

eBook

8 Virtual Training Mistakes You Didn't Know You Were Making

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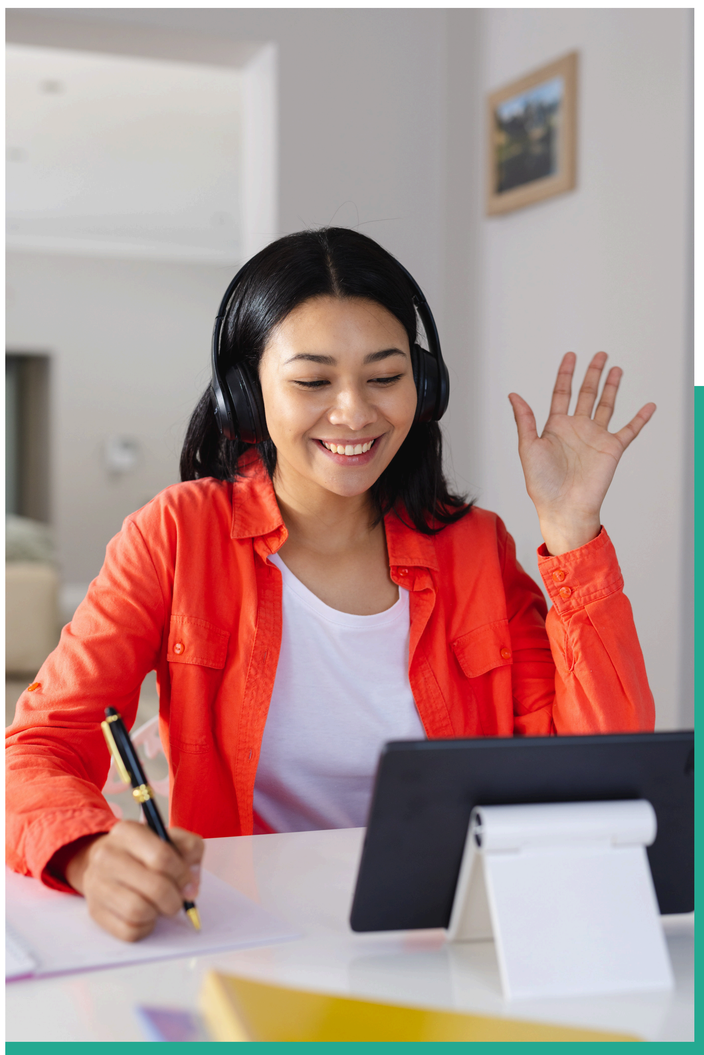


Introduction

If you're here, chances are you're involved in virtual training in some way—whether you're an instructor, a learning and development professional, or just someone looking to improve your online training sessions. Virtual training is an incredible tool, offering flexibility, accessibility, and the ability to connect learners from all over the world. But, as with any tool, it’s easy to fall into a few common traps.

The goal of this eBook isn’t to point out mistakes to make you feel bad. Instead, we want to help you avoid some of the most common—and often overlooked—errors that could be impacting your training effectiveness. These are the mistakes that even experienced trainers can make without realizing it, and they can sometimes make all the difference between a successful session and a forgettable one.

We’re not here to overcomplicate things. Instead, we’ll take a look at some straightforward ways to improve your virtual training programs. From setting up the technology right to keeping your learners engaged and ensuring everyone is on the same page, we’ll cover all the essentials you need to make your virtual training smoother, more impactful, and—dare we say—more enjoyable.



So, let’s dive in and explore the top 8 mistakes and how to avoid them, so you can create a virtual learning experience that truly works.

"In virtual instructor-led training, sometimes the biggest challenges aren't the ones you see coming—they're the small mistakes you didn't even know you were making, until they start affecting your learners."

