



The Compliance Training Not-So-Secret Weapon:

# **TURN MANDATED TRAINING INTO ENGAGING ELEARNING**



Compliance training has a bad reputation. Whether the focus of the training is on common workplace issues like harassment, safety, discrimination, or information security, and regardless of whether the issues involve external regulations established by HIPAA, GDPR, OSHA, or EEOC, among others, compliance training is often viewed by employees and administrators, alike, as dry and of questionable value.

According to Brandon Hall Group's 2017 Compliance Training Study, "only about one-third of companies consider their compliance training efforts to be effective. Most report that their efforts are only somewhat effective." (Training Magazine) The study also found that the preponderance of compliance training is conducted in a traditional, instructor-led classroom setting. Is there a correlation between the method of training delivery and its perceived effectiveness? Surely. Is there causality? That's less certain, but clearly, with such dim results, it's time to rethink how companies approach their compliance training initiatives.

One might think that this is where eLearning comes in. And, according to the Brandon Hall study, it does: following instructor-led training, eLearning is the next most common method of compliance training delivery. But simply making eLearning course content available to those in your organization who need compliance training won't necessarily boost the effectiveness of these programs. The content has to be compelling.

How can you be sure your compliance training is a cut above? Fortunately, we've pulled together a few tips to help you do just that. We'll focus on what you need to consider in creating and assembling engaging compliance training content, and along the way we'll look at why companies engage in compliance training, what the risks are for companies that incur compliance violations, and how you can ensure that delivering and tracking the consumption of compliance course material is as efficient as it can be across your organization.

## Why Engage in Compliance Training?

There are many practical reasons for ensuring that your organization offers comprehensive compliance training to your team members. Compliance training can help:



Ensure that your employees and partners are working toward a common goal and aligned on company policies and/or industry or legal regulations.



Protect the organization by laying the groundwork for a partial or complete defense in the event that employee wrongdoing occurs.



Head off potential violations of company policies and/or industry or legal regulations before they can occur.



Instill a sense that your team members are valued by investing in their development.



Protect the organization from penalties incurred by failing to comply with compliance mandates.

# Build, Buy, or Both?

## Let Your Needs Determine the Best Way to Go

Where does compliance training course content come from? While a good deal of course material is off-the-shelf courseware sold at scale, the Brandon Hall study found a healthy split between custom-developed compliance training material and course content that was sourced externally. In fact, most of the compliance training course content in use in 2017 – 57 percent – was actually developed in-house.

How do you figure out whether to buy your course content or to build your own?

- First, determine whether the compliance training content is specific or proprietary to the company.
- Are you training on internal policies? Or external regulations?
- Or are you looking at a mix?

If the training content is specific to the organization, then the course content would need to be custom developed. However, if you are looking for training material to manage compliance with regulations that govern your entire industry, then purchasing from an off-the-shelf course provider might be warranted. Usually, companies find that a blended approach of both custom-created courses and purchased off-the-shelf courses is the best approach.

## 5 Cautionary Tales (Among Many!) Illustrating the Cost of Compliance Violations

Policy and regulations violations cut across all industries and affect businesses of all sizes. Even when the monetary impact doesn't ruin the company, the resulting damage to the brand's reputation may. Here are five examples of the perils of failing to maintain compliance that routinely come to light in business news headlines:

1. **British Petroleum Slammed with \$87 Million Penalty, Largest OSHA Fine Ever**  
(OSHA.gov)
2. **Memorial Healthcare System Agrees to Pay \$5.5 Million to Settle Potential Violations of HIPAA**  
(Tripwire.com)
3. **Sexual Harassment Judgment Against Daimler-Chrysler Results in \$21 Million Award**  
(USA Today)
4. **Wrongful Termination Verdict: Cardiovascular Systems, Inc. Forced to Pay \$25.1 Million to Whistleblower**  
(Star Tribune)
5. **Merrill Lynch to Pay \$160 Million to Settle Racial Bias Lawsuit**  
(Reuters)

# Buy Off the Shelf

Off-the-shelf courses are pre-designed, built, and available for purchase. Organizations can use these off-the-shelf courses to quickly increase their course offerings. The purchasing models of these types of courses can vary, so be sure to understand the licensing agreements, payment methods, learning management system integration options, and any restrictions that apply to your purchase.

In some cases, course providers sell the actual course, meaning they supply the course source

files. This allows companies to customize the course to their specifications. RapidCourse is one company that sells courses this way.

The key to off-the-shelf content is relevancy. We recommend sampling a few of the courses before you buy/license them to ensure they contain the right information and are of the quality you require. While it may be enticing to increase your course offerings quickly, be sure not to lose credibility with your learners by offering them low-quality courses.

## Common Topics of Compliance Training

These are among the most frequently requested compliance courseware topics developed and/or purchased today:



**Workplace Discrimination and/or Harassment:** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)



**Equal Protection:** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



**European Union Data Protection:** General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Enforceable as of 25 May, 2018)



**Workplace Environment Regulations:** Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)



**Healthcare Data Protection:** Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA)



**Information Security (USA):** Varies by organizational policy and/or state regulations

# Build to Order

If you determine you need custom courses, you have two choices for how they can be developed. The courses can either be outsourced to a content development company or they can be developed in-house by company staff. Both strategies have advantages, disadvantages, and costs.

## Outsourced Course Development

Outsourcing content creation is a popular option for many reasons. Organizations choose to outsource especially when they are just getting started with eLearning, or have lots of content to produce in a short time frame. Getting help from professional courseware developers can save both time and money. There are several items to consider when comparing content development companies: pricing, output (Flash vs HTML5), instructional design creativity, graphic design creativity, course updating, and maintenance processes.

