

# HR NEWS



## Change Management



# How HR Can Rethink Compliance Training

## *Relying on Learning Management Systems and Fostering Employee Engagement*

By Trish Stromberg

**C**ontact tracing apps. Elevator safe zones. Infrared body temperature scanners. Face masks. Distancing.

It is a new era for the American workplace, and human resources professionals are in the thick of it.

With significant input from those in HR, employers are reimagining workspaces as the United States continues to contend with the coronavirus pandemic. Before employees return to the office, it is crucial for HR professionals to highlight the measures that have been taken to protect workers' health and safety, such as issuing social distancing guidelines and detailing hygiene practices.

But how can employers easily communicate this type of information to workers? HR professionals and other workplace managers should consider leaning on technology to get the job done.

Employers are obligated to ensure that every employee reads and comprehends all of the new safety policies and procedures. Employers must also do what they can to confirm that each employee commits to complying with new practices. Both can be achieved by implementing a learning management system that allows the employer to deliver short courses that teach employees about the new procedures before they come back to the office.

A workplace leader such as the HR director can guide employees through the policies, distribute and assign coursework, and quiz employees to assess how much knowledge they absorbed. This way, everyone gets on the same page for complying with new health and safety rules.

### Why Now Is the Time to Adopt a Learning Management System

The rise of remote work amid the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the value of using learning management systems. This technology allows safety and compliance training to be carried out

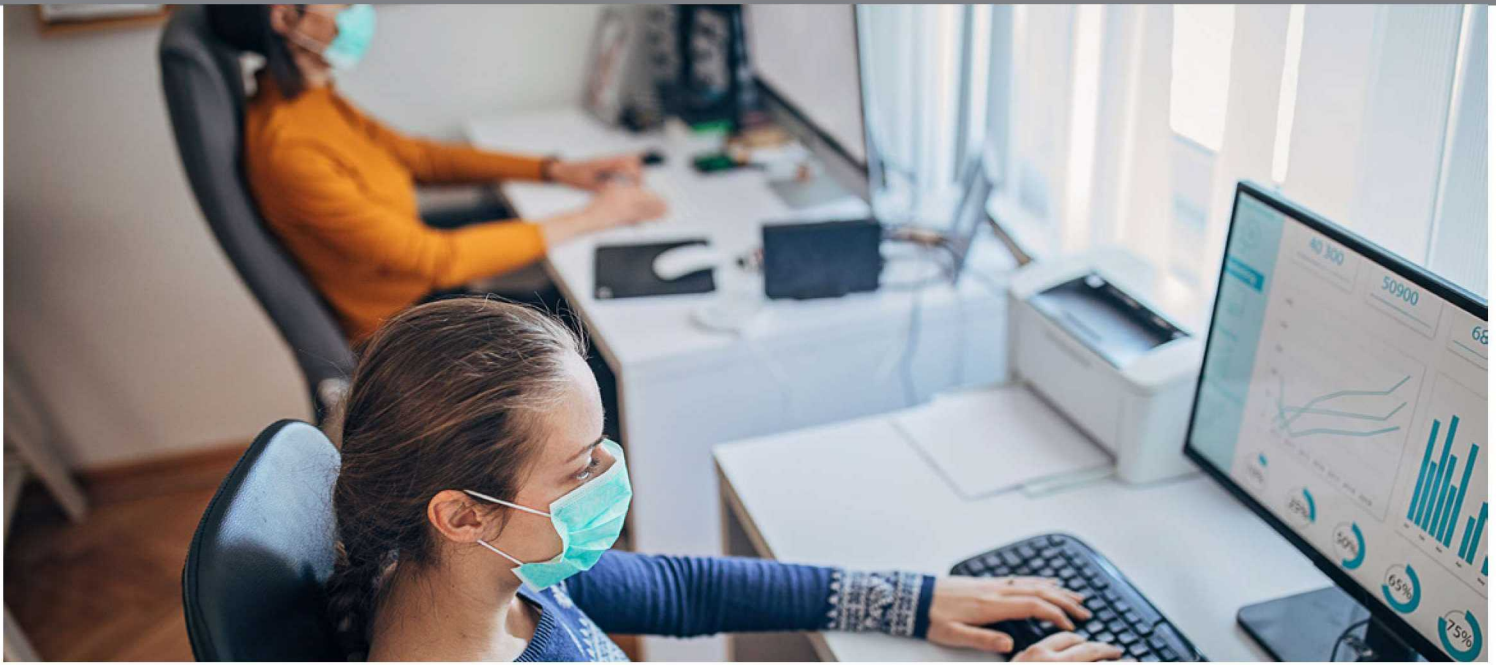
online, which means that someone working remotely can easily complete a course.