Mistake #1: Ignoring Pre-Training Setup

One of the most common—and easily avoidable—mistakes in virtual training is skipping the pre-training setup. We've all been there: it's minutes before the session, and everything is ready to go… or so you think. You open up your virtual classroom, only to realize that the software isn't working properly, your internet connection is spotty, or your microphone is muted. Suddenly, you're scrambling to troubleshoot right in front of your learners, and it's stressful for everyone.

Consequences

When you don't take the time to properly test everything before the training begins, the result is often technical delays, frustrating hiccups, or worse—complete disruptions. And these issues can make learners feel disconnected, distracted, or even frustrated. When technology doesn't work smoothly, it undermines engagement and can lead to a less productive session. No one wants to attend a virtual class where things keep breaking down, right?

In fact, a recent Statista report revealed that internet connectivity issues are one of the top challenges in virtual training, affecting both instructors and learners alike. Connectivity problems are a leading cause of disruptions in online learning environments, and they can significantly impact the success of your session (Statista on Internet Connectivity Issues).

The Solution

The solution here is simple but crucial: always do a thorough pre-training check. Before you hit "start," test your software, hardware, and internet connection. Make sure your microphone and camera are working, and that you've shared all the necessary links and materials with your participants. If possible, schedule a dry run or test session with a colleague or a friend to ensure everything is running smoothly. It's worth the extra time upfront to avoid the chaos later.

Taking the time to properly prepare your virtual environment helps ensure that your session will go off without a hitch. A little prep goes a long way in boosting your confidence and setting the tone for a seamless, engaging training experience.

"The solution here is simple but crucial: always do a thorough pre-training check."





Mistake #2: Failing to Engage Learners

In the realm of virtual training, keeping learners engaged is paramount. Without the physical presence of a classroom, it's easy for participants to drift into passive observation, leading to disengagement and diminished learning outcomes.

Consequences

When learners aren't actively involved, the effectiveness of the training diminishes. Disengaged participants are less likely to retain information, participate in discussions, or apply new skills in their roles. This disengagement can result in lower productivity and a lack of enthusiasm for future training sessions.

A study by Training Industry found that organizations utilizing a blend of online and interactive elements in their virtual training sessions experienced a 40% increase in engagement rates. This underscores the importance of incorporating interactive components to maintain learner interest and enhance retention (HubSpot).

The Solution

To foster engagement, it's essential to design training sessions that encourage active participation. Incorporate interactive elements such as live polls, quizzes, discussion forums, and breakout sessions. These tools not only make the learning experience more dynamic but also help in assessing understanding in real-time.

Additionally, leveraging technology can enhance engagement. Virtual Reality (VR) training, for instance, has been shown to be more cost-effective and engaging at scale compared to traditional methods. A study by PwC revealed that VR training became 52% more cost-effective than classroom training when delivered to 3,000 learners (PWC).

By integrating these strategies, you can create a more engaging and effective virtual training environment that not only captures learners' attention but also enhances their learning experience.

Mistake #3: Overloading Partcipants with Content

When it comes to virtual training, it's tempting to pack as much information as possible into each session. After all, you want to make the most of the time you have with your learners. But here's the thing: cramming too much content into a single session can actually work against you.

20%

Studies show that learners typically retain only about 20% of the information presented in a single session.

Consequences

The result of overloading participants with too much content is cognitive overload. When learners are bombarded with too much information at once, they struggle to process and retain it. Research from Cognitive Load Theory shows that our brains can only handle so much new information at once. If we exceed that capacity, learning becomes less effective, and retention drops.

In fact, studies show that learners typically retain only about 20% of the information presented in a single session, especially when there's too much to absorb. According to a report from Edutopia, this phenomenon is known as cognitive overload, and it can lead to frustration, confusion, and disengagement. Overloading learners can lead to them zoning out, checking emails, or multitasking, reducing the effectiveness of your training.

The Solution

The good news is that this is an easy fix. The solution is to break content down into digestible, manageable sections. Instead of trying to cover everything in one go, divide your material into smaller, focused segments. This makes it easier for learners to absorb and retain the information. Use a combination of text, visuals, and multimedia to complement the learning experience.

