

NlightN Multimedia -

A Real World View



eCommunication: making it work

Part 7– Integration

A large percentage of the eCommunication I see appears to drop out of a clear blue sky. However, it's not hard to see why this can be ineffective. Different forms of communication have different strengths so it makes sense that, by employing multiple methods, the end results are likely to make more impact.

By integration, however, I'm specifically talking about the way in which a particular piece of eCommunication is packaged within an overall campaign.

Let's look at a realistic example. You receive an email from your boss to say that an elearning module covering Repetitive Strain Injury is now available on the company intranet. The email informs you, in friendly but authoritative terms, that you are expected to complete the training within the next 5 working days.

As a conscientious employee, you schedule time into your diary to complete the training. You're pleasantly surprised at the quality of the product, it's also concise, relevant and makes use of multimedia. You pass the test with flying colours and what happens next? You forget every last teaching point!

Why does this happen? Simply because your goal, as set by your boss, was to complete



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the elearning within a specified time period. You met your goal, learning enough to pass the test, but that goal was **not** the aim of the programme as a whole. Presumably, your employer's motivation in paying for the elearning was to reduce the incidence of RSI which benefits, of course, both the employee and the employer.

This motivation is at odds with yours because of the way in which the learning appeared out of nowhere.

Compare this with the alternative. You receive an email from your boss telling you that the RSI elearning module you'd heard about is now online. You'd been expecting it because your boss had mentioned it at your last team meeting. You'd also read an article in the staff newspaper explaining that the company is looking into the working environment of its employees and one of the aspects they are examining is the prevention of RSI. Your boss explains that there will be an audit of everyone's working environment next week and that the elearning is preparation for that as it ensures that everyone understands the contributory factors and most common remedies.

All of a sudden, this training appears clearly within the context of an overall policy campaign. The employee has bought into it (not least because his/her boss has also bought in) and can see that there will be a specific action resulting from the elearning. So, the employee will be motivated and paying attention with more in mind than simply passing an end of course test.

The same applies with eMarketing where a presentation that fits within an overarching multimedia campaign will be far more effective than a one-off. Educational elearning works best when it is integrated into the syllabus and, therefore, makes a clear contribution.

This integration need not be large scale but it does need to give the person receiving the communication the feeling that there is an overall programme at work here. Why? Because we all choose how much of our time and effort we invest in any particular activity. The very fact that the campaign is *integrated* communicates to the end-user: it tells them that the campaign has been thought through, that it matters to the communicator, that more than one person has been involved and it suggests that more money has been spent (not always correct). All of this added together suggests that the communicator is *committed* to the project and, after all, if your employer, educator or potential supplier, isn't committed enough to create an integrated campaign, why should you be?