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## Complying in e-Learning

**How do providers and initiators of training and education services ensure that their messages are getting across?**

**How do you ensure conformity in e-learning while keeping learners engaged?**

Like all classroom and training environments, the messenger or the teacher/trainer is critical in assuring the engagement of the trainee and a successful outcome of the process. But as remote and online training becomes more prevalent the medium or environment in which the training and education takes place becomes more important from both a practical and cost perspective, and so the need to maintain and develop the full engagement of the trainee both in attention and quality of outcome becomes more critical. Although a keen student who wants or needs to benefit from the education will be outwardly and initially well engaged, they may waver if the quality and delivery is compromised. While for trainees who are less engaged in the training process this becomes even more important, especially where it is critical for the delivery organisation to maintain a high degree of engagement for compliance in legal or safety assurance.

While attendance in a classroom where constant attention, personal encouragement and hands and eyes-on vigilance maybe the preferred method, the reality is that e-learning is becoming more prevalent. As speed of delivery, cost management and frequency of updates, together with the inherent benefits and ease of use of ever-increasing internet speeds and availability will inevitably lead to much greater use of online education, training, examining and supervision.

But how do providers and initiators of training and education services ensure that their messages are getting across, that their teaching is effective, that their recipients are engaged and that their quality of outcome is enhanced? In addition, can they detect and protect against cheating, fraud or avoidance where it is necessary to ensure delivery on time, to the right person and in some cases have an audit trail to prove the efficacy in any future disputes.

There are some basic features and functions that need to be used selectively as appropriate to ensure and enhance outcomes in utilising remote learning and teaching over the internet for the benefit of the trainer and trainee. These include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Positive and secure identification of the trainee or recipient
- Monitoring and capturing of inattentiveness, distraction, impersonation and cheating
- Testing and measurement of the trainees' understanding and engagement both to ensure effective and quality information and that the recipient is gaining value and information from the session
- Formal testing and examination is undertaken and completed in accordance with and as vigilantly as a classroom-based test
- Full recording and audit trail of the online session to ensure good and effective outcomes for both trainee and trainer, to review methods and quality, and to improve effectiveness



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- Ease of use and full and maintained quality of delivery and interaction
- Minimal or no increased imposition of software and applications to avoid costly and onerous systems maintenance for the delivery mechanisms
- Ease of upload, distribution and management of the training material to make the trainees' workload manageable and effective
- Time shift and flexibility of training timetable to fit into trainees' life style and commitments, allowing them to do it at the most convenient time at their own pace.

Obviously while the interaction in a classroom helps ensure these benefits are achieved, there is no reason why the use of technology found on all consumer devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones cannot be as equally effective. Cameras can monitor attention and record entire sessions; software programming can initiate comprehension prompts and detect web and screen activity for quality and possible fraud. This can be delivered in an impartial and non-subjective manner and, with the added benefit of an audit trail, greatly enhance the benefit to the trainer and trainee. If we use technology and security we can engage the trainee in education and information training over the internet as effectively, or more so, than the classroom. And the benefits in cost and speed of delivery of remote learning and training will enhance both the take up and quality of online training.

Having engaged the trainee in the benefits and ease of e-learning and training it is important to remember and qualify that the purpose of the process is to enhance safety, security, knowledge and results, not just save costs and make life easier and faster for achieving the intended outcome. Whilst the use of camera and screen activity, combined with attention and comprehension questions ensures the real time effectiveness of the education and training, there is usually an end point which can either be an examination, a verification and in more and more cases, a recorded audit trail for future reference where the learning is tested and applied in reality, and where legal or professional standards are assessed for quality and adherence. The rigorous and assured invigilation of the testing and examination to ensure the correct person is tested, that the examination rules are applied fairly and correctly, and that the award or completion of the test is authorised and collated is of paramount importance. Failure means that the result loses credibility and authority, and in some cases organisations may risk financial penalty if the failure to educate, inform and test leads to physical or financial harm.

It is a natural consequence of modern life to use of the Internet for disseminating, engaging and if necessary testing the training – making better use of time and saving costs – but it is not enough to just put it out via videos and web content. From the chairman's address to deliver the latest company news and results, through health and safety education, adherence to professional and technical rules and processes, and taking of tests to be a safe and qualified participant in work and society, it is important and incumbent on the trainer to ensure the message reaches the right and correct person, is understood, is tested if necessary and that it is effective in both quality and content. This needs a managed and tracked distribution and monitoring of the message, to know it gets to its intended recipient and is understood. Whilst using scheduling and positive targeting, the technology of watching who and what activities the recipient responds with, and the assurance that that gives the messenger that their message is being received and understood can be seen to be intrusive, it should be seen as a positive and necessary consolidation of Internet technology into the education training and online engagement of the pupil or customer. It also will make the trainee feel that the process ensures fairness, authority and confidence in the remote learning method.



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Current practices that depend on username and password to validate a person's identity are clearly not effective at ensuring that messages reach the intended recipient - they merely confirm that a person who has knowledge of the username and password has received the information or has access to the desired secure website. In addition to the significant criminal activity taking advantage of this situation, there is also widespread noncompliance amongst professionals in a variety of vertical markets - for example front-line mental health professionals who ask colleagues to take their mandatory training updates in their place.

As it stands, username and password is sufficient to adhere and comply with existing legislation but as more and more instances of identity theft occur pressure will build for more robust security practices to protect the individual. Biometric methods used currently at border gates will become more widespread and the ever-advancing tide of consumer electronic goods will make this a reality to secure both access to sensitive information and the targeted dissemination of training materials.

Solutions are now available that can transform the effectiveness of on-line training and ensure that information reaches the right person at the right time. Remote invigilation systems are effective, ensuring that candidates are engaged and that the quality of outcome is enhanced. We can detect and protect against cheating, fraud or avoidance and can ensure delivery with an audit trail to prove efficacy in any future disputes.

Organisations moving ahead with this technology will be at the vanguard of the Government's Digital Inclusion strategy as all candidates will be treated equally irrespective of location. The stated aim is to have 50% of all assessments available online by 2018\*.

There is no reason why the use of technology common to all consumer devices such as laptops, tablets and smart-phones, together with innovative software delivered within a robust management process, cannot provide the same level of quality assessments as now found in designated test centres. If we use this technology properly we can also engage the candidate in education and training over the internet as effectively, or more, so than we do now, with the associated benefits in cost and speed of delivery that will enhance both the take-up and quality of the information delivered.

OBS has developed a suite of functionality that provides these benefits and enhancements to remote learning, education and training which we believe can maintain and enhance the engagement of the trainee whilst providing significant quality, cost and effectiveness to online messaging, training and invigilation.

\* Government Response to the recommendations from the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG), June 2014