Additionally, make time for recaps or Q&A sessions to reinforce what's been covered and ensure everyone is on the same page. Studies have shown that reinforcing key concepts throughout a session helps solidify learning and improve retention. According to Learning Solutions Magazine, learners are 65% more likely to remember material when the content is chunked and reviewed regularly.

To help with retention, include interactive elements like quizzes or brief assessments to keep learners engaged and ensure they're absorbing the material. These not only reinforce learning but also provide an opportunity for instant feedback. By breaking content down into bite-sized pieces, you give your learners the best chance to succeed without overwhelming them. A little organization goes a long way in making your virtual training sessions more effective and impactful.

65%

Learners are 65% more likely to remember material when the content is chunked and reviewed regularly.

Reference

Cognitive Load Theory, which explains how too much information can hinder learning and retention, underscores the importance of breaking content into manageable parts. Research on this topic can be found in the article Cognitive Load Theory by John Sweller, published by the Learning & Instruction Journal (ResearchGate).





Mistake #4: Failing to Foster a Collaborative Learning Environment

One of the key components of effective virtual training is the ability to create a collaborative learning environment. Unfortunately, many virtual training programs overlook the importance of encouraging teamwork and peer-to-peer learning. Without opportunities for learners to engage with one another, they miss out on valuable collaborative insights and the chance to solve problems together. This lack of interaction can lead to feelings of isolation, reduced engagement, and missed opportunities for deeper understanding.

Studies have shown that collaboration significantly enhances learning outcomes. According to research from Edutopia, collaborative learning fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, all of which are vital for learners' personal and professional growth. In virtual settings, where learners may feel disconnected from the content and each other, collaborative tools can bridge the gap.

Consequences

When learners don't interact with their peers, they miss out on diverse perspectives and the opportunity to actively engage with the material. This can result in lower retention rates and reduced overall learning effectiveness. Additionally, without collaboration, learners may struggle to apply the content to real-world scenarios, as they lack the shared problem-solving experiences that can deepen understanding.

The Solution

To overcome this mistake, it's essential to use collaborative tools that encourage interaction and teamwork. Implementing shared documents, group discussions, and collaborative tasks can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. Tools like breakout rooms, discussion forums, and collaborative software such as Google Docs or Trello can promote teamwork and help learners work together to solve problems, share insights, and develop a deeper understanding of the content.

Encouraging peer-to-peer learning not only enhances individual learning but also fosters a sense of community, which is particularly important in virtual training where social interaction may otherwise be limited.

By integrating collaborative learning strategies, virtual training programs can offer a more engaging and impactful experience that benefits both individual learners and the group as a whole.



Mistake #5: Underestimating Technical Support Needs

A common mistake in virtual training is assuming that all learners are comfortable with the technology being used. While many participants may be familiar with basic online platforms, not everyone is equipped to handle technical issues that might arise during a session. This assumption can lead to frustration, confusion, and a poor overall learning experience. When technical difficulties occur, learners may struggle to rejoin sessions, access materials, or interact with the platform effectively. In some cases, this can result in learners abandoning the course altogether.

Consequences

When learners face technical problems without adequate support, they often feel disconnected from the training experience. According to a survey by the Online Learning Consortium, **70% of learners** reported that technical issues were a major barrier to their engagement in online courses. These frustrations can lead to increased dropout rates, reduced participation, and ultimately, lower completion and success rates. In fact, the lack of effective technical support has been cited as one of the top reasons for learners abandoning online courses.

If learners feel unsupported when problems arise, they may lose confidence in the program and the technology, which could lead to negative perceptions of the training and the organization offering it. This not only hinders individual success but also diminishes the overall effectiveness of the training program.

The Solution

To prevent these issues, it's essential to provide robust technical support throughout the training process. This includes offering easily accessible tech support channels, such as live chat, email, or dedicated helplines, to quickly address problems as they arise. Additionally, offering pre-training tutorials or onboarding sessions can help familiarize learners with the platform and its features before the training begins. This proactive approach ensures that learners feel comfortable navigating the technology, reducing the likelihood of issues during live sessions.

