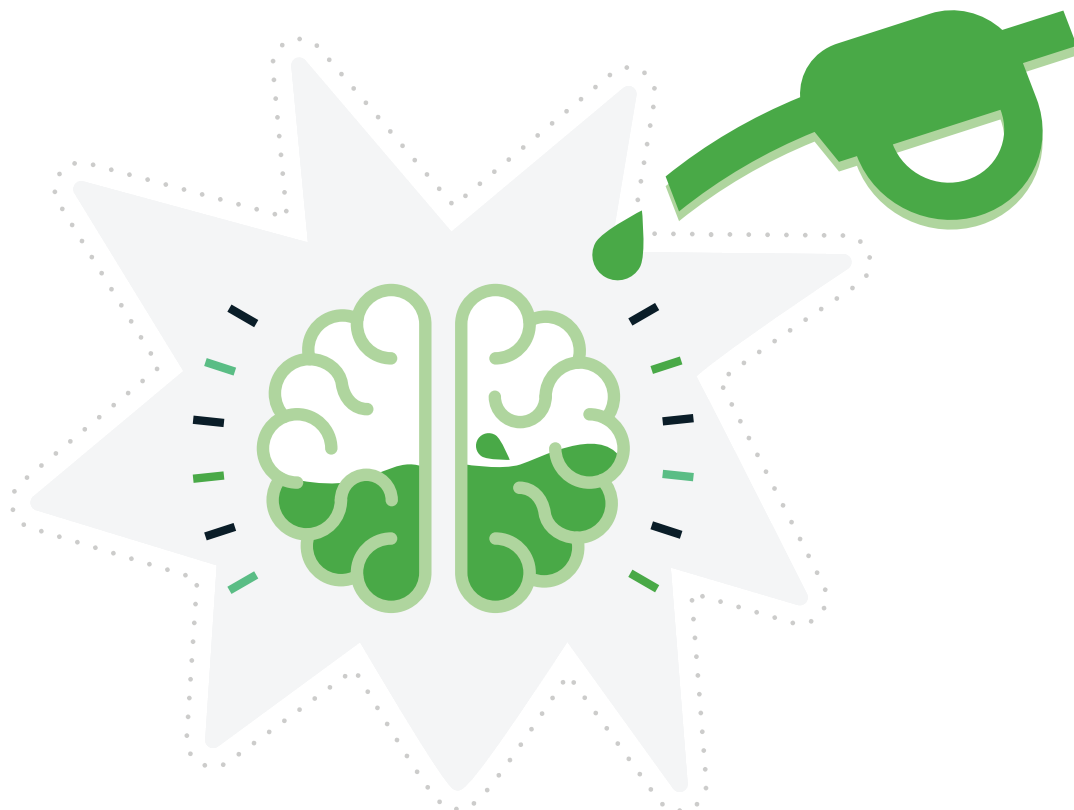
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The Importance of Motivation in Learning

Go back to the time when you were in school. There was always some subject that you found more engrossing than the others. Whether it was because of Miss O'Neil or how the textbooks transported you to a world of wonder, you eagerly looked forward to the classes, prepared your lessons on time, and even went the extra mile to go to public library and pick up new information. You usually scored well in this subject.

Motivation: the gas that fuels learning.

Unfortunately, motivation is hard to achieve if you cannot address the WHY of the learner. To compound matters, adult learners usually lack the desire to engage in learning. The curious child of yesterday—the one who never stopped asking questions and wanted to explore and find out for himself—grows up to become a skeptic adult, uninterested in learning new skills and loathe to implement newly-acquired knowledge in practical scenarios.



What is Stopping Employees from Being Motivated?

Identifying what is keeping your workers from being motivated to take your eLearning courses is the first step to breaking down the barriers.

Here are the most common obstacles to motivation:

- **Learners feel forced to take a course:** Adult learners do not like being dictated. They lack the motivation to take and complete mandatory courses.
- **Learners hold biases against the course:** Many adult learners feel that they will be made to go through a rote learning process in the name of training and are already biased against the course before they click it open.
- **Time:** If an employee has piles of work already stacked on their desk, those things that are already there will take precedence over training. While developing their skills with training will benefit them more in the long run, it is hard to ignore what is urgent and right in front of you.
- **Irrelevant Information:** If people don't know what resources will be available or just how the training will benefit them, they won't be very excited about it.

