Four reasons your training flopped—even when you had the best intentions

Have you ever put a ton of time into creating compliance training just to have it fall flat? As in, your employees hated it, or worse—they loved it but it made ZERO impact on their behavior? Here's four reasons this likely happened—and how to avoid them.



Reason #1: The format came first

It's like building a boat before knowing you're traveling over water. It might work out … or you might get stuck with a boat.



The fix: Start with the problem you're trying to solve

Use the formula "people are doing X, and we need them to do Y instead."

Then, pick the right format to communicate about Y—the right format may not be training at all, but rather process improvements, new resources, or disciplinary action.

Reason #2: Engagement was the priority

"Entertainment" is not the same as "Engagement." Conflating the two generates well-made-but-totally-useless training media.



The fix: Focus on transfer

Training should help employees correctly apply information in the real world, like just-in-time or process-embedded tools.

Remember, you can't achieve transfer without engagement, but you can have engagement without transfer.

Reason #3: The focus was on bad employees

Forcing employees to click every slide, or complete a quiz based on what they just heard doesn't change bad employees. It irritates good ones.



The fix: Don't worry about bad employees

Build training for employees who want to follow the rules. Make it relevant to their jobs, and let them take as little or as much time as they need.

Bad employees ignore training. Controls, auditing, and investigations will catch them.

Reason #4: Something was added "just in case"

This is anything you don't *actually* expect someone to do, but checks the I-told-you-about-it box. This is not training. It's liability shifting and employees know it.



The fix: Focus on what they *can* do

Be reasonable about the amount of information you provide. Tell them specifically what to look out for to help mitigate risk.

Remember, they don't need to memorize your policy, just know when and where to find it.

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