Providing clear instructions, step-by-step guides, and troubleshooting resources can also help learners resolve common issues independently. The key is to make sure learners know where to turn if they encounter any technical challenges and feel confident in their ability to solve them.
By ensuring that technical support is readily available and providing learners with the tools and knowledge to navigate the platform, you can reduce frustration, enhance engagement, and improve overall learning outcomes (For more information see: Tech Support Needs in Virtual Education).

Mistake #6: Not Using Data and Analytics to Track Progress

In today's data-driven world, one of the most common mistakes in virtual training is failing to utilize the rich data available through Learning Management Systems (LMS) to track student progress. By not regularly monitoring learner performance, instructors miss crucial opportunities to personalize the learning experience and identify students who may need additional support. With the vast array of data points available, from completion rates to quiz scores, instructors have the tools to make real-time adjustments to content delivery, ensuring that each learner's needs are met.

Consequences

When instructors don't track data, they risk losing visibility into learner engagement and performance. Without this insight, it becomes difficult to identify struggling learners, pinpoint areas where content may be unclear, or adapt the pace of training. According to research from Deloitte, organizations that use data analytics to personalize learning see a 20% increase in employee engagement and a 25% improvement in learning outcomes. Without leveraging data, instructors may continue delivering content that's either too challenging or not challenging enough, leading to disengagement and poor retention. In fact, a report from McKinsey found that 60% of learners who feel their training isn't relevant to their needs are less likely to complete the course.

Moreover, failing to adapt training based on real-time data can also lead to missed opportunities for learners who may need more personalized attention. This can result in lower course completion rates and decreased learner satisfaction. According to a study by the Journal of Educational Psychology, students who received tailored interventions based on learning data showed a 30% higher retention rate than those who did not.

20%

Organizations that use data analytics to personalize learning see a 20% increase in employee engagement.

30%

Students who received tailored interventions based on learning data showed higher retention rate than those who did not.

The Solution

The solution lies in actively using LMS data and analytics tools to track learner progress. These tools provide insights into how learners are interacting with the content, where they might be struggling, and which areas of the training need to be adjusted. Instructors can monitor metrics like quiz scores, time spent on modules, and completion rates to gauge understanding and engagement.

By using data to inform decisions, instructors can make necessary adjustments to training content in real-time, such as providing additional resources for struggling learners, simplifying complex topics, or speeding up content delivery for advanced learners. This personalized approach helps to create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

Additionally, data-driven insights allow instructors to identify students who need additional support, either through extra materials or one-on-one assistance. This proactive approach ensures no learner is left behind, increasing both the success and satisfaction of participants.

Conclusion

To maximize the impact of virtual training, leveraging data and analytics is essential. Data-driven decision-making not only helps instructors optimize their content but also creates a more personalized learning experience, which ultimately leads to better learner outcomes (Deloitte's research on Data-Driven Learning).

Mistake #7: Disregarding Accessibility and Inclusivity

In today's digital learning environment, accessibility is not just a nice-to-have—it's essential. Many virtual training sessions fail to consider the diverse needs of all learners, particularly those with disabilities. Whether it's visual or auditory impairments, learning disabilities, or other needs, overlooking accessibility features can make your training exclusionary.



Consequences

When accessibility is disregarded, you're not only alienating learners who require accommodations, but you're also creating a discriminatory environment. Excluding learners from participating fully in training can lead to frustration, lower engagement, and reduced success. In some cases, failing to provide an inclusive learning experience may even violate legal requirements, such as those outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Research by WebAIM found that approximately 19% of people in the U.S. live with a disability (WebAIM). That's a significant portion of your potential audience that could be left out if accessibility is not a priority. Furthermore, 30% of workers with disabilities report facing barriers in accessing online learning resources due to a lack of accommodations (Inclusive Education Technology).

19%

Of people in the U.S. live with a disability (WebAIM).