The process for collaborating with external developers is also important. While hiring a

content development company seems like an easy way to go, don't minimize the input required from the internal team members such as subject matter experts, stakeholders, and reviewers. This point is often underemphasized and can be a frequent cause of project delays and cost overruns.

Make sure to understand the development process and have periodic check-ins and review sessions. Some development companies use an Agile or Lean development process that helps mitigate the concern of rework due to lack of timely communication, clarity, or preference differences.

## In-House Course Development

In-house development can be a very attractive option, as no one knows the precise training needs better than those within the company, itself. This can also be the least expensive option. However, internal development requires that the company have the staff, resources, knowledge, time, and

expertise to build the course. If these resources are in doubt, then deciding to build the course in-house could increase the cost of production due to inefficiencies. If you're wavering, it's probably wise to research outsourcing options, as well.

## Best Practices in Custom Courseware Development

The keys to engaging eLearning content development are few, but they are vitally important. Review the following list and use it as a checklist or requirements list when setting up and executing your content development plan:

### Keep it short

Microlearning, which supports a mobile work style, is a must in course design today. Topics should be chunked out into easily consumable sections that reflect and accommodate learners' need to consume training in multiple short bursts.

### Make it lively

Vary the training format. Utilize different media, including written material, audio, and video. Look to incorporate a gamified approach to compliance training.

### Make it real

Instead of dealing in hypothetical scenarios or dry exposition on policies and regulations, introduce case studies that examine real-world issues, explore how the involved individuals conducted themselves, and debrief the resulting consequences.

### Measure progress routinely

Instead of relying on a singular summative test to assess the learner's retention of the training material, incorporate short and frequent checkpoint assessments that measure learner engagement and retention along the way.

## Unsure if building in-house is the best option? We've outlined some of the key players needed for an in-house course development project.



### **Subject Matter Experts**

You will need access to an in-house expert or specialist with relevant experience in the training topic and compliance issues. Subject matter experts work collaboratively with instructional designers to determine the key learning points for the content. They also need to be heavily involved in the review and approval process. It's not enough for them to just supply information; part of their role is to help ensure that key content is not lost and that any nuanced information is properly communicated and conveyed. This is especially important when building course material that addresses external regulations that govern company or individual behaviors and actions.



### **Instructional Designer (Learning Designer)**

Instructional Designers know how to design courses to best communicate the information. They will decide when to have branched scenarios, quizzes, videos, tests, etc., and they will know how to incorporate various instructional design techniques. As mentioned above, they will work closely with subject matter experts. Note that instructional design techniques for eLearning courses are unique to the format. Be sure your instructional designer is familiar with creating eLearning courses and knows how to design relevant, applicable, and actionable content. It's also important to understand the learning style and baseline proficiency of the target audience, as this will help determine the appropriate course length and pace.



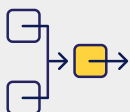
### **Graphic Designer**

Never underestimate the importance of the visual design of a course. A graphic designer will make the course visually engaging, which can go a long way to helping learners retain the information being presented. Oftentimes, there is also a set of corporate branding or style guidelines that need to be taken into consideration.



### **Content Developer**

A content developer builds the eLearning course in the determined software or application. They can make the course run and work the way in which it's been designed. It is important that the content developer be highly familiar with the developer tools and software being employed. There are many tools available but some of the most commonly used eLearning development software tools are Articulate Storyline and Adobe Captivate.



### **Project Manager**

The project manager will need to understand the complexities and moving parts of eLearning course development. This will help them understand the key development points and keep the project on task and on time.



### **Testing and Quality Assurance (QA)**

Attention to detail is crucial. Testing to ensure that all components of the project are accurate, working properly, and error-free is critical. Grammar, typos, graphics, and course functionality, from beginning to end, must be checked multiple times by at least two people, preferably more.

# Learning Management Systems for Administering and Tracking Compliance Training

Once the compliance course content is assembled, it is crucial to take a systematic approach to delivering the course material and tracking learner progress in consuming and retaining the course content. A learning management system (LMS) can be the most efficient way to orchestrate compliance training, especially when needing to manage the delivery of course content that differs

depending on the specific compliance training needs of the learner profile.

To learn more about how an LMS may help your organization tackle its compliance (and other) training needs, we invite you to review our white paper, *The LMS Imperative*.

*Technology is constantly evolving and it's important that the LMS provider keeps its solution current with emerging capabilities*

In a business environment where being able to build and maintain a solid brand reputation and lasting relationships with your customers is essential for ongoing success, effective compliance training for team members is critical. Assembling quality course content, either through purchasing off-the-shelf compliance courseware or developing training material in-house or in partnership with an external developer, and delivering that material in a consistent manner, can help protect your organization and minimize the damage from compliance transgressions.

Utilizing a flexible and reliable orchestration tool like an LMS to manage the delivery and tracking of compliance courseware can be just as important as offering engaging content. If you'd like to learn more about how Absorb LMS can help with all aspects of your compliance training needs, we invite you to visit our website at [absorblms.com/request-demo](https://absorblms.com/request-demo). We'd love to talk with you about how Absorb LMS can meet your company's needs.

**Absorb Software** is an AI-powered learning management system (LMS) provider for all learners inside and outside an enterprise, across industries globally. Purpose-built for an engaging, personalized learner experience and efficient administration, Absorb LMS enables millions of employees, customers, partners, and members to discover, absorb, and apply the knowledge they need. From meeting compliance to motivating learners, up-skilling/re-skilling to improving productivity, and creating/curating to monetizing course content, the platform unlocks potential.