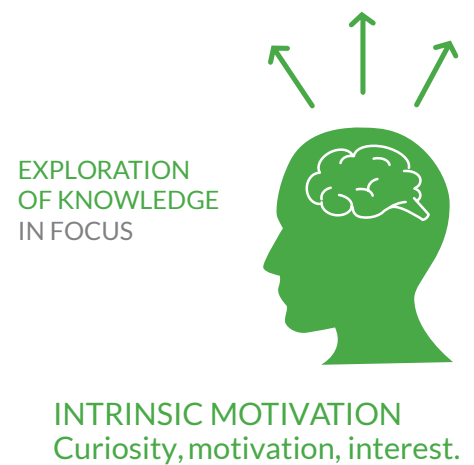
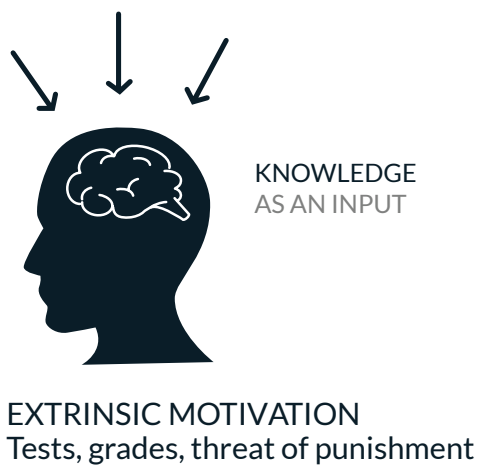
The 2 Basic Motivational Urges That Drive Learners

Motivation is closely associated with those factors that intensify or lessen the levels of engagement of a learner with the course.

Two types of motivational urges drive learners:

- **Intrinsic Motivation:** This is an urge that people feel from within themselves and is powerfully dictated by emotions, aspirations, and fears. If you know your audience well, an eLearning course can be made engaging by appealing to these emotions.
- **Extrinsic Motivation:** This refers to factors contained within the learning environment and outside of the learner, that inspire him or her to engage with a course.

EXTRINSIC VS INTRINSIC MOTIVATION



2.

USING MOTIVATION THEORIES TO DESIGN ELEARNING

Knowing what motivates learners is crucial to create high engagement levels in eLearning. Psychologists and scientists have developed three motivation theories to help explain the way the human mind works. As eLearning professionals, we should apply these principles to create courses that inspire and persuade people to learn.

Let's look at the basic tenets of these theories:

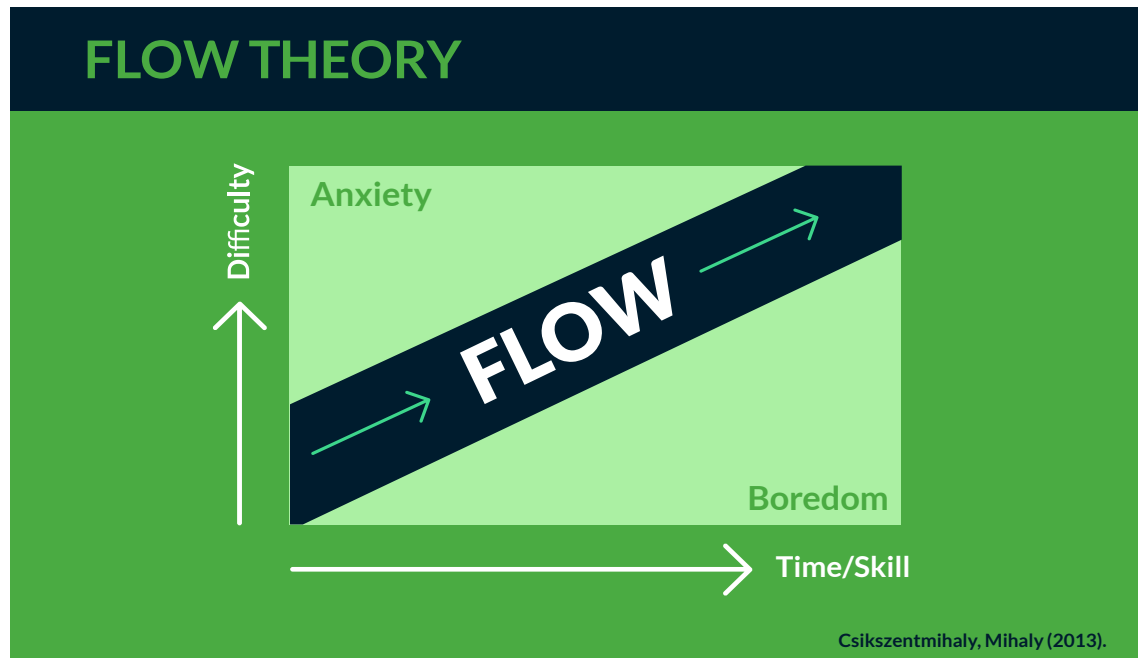
1. FLOW THEORY -

Being in the flow is the ultimate manifestation of intrinsic motivation, according to Mihály Csíkszentmihályi. It is that state of intense focus when you are so absorbed in the work at hand that you forget the passage of time. You forget to eat. You forget to sleep. Musicians, actors, sportsmen, and writers are familiar with these moments when they are in the zone. Perhaps you too recognize these moments too.

You want your learners to achieve this state of intense concentration when they take your course. According to Csíkszentmihályi, being in a state of flow acts as a “magnet for learning” by overcoming challenges.

In eLearning, being in the flow happens when the learner is fully and voluntarily engaging with the course and is able to control the pace and flow of the learning according to his/her needs and preferences. Being in a state of flow maximizes the effectiveness of every training activity. Higher

engagement levels aid retention, comprehension, recall, and transfer. When learners are able to lose themselves in the learning, they can effortlessly overcome challenges and master skills.



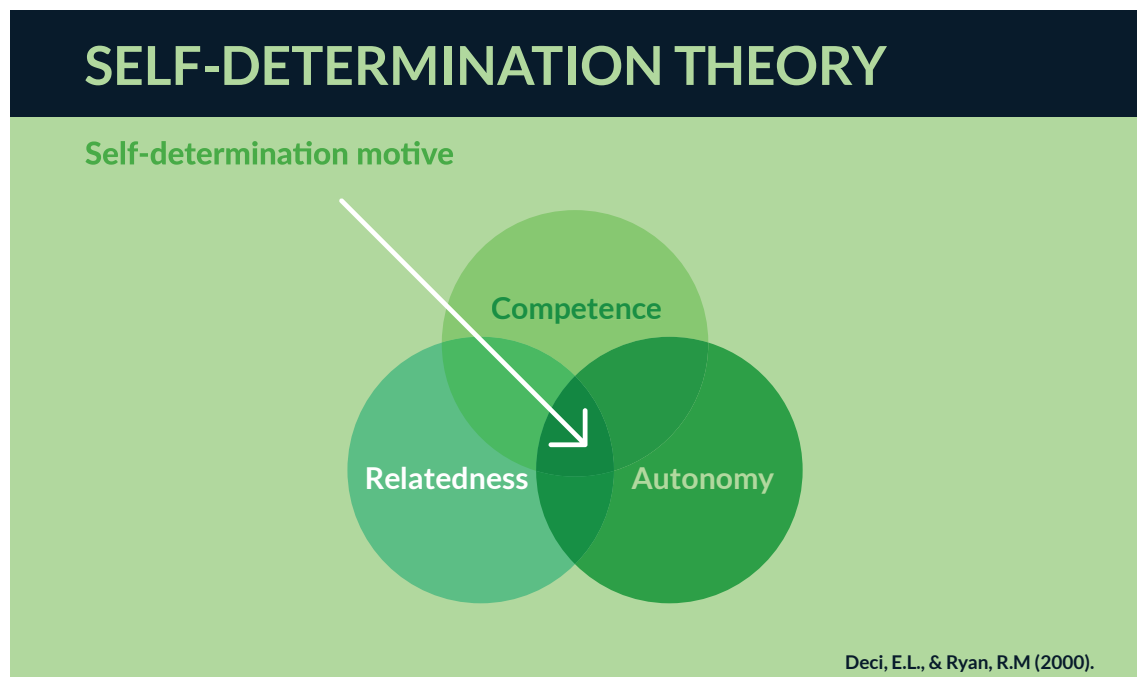
2.

