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Fit-for-purpose design of digital training important to address specific needs

1ST OCTOBER 2021 BY: SCHALK BURGER - CREAMER MEDIA SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

There is no single digital education solution that can address all the needs of an industry, and fit-for-purpose designed training solutions are important to facilitate training that effectively develops particular skills or meets a particular business or industry need.

Rekindle Learning founder **Rapelang Rabana** this week said fit-for-purpose designs often required short sprints to validate the designs and the effectiveness of the learning solutions in a particular environment and, from this information, Rekindle would advise on an appropriate solution to fulfil the needs of a particular industry.

Speaking during industry organisation the Minerals Council South Africa's Reimagining Training in Mining conference, she said a learning system was not just about changing the training room, but about starting with simple components, such as ensuring information transparency throughout the business.

More structured learning engagements could then be added, such as micro-learning formats to support occupational health and safety

training of staff, or courses to retrain artisans to work in new industries, such as retraining plumbers who may not have previously studied in a formal environment.

"Rapid content development and packaging short learning courses should also include supportive elements such as different languages to ensure people can take part in the journey and that course materials are accessible and serve to support an effective coaching," said Rabana.

"The point of a test, especially in training, is not to determine an arbitrary point of failure or success, but to track what each employee is struggling with and then to focus on those areas and ensure [an employee is able] to gain competence and get to the point required," she noted.

Further, learning systems in territories with significant diversity, such as South Africa and Africa, must be customised to suit the needs of individuals in these territories and the diverse multilingualism. These needs must be identified and must inform learning design, said blended learning and skills development company WinWin International CEO **Stuart Woolmington**.

"The main aim is for the content to be practical and applicable. This requires making the content relevant for users, learners and facilitators on the ground and solving the problem using technology that addresses personal and individual needs," he added.

Digital innovation consultancy and service provider The Boiler Room chief learning and innovation officer **Adi Stephan**

emphasised that learning was not about the technology or systems used but about finding solutions to the problems of trainees. If these problems are understood, the organisation can then select from the broad range of digital tools and solutions available to address shortcomings and drive the desired outcome of effective skills development.

Business systems development company Reevell Enterprise Development MD **David Reevell** concurred, saying that preconceived ideas of what is needed distract from the central importance of understanding the problem and then selecting or developing a solution to address it.

"It is never effective to push technology to solve challenges and especially in the mining sector, solutions must be simple and effective and deliver against the needs of the learners or the company."

However, effectively designed learning materials and systems can accelerate training and dramatically improve trainees' engagement with learning materials, said Rabana.

"If we look at how voraciously people consume social media and entertaining content, we can draw lessons to improve engagement with learning materials. A key challenge is that every company has its own perspective about interactive training, but that not aligning the design of the training course with the requirements of the company and the trainees will result in a poor fit," she added.

Leveraging story-telling can help to encourage sharing of education

materials, and this content can be embedded within applications or training platforms to enable easy access. This approach is effective not only for technicians and artisans, but for all training at all levels.

"Content must be contextualised to improve its relevance and multimedia education has relevance in all industrial sectors," she noted.

To start, organisations need to take stock of what training materials, content and facilities they have and update or remove old materials or materials that are not engaged as regularly as required or desired, Stephan advised.

"The validity and accuracy of training materials need to be determined before the content is digitised. Transforming education in mining is a journey of understanding with a firm vision and strategy to facilitate the change and provide a framework for how a company will handle the introduction of new technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, into its training processes," he said.

Once companies have taken stock of their education content and systems, as well as their vision of what they are transforming these systems into, they can then look at combining certain parts, or creating smaller and micro-learning courses, as determined by the needs and approaches to address them. This can also lead to the creation of digital learning systems and platforms in organisations that can can be accessed 24/7 by employees, said Stephan. ▦

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