THE BOOTPACK

FIELD GUIDE

to

TRAINING
THAT WORKS

TOP 10 E-LEARNING MISTAKES
and how to fix them

Bootpack Media

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E-LEARNING MISTAKES
and how to fix them

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Bootpack Media

#1
Dumping Content Instead of Teaching

⚠️ The Problem

Walls of text overwhelm a learner's memory. Too much text encourages learners to tend to skim, click, and forget.

🔧 The Fix

Put content into bite-sized chunks. Have each screen represent one actionable point. Use hyper-relevant photos, illustrations, videos, or animations.

Make additional content available as extra reading as a policy, job aid, or other type of document that can be easily referenced. Don't put further reading in the training module.

For more information, look up Cognitive Load Theory by Clark & Mayer.

#2
Designing for the Checkbox, Not the Learner

⚠️ The Problem

Compliance modules only prove completion, not competence, knowledge, or confidence.

🔧 The Fix

Adults learn best when training clearly illustrates a problem that is relevant to them. Design backwards by starting with the desired outcome, then work through the actions a learner should take in order to achieve the optimum result.

In adult education this is a critical component of Andragogy, the theory of adult learning, which you can learn more about by reading Knowles (1980) and Merriam & Bierema (2014).

#3

Using Narration to Read the Screen Word for Word

⚠️ The Problem

Voiceover reading on screen text takes away the value of narration and contributes a learner's disengagement.

🔧 The Fix

Narration and on screen text should not be duplicates of one another.

Text, photos, animations, narration, videos, and infographics are all learning aids that should be used to complement one another.

When your media elements work together, they become very powerful teaching tools.

Mayer's Multimedia Principles (2001, 2021) describe how learners process various media types like text and voiceover.

#4
Making Training Too Long (and Too Costly)

⚠️ The Problem

Lengthy modules are draining, they're not good for morale or payroll. Do the math, multiply the number of training minutes by the number of employees in your workforce. That is a lot of hours and a lot of dollars lost to ineffective training.

🔧 The Fix

Create single topic training modules with a duration of 2 to 7 minutes.

This provides you with a training library for more frequent, shorter training sessions. Modules can be bundled together and targeted for relevancy to greatly reduce time off for training.

The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve is a valuable resource that is widely referenced in the adult learning industry.

#5
Forgetting the Audience is Human

⚠️ The Problem

Learners tune out as soon as they're presented with corporate speak.

🔧 The Fix

Grab the learner's attention right away. Make the content relevant to them. Make it personal by using names, characters, and stories that your learners can relate to.

Have your content relate to your employees' lives at work, at home, and at play.

Do some research into Keller's ARCS Model and learn more about:

- **A**ttention
- **R**elevance
- **C**onfidence
- **S**atisfaction

#6
Teaching Facts Instead of Behaviours

⚠️ The Problem

It's common to see training that presents facts and then tests for retention. Quizzes test memory, not action.

🔧 The Fix

Having people take the right action at the right time, keep this goal of training top of mind when creating training modules.

Encourage learners to draw on their own experiences. We all know that practice makes perfect, reinforce training through practice within e-learning. Make it a two-way conversation by asking for feedback.

Both David Kolb and Eduardo Salas discuss these training tactics at length.

#7

Lack of Respect for the Learner

⚠️ The Problem

One-size-fits-all training demonstrates a clear disrespect for a learner's time, role, knowledge, and experience.

Presenting material that is irrelevant, basic, or inherently understood wastes valuable time.

🔧 The Fix

Target batches of micro-modules to specific groups of people. Create adaptive modules that change based on ongoing knowledge checks. Allow knowledge verification to fast track learners through modules. Efficiency saves time and payroll.

Shute & Towle, as well as Siemens & Long, offer valuable insights into adaptive learning and ongoing knowledge checks.

#8
Delivering "So What?" Training

⚠️ The Problem

When training is boring and not performance focused, the only outcome is learners who are happy to be finished.

🔧 The Fix

Take a page out of marketings' playbook. Get the viewer's attention and give them a clear call to action. Create training content that is engaging, entertaining, or even humorous.

Relate the content directly to actions that can be taken immediately, within the learner's workday. Provide relevant actions and suggest conversation starters.

Take this further by reading work by Baldwin & Ford, and Grossman & Salas.

#9
Treating Training as One-and-Done

⚠️ The Problem

Humans forget 70–80% of training within a week if there's no follow-up.

🔧 The Fix

Reinforce information to overcome the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve.

Treat training like a campaign, not an event. Communicate effectively with monthly, weekly, daily, and continuous touch points (marketing's playbook).

Use printed pieces, videos, discussion topics, and other awareness techniques to keep the monthly training topic top-of-mind.

#10
Forgetting That Training Is Branding

⚠️ The Problem

Content creators don't always realize that
e-learning is the voice, personality, and brand
of the company. Training is an important
component of the workplace culture.

🔧 The Fix

Treat every employee-facing touchpoint,
including training and awareness, with the goal
of creating engagement and trust. Training
should reflect the company's brand design, tone,
and values.

Training that is trusted and respected builds
credibility, adding to a positive workplace
culture. This is emphasized by Paul A. Argenti,
while Gallup research shows that trust
and confidence in internal communication
like training, are key drivers of employee
engagement.

FINAL THOUGHTS
Why this Matters

The vast majority of the costs for e-learning are due to the cost of time off the floor for training.

Effective, efficient training depends on precise planning, deep expertise, and disciplined execution.

If e-learning creation is your solo adventure, keep this Field Guide nearby and look up the references mentioned to help you along the way.

For those seeking collaboration, Bootpack Media offers services ranging from consultation and planning through to digital media creation and SCORM production, providing full working file ownership with no license fees.

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"Cool, another online training module!"

— said no one ever

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