Ideas for Creating Interactive and Engaging Online Trainings

Interactivity

1. **Facilitate hands-on practice or simulated practice when teaching software skills.**
   Watching a video or webinar on how to use software can be useful, but most people learn best if they can actually try out the skills. Some of the best online courses are structured so that a brief demo video is given, showing a particular software skill to be learned, then prompting the learner to pause the video and try the skill on their own.

   In advance, you'll also want to consider whether the learner has access to the software in question. Google Apps, for example, may be accessed by anyone who creates a Google account, while Microsoft Office may be less accessible. You may want to consider creating a simulation for practice if that is technically and financially feasible.

2. **Use multimedia content.**
   Everyone learns differently - some people learn best by reading, some by watching, some by hearing. Break up your text and graphic content by interspersing video and audio to enhance the learning and reinforce concepts.

3. **Create games to enhance learning.**
   If you've ever used a tool like DuoLingo, the Salesforce Trailhead or CodeCademy, you've used a gamified learning tool. Games, puzzles and challenges force the learner to actively engage with the information in a way that is fun and rewards them for their efforts in various ways (points, badges, etc.).

4. **Certify learning through quizzes and tests.**
   Rather than hope the course or webinar achieved its goals, measure learning by providing online quizzes or tests to check learning levels. This can be a great way to see if there are any learning gaps left for which you might create additional trainings.

Engagement

1. **Use online forums and discussion groups to support content.**
   Online trainings can frequently feel like one is learning in a vacuum. By providing a forum or other ways for learners to talk to each other and discuss what they've learned, you can help them build collaboration and teamwork skills as well as benefit from each others' knowledge and insights.

2. **Use breakout groups for discussion.**
   Many webinar and conference calling software tools permit the instructor to place participants into small groups of 3-5 people for discussion. Just like you might do in a live training session, give them topics for discussion, put them into groups, then have someone from each breakout group report

the highlights of their group's discussion when everyone comes back together as a whole.

3. **Use stories to personalize learning.**
Include stories and examples to illustrate the content and concