A History of SCCE with Debbie Troklus

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Five ways eLearning games can aid compliance and ethics training

The expectation on compliance training is higher than ever before. Most organizations want it to go far beyond the tick box and positively impact staff attitudes, values, and behaviors. But according to the preliminary findings of the 2015 Compliance Study by Towards Maturity, fewer than half the respondent organizations believe they are making significant progress in these key areas. In response to this frustrating pace of change, some corporate workplaces are turning to eLearning games to give their compliance and ethics training a boost. On the face of it, the promise of an eLearning game is to make compliance more interesting and enjoyable, but these are really just by-products of the experience. The true value of a gamified approach goes beyond fun. Games can help create a deeper and longer-lasting learning experience for staff and, in some cases, deliver things that “typical” compliance training can’t.

What games do
So, if games are not about adding fun, what do they bring to the table?

The Towards Maturity study found that 50% of respondents cited user engagement is a significant barrier to change in compliance.

They help keep people engaged
Engagement remains a big issue for many businesses and institutions. The Towards Maturity study found that 50% of respondents cited user engagement is a significant barrier to change in compliance. Games and engagement go hand-in-hand; they are highly interactive and demand
participation through challenge, curiosity, and exploration. Learners have to *play* a game; they cannot passively observe. Crucially, for eLearning games to be effective in the workplace, they must deal with real risks and real consequences, and the thought processes required in the game must be the same as those used on the job.

They help people with decision-making skills
Research suggests online game play helps with decision-making, because it enables people to develop their skills in making quick decisions.\(^2\) It’s easy to see how game mechanics help to reinforce this ability; think of a game against the clock where players have limited time to choose the next action. For organizations looking to create a culture of compliance, where employees are empowered to do the right thing, decision-making is an important skill to invest in.

They allow people to learn through exploration
In typical compliance and ethics training, failure is generally viewed as a bad thing. Learners get one chance to answer correctly and pass the test. The trouble with this approach is that it discourages the natural curiosity of human beings. You cannot give a wrong answer simply to see what happens, or learn from your mistakes. Games are constructed differently than regular training to allow exploration through mechanics, such as multiple lives and replays. Most modern organizations recognize that exploration can lead to a deeper understanding of a training topic, and this can be particularly important in an area such as ethics, where staff may be faced with “grey areas” to navigate.

They allow people to practice and try again
Allied to the idea of “constructive failure” is replayability. It’s a familiar concept from the world of video games, where players either re-start a game, because they want to master it or relive the experience. This replayability sets eLearning games apart from typical compliance training, where employees are unlikely to repeat a module unless they are required to do so. If a game is well-designed, people will be more likely to replay it without prompting and, in doing so, reinforce their knowledge through practice.

They provide continual feedback
Feedback in games is different from that normally found in a traditional instructional setting. In games, feedback is generally straightforward, continual, and immediate. For example, in the popular app game *Candy Crush*, players are constantly reminded of their progress through points, sound effects, and words such as “sweet” or “wonderful.” Players even get feedback on how they are scoring compared to their friends. This type of feedback can be motivational and encourage players to strive for a better performance, so it’s easy to see how this could be a good thing in a training setting.

Real life examples
Given what games are able to deliver beyond a typical eLearning module, it is unsurprising that they are becoming increasingly common as a tool in compliance training. Research suggests 40% of the top 1,000 global organizations will be using games and gamification in 2015.\(^3\)

One business that has decided to incorporate games into its compliance eLearning is the baby goods retailer, Mothercare. The company is moving its health and safety training for UK staff online for the first time with a 20-minute long custom-made module, *Staying Safe at Work*. This includes a fire safety game, where learners have to explore a stockroom and...
identify the possible fire hazards (see Figure 1).

TUI Group, the world’s number one integrated tourism business, is also utilizing games in the compliance training it provides for its 77,000 employees worldwide. The company’s new Social Media Employee Policy Training Module includes a series of 10 mini-game scenarios (see Figure 2). Staff must work against the clock to complete the challenges about putting the social media policy into action.

One thing these businesses have in common is that games are just one of the tools being used within a wider compliance eLearning module. It may seem obvious, but incorporating games only when they are useful and appropriate is the best way to make them work within corporate training. If games are viewed as a silver bullet or panacea, they will fail to meet expectations. Another pitfall is quality; badly designed games will fall short, just as badly designed instruction will fall short. Finally, it’s worth bearing in mind that as more and more organizations use games and gamification in their compliance and ethics training, the body of evidence and experience about what works (and what does not) is growing. Gamification expert Professor Karl M. Kapp suggests it is now time to widen the debate and concentrate on how to “leverage the best elements of games to create the best instruction for learners.”


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