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY -

You want your learners to approach your eLearning course as a training they WANT to take, and NOT something that they are being made to go through. Right? You want your learners to be motivated, NOT indifferent to the learning. You want focused, willing learners who are driven by some innate urge to take your course. Truth is self-motivated learners absorb and internalize learning much more efficiently than people who approach a training program with skepticism, unwillingness, and apathy.

The Self-Determination Theory focuses on human being's natural tendencies and psychological needs. The theory deals with three basic psychological needs: Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. These basic psychological needs are common to people of different cultures, gender, and professions. Fulfilling these needs facilitates self-growth and promotes well-being.

You can apply the tenets of this theory to create courses that appeal to the basic needs of your learners and let them respond according to their innate tendencies. Here's how to address the essential psychological needs of your learners, so your eLearning courses are well received and eagerly taken.



Autonomy - Freedom is a fundamental urge of human beings. Your learners are more eager to take your course when they feel assured that they will have the rein in their hands. They will be more responsive to your content when they know that they have the freedom to make choices.

Competence - Adult corporate learners want to feel valued at the workplace. They are always on the lookout for opportunities to learn new skills and hone existing ones. They want to be able to complete efficiently challenging tasks appropriate to their job roles, make sound decisions, and feel confident in the knowledge that they are doing what they are supposed in the best possible manner.

As an eLearning designer, you have to instill this confidence in your learners. You have to not only develop their competency but also make them believe that they are confident. Would you be motivated to carry on with your lessons if you didn't believe that you were doing a good job of it?

Relatedness - We all want to belong and experience the deep pleasure and satisfaction of caring for others. The idea of relatedness is rooted in man's innate longing to feel connected.

This means that as an eLearning designer, you should design courses that connect learners to other participants and mentors, for instance in an online learning community.

3.

PATH-GOAL THEORY -

The Path-Goal Theory is based on the basic human tendency to follow examples set by others. We all have our favorite sportsmen whose grit we admire. We have our role models whose courage and tenacity we try to emulate. In a learning environment, who better than the trainer or the eLearning designer to BE the motivation that learners will want to learn from?

The Path-Goal Theory, developed by psychologist Robert House in 1971 and later refined in 1996, lays down the principles of how leaders spur followers to action. The foundation of this theory is the belief that learner's motivation and consequently, his/her performance is heavily influenced by the behavior of the instructor.

There are four essential behaviors related to the Path-Goal theory:

- **Directive:** As an eLearning designer, you are expected to provide clarity to learners. State the what's-in-it-for-me information before asking the learners to perform any interactivity. For instance, before asking them to play a video, let them know that they will be able to carry out a procedure correctly after watching the steps in the video. This knowledge will, in turn, help them perform better at the their job.
- **Supportive:** Make sure that your course incorporates support from the instructor at multiple levels. For instance, if you are creating learning modules with online forums and chat groups, ensure that you specify the means by which they can access these.

- **Achievement-oriented:** Take the garb of a mentor and gently coax the best performance out of your learners. Keep the following tips in mind to create a positive learning experience:
 - Talk to your audience. Don't talk down to them.
 - Create challenging tasks to give the learners the confidence that they can achieve their goals.
- **Participatory:** Design a course that eases the following types of interactions.
 - Between the instructor and the learners
 - Between the learners
 - Between the learners and the instructional material
 - Between the learners and the interface



3.

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE MOTIVATION

Before, During and After an eLearning Course

Keeping learners motivated throughout an eLearning course is a challenge for even the most seasoned designers. Not only is it difficult to hook and keep learners engaged offline, but asynchronous training invites an even larger set of challenges. There is no way to read visual cues if students are bored or for an instructor to redirect training if there are questions. Online courses also provide an anonymity that prevents some learners from even participating at all.

So, what is the key to motivating learners and ensuring they stay on track throughout a course? The trick is to line the design with elements that promote motivation before, during, and even after course completion.