In addition, an employer can improve engagement with employees and boost their confidence by incorporating compliance training into a learning management system. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) acknowledged as much by writing its *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19*, "Informed workers who feel safe at work are less likely to be unnecessarily absent."

And, given the many hazards employees will face until the pandemic ends, OSHA recommends that employers offer refresher training on health and safety. Using a customizable learning management system should simplify the delivery of that follow-up training. Customizability is key because, as OSHA reminds, "Training material should be easy to understand and available in the appropriate language and literacy level for all workers."

Using a learning management system also lets employees complete specially tailored training anywhere and anytime on a laptop, smartphone or tablet. In other words, there is no need to gather employees in a conference room—where social distancing might be difficult—to make it possible for a manager to conduct a training session.

These are all important attributes at a time when, as revealed by a Brandon Hall Group survey, 80 percent of organizations describe management of the coronavirus crisis as challenging or very challenging. That survey of how HR departments and learning and development programs are contributing to managing the business and human impacts of the pandemic also revealed that organizations of all sizes are struggling with compliance training. A little more than half (55 percent) of respondents from organizations with between 500 and 4,999 employees indicated that technology could help them meet the challenge of training workers.



## Just Any Learning Management System Will Not Suffice

In the long term, gaining a technological edge in compliance training and, more broadly, employee engagement is essential. Right now, implementing the right technology can ease the burden of HR professionals who are arranging employees' return to the workplace.

So, it is no wonder that the global market for learning management systems is projected to reach \$28.1 billion by 2025. As already noted, factors driving increased use of learning management systems include the

- Ability to customize training,
- Array of budget-friendly options, and
- Growing use of smartphones and cloud-based services.

The benefits of learning management systems are numerous, but employers do not always take full advantage of what the technology offers. For one thing, many organizations lack a strong culture surrounding knowledge sharing and knowledge management. Research findings published by the Association for Talent Development (ATD) in July 2020 show that only “44 percent of organizations have a formal knowledge-sharing process and 53 percent have an informal knowledge-sharing process.” The remaining 3 percent of organizations lack knowledge-sharing progresses altogether.

To make matters worse, the association’s research indicated that a number of organizations have not tasked HR professionals or anyone else with overseeing knowledge sharing and management. Just 49 percent of organizations have tapped someone to be in charge of knowledge sharing, while 54 percent have assigned someone to direct knowledge management.

Adding to the problem, as ATD pointed out, sharing and

managing knowledge encompasses technology and change management. The processes also depend on employee engagement. “There must be leadership support, and there must be an understanding by the organization that knowledge management is not just one and done,” Liz Herman, the director of knowledge management at Kentucky-based customer care center Senture, told the association. “To do knowledge management right requires an ongoing process and dedication to doing the work.”

Using a learning management system can go a long way in solving this puzzle by enabling a point person to make sure that all employees are appropriately trained. But, ATD’s research showed that 42 percent of organizations do not store knowledge in a learning management system. And even the organizations that do use learning management systems are not fully capitalizing on their value.

A February 2020 survey conducted for online printing services provider Mimeo revealed that 70 percent of organizations used learning management systems, but just 55 percent of trainers had the right tools to produce e-learning materials. Considering the rapid-fire pace of workplace changes during the coronavirus pandemic, a technology gap like that could hinder efforts to properly train employees on new health and safety practices.

Now, more than ever, it is vital for employers to embrace customizable learning management systems so they can deliver the vital health and safety knowledge employees need to do their work properly and comfortably. Using the technology can also help ensure compliance with OSHA guidelines and mandates from other workplace regulators in the new normal of the workplace.

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