30%

of workers with disabilities report facing barriers in accessing online learning resources due to a lack of accommodations.

The Solution

The solution is straightforward: ensure that your virtual training sessions are accessible to everyone. Start by including closed captioning for videos, enabling screen reader compatibility, and offering flexible learning formats, such as downloadable transcripts or audio versions of content. These simple adjustments ensure that learners with different needs can fully engage with the material.

Additionally, use accessible learning management systems (LMS) that provide features like customizable font sizes, color contrast settings, and alternative navigation options. The World Health Organization states that inclusive education benefits all learners—not just those with disabilities. By creating an accessible environment, you enhance the learning experience for everyone, not just those who require accommodations. (WHO on Inclusive Education).

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education has highlighted that students in accessible learning environments perform better overall. They are more likely to complete courses, perform at a higher level, and apply what they've learned in real-world scenarios. (U.S. Department of Education on Accessible Learning).

The importance of accessibility in eLearning is outlined by Edutopia, which provides detailed guidelines on making digital learning environments accessible to all learners.



35%

Of Training programs with post-training follow-up saw higher retention rates compared to those that did not provide follow-up.

Mistake #8: Not Following Up Post-Training

The training doesn't end when the session does. One of the most overlooked mistakes is neglecting to follow up with learners after the training has been completed. The fact is, that learners forget much of what they've learned unless it's reinforced. Without proper follow-up, key concepts fade away, and the impact of your training is diminished.

Consequences

When post-training follow-up is skipped, learners are left to navigate their own way after the session, which often leads to forgetting critical information. According to a study by The Learning Agency, without reinforcement, 70% of new knowledge learned in a training session is forgotten within 24 hours. The failure to offer follow-up resources can leave learners feeling unsupported and unprepared to apply what they've learned in real-world situations.

In addition, not offering ways to check in with learners or assess their understanding means missing out on opportunities for further clarification or correction. This is especially true when it comes to complex topics or new skills that require practice and review.

The Solution

The solution here is simple: follow up! Send learners additional materials to help them retain and deepen their understanding of the training content. This could include recap videos, reading materials, or slides from the session. Consider using surveys to gather feedback on what they learned and identify areas where they need more clarification.

Incorporating opportunities for learners to review the content, whether through quizzes, group discussions, or one-on-one check-ins, significantly improves retention rates. A report by Training Magazine found that training programs with post-training follow-up saw a 35% higher retention rate compared to those that did not provide follow-up. This reinforcement is key to ensuring learners don't just remember the material—they understand it and can apply it effectively in their roles (Training Magazine).

Conclusion

We've now covered 8 common mistakes that can impact your virtual training programs. Whether it's ignoring pre-training setup, failing to engage learners, overloading them with content, or neglecting post-training follow-up, each of these mistakes can hinder the success of your sessions and the effectiveness of your training.

Mistake #1: Ignoring Pre-Training Setup
Mistake #2: Failing to Engage Learners
Mistake #3: Overloading Partcipants with Content
Mistake #4: Failing to Foster a Collaborative Learning Environment
Mistake #5: Underestimating Technical Support Needs
Mistake #6: Not Using Data and Analytics to Track Progress
Mistake #7: Disregarding Accessibility and Inclusivity
Mistake #8: Not Following Up Post-Training

By addressing these issues, you can create a more engaging, productive, and inclusive virtual learning environment that not only improves the learning experience but also boosts retention, engagement, and overall success. Take a moment to evaluate your current training programs—are there any areas where you can improve? These small adjustments can make a world of difference.

If you're ready to take your virtual training programs to the next level, ReadyTech offers a range of customizable solutions to help. From cloud IT labs to instructor-led portals, we provide everything you need to create engaging, interactive, and effective virtual learning experiences.

References

PWC

HubSpot

ResearchGate

WHO on Inclusive Education

U.S. Department of Education on Accessible Learning

Training Magazine

Tech Support Needs in Virtual Education

Deloitte's research on Data-Driven Learning

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