You cannot make someone learn, but you can create an environment that encourages learning.



BEFORE:

#1: Begin by laying the groundwork and building anticipation for the course.

Figure out a way to hook the learners before they even start the course. This can be done via a pre-work activity or a short video introducing the content. By creating anticipation, you are building learner excitement and motivating them before they access the content. Also, you can give an engaging title to the course. This should create interest as well as grab people's attention immediately.

#2: Communicate expectations and goals before the course starts.

By sharing with the learners what they can expect, you are already motivating the students to meet standards set forth. Be very clear about how the content will be organized and lay out the desired outcomes. This removes some anxiety and begins to get the learners excited about achieving goals.

Idea: Help them identify their goals and instill in them a belief in their ability to achieve them. You can include a section at the beginning of your course asking employees to set goals for their training. Then, at the end of the course, you can include a section asking if those goals were met, with the option to review material if the goals aren't met.

#3: Know your audience.

Figure out who your learners are and assess their needs before designing the course. If possible, send out a poll to determine items such as what tasks they need to complete their job, find out if they are familiar with technical jargon and determine the level of experience for the average learner. A thorough assessment can provide keys to what factors will motivate them. This insight can be factored in to build emotional connections between your audience and the content, further strengthening intrinsic motivation.

Idea: These 27 Questions Will Help You (Really) Know Your Learners

<http://info.shiftelearning.com/blog/get-to-know-your-learners-better-elearning>

#4: Take your audience's opinion.

Not only will asking your employees how and what they want to learn enhance the training, but it will also make them feel as if their opinions matter. They will then be more likely to take the training seriously because they are valued and feel an effort has been made to present information they were already interested in.

Take the opinion of people from different levels and departments of the company to create the best training program possible. Once the program is in place, follow-up with people who have engaged in the training to get feedback and continue to improve the program.

DURING:

#1: Give relevant feedback and progress visualization.

Include quizzes, games or other interactive exercises providing the type of feedback that helps learners track their own progress. Ensure that the feedback is immediate so that the students can use the information in subsequent exercises.

Instant, simple and direct feedback helps participants advance through the tasks. Moreover, it ensures that they are able to learn from their mistakes, if any, right then. Feedback also boosts the confidence of the learner; he/she is assured that he is doing great (or not so great!).

Find a way to incorporate a visual that shows advancement, such as a progress meter that fills in as modules are completed. Motivation will increase when success is visualized.



#2: Break down your content.

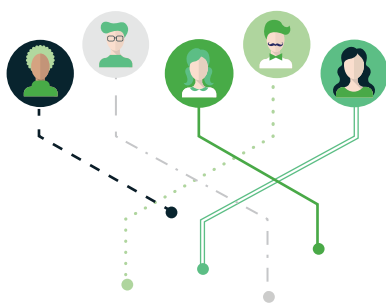
Good eLearning design chunks the content in a way that helps people remember what they have learned. Small pieces of information are not only easier to assimilate, but they allow learners to complete activities quickly and in a way that is convenient to them.

Chunking helps to create an internal framework for processing information, thus making the learner not only more prepared but also more motivated in continuing their learning process.

#3: Give them a sense of autonomy.

Encourage employees to take command of their own learning to further strengthen the idea that “this is my choice, and the result benefits me.” This is a far different and far more effective mindset than traditional ILT training, which always seemed like another chore to check off a list as opposed to a step up to a greater goal.

Personal choice itself is a motivator and can be provided by allowing employees to decide when training is completed, how much training is done in one sitting, the order courses or modules are taken in, and where the training takes place.



Here are some ideas:

- **Free-Play Navigation:** Your learners can move back and forth between topics and modules if you don't lock down navigation. They can even skip content. We highly encourage doing this!
- **Choose Your Lessons:** Let people choose what they want to learn. Let them explore how they can achieve their learning goals; design a course that provides more than one way to fulfill the learning objectives.
- **Optional Additional Learning:** Includes supplementary learning modules that learners have the freedom to take or not take. Make sure that you indicate upfront that these modules are additional learning matter and that not taking them will not hinder learners from fulfilling the learning objectives of the course.
- **Ability to Re-access Modules:** This ensures learners can revisit modules in future whenever they wish to. Repetition reinforces the learning and cements knowledge.
- **Choose Your Own Adventure:** This is most applicable in gamified courses. Let learners choose their own strategies and play the game in the way they like.

#4: Balance challenges with learner ability and time.

According to the [Flow theory](#) (review page 7), optimal learning takes place when there is a balance between the level of difficulty of the task and the skill level of the learner. Csíkszentmihályi emphasizes the importance of this correlation. If the task is too easy or if information is presented too slowly, the learner feels bored and may feel that the course is not going anywhere. There is also a feeling of stagnancy that is demotivating. If the tasks are impossibly challenging, the learner loses motivation and feels he is not capable of acquiring the skills taught in the course.

Achieving the perfect flow requires a dynamic balance between the challenge level and the ability of the learner. Ideally, the tasks should progressively become stiffer as the learners acquire more skills. It is a good practice to state upfront what skills, knowledge, and experience learners should bring to the table.



#5: Minimize distractions.

Minimize distractions so that learners can focus on the learning journey. Do not include content or graphical elements that disrupt the natural flow, cause clutter, or create ambiguity.

#6: Implement the Show-Do model.

Include simulations and guided practices to let learners practice their newly-acquired skills in the safe virtual environment. Practice makes perfect!

#7: Encourage communication.

Find ways that students can link to other people taking the same course content such as through social media, blogs or discussion boards. Learning is social, and people are more successful in collaboration than isolation. Sharing ideas and receiving feedback from others keeps the learner motivated to learn.

Idea: Design activities to incorporate peer interactions. Forums and discussion boards help learners interact with people with the same goals and aspirations as he or she has.



#8 Create a scaffolding learning pattern.

This instructional strategy ensures that learners build up on their knowledge and develop their skills slowly and gradually till they attain mastery. This ensures that they are never overwhelmed by the amount of knowledge they have to absorb at any given point in time.

AFTER:

#1: Celebrate Course Completion

People remain motivated when they have an awareness of their accomplishments. Not only should you find ways to for the learner to receive feedback throughout the course, but also seek to encourage learning even after the course is completed. Challenge the audience to continue their research or learn to solve even more complex problems. Provide a course certificate or a small prize or recognition for a job well done.



**WELL
DONE!**

#2: Provide takeaways and give them access to performance support systems.

The transfer of learning is more effective if you provide ongoing instructional support after the training program is over. For instance, providing job aids gives learners just-in time access to information wherever they may be. These aids also serve as checklists or reminders when learners have to perform procedures safely.

Give the learners something to take back to their jobs with them, such as a job aid, a quote or an infographic. Without any sort of reinforcement, learners may

forget up to 90% of the course within a matter of days. Help them remember with something concrete that ties directly back to the content. The more they remember, the more they will be motivated to implement skills learned throughout the course.

#3: Arrange post-training follow-up sessions.

Reflecting on their learning also helps people become more focused and motivated to apply what they've learned at their job.

Here are some ideas of how you can include post-training reflection in eLearning design:

- Send follow-up mails to trainees after about a month to reinforce key learning points.
- Arrange post-training follow-up sessions to provide supplementary lessons or use these opportunities to let trainees practice their skills or discuss their experiences as they try to apply their knowledge on the job.

These sessions are also ideal times for trainees to ponder whether they are facing challenges as they try to apply their skills at work, and how they have implemented the key concepts and what were the results? The answers to these questions provide valuable insights to trainers about how successful has been the learning transfer, so they can devise ways to optimize the transfer process.

Beat the motivation challenge by building anticipation **before** the course, engaging the learners consistently **throughout** and keeping them thinking **long after** the course ends. The learners should always be forefront in your mind as you design because their success leads to intrinsic motivation, which leads to the ultimate goal of learning.

Learn More About SHIFT's eLearning Platform

SHIFT is a complete eLearning factory in a box, having all the necessary elements to empower an instructional designer to create rich, interactive courses on their own, with zero technical knowledge. Scenarios, avatars, image and animation gallery, integrated audio recording studio, responsive templates, variety of learning evaluations and learning games are all integrated into this single online platform. It's the easiest way to publish course for multiple devices and save time.



[Learn more about SHIFT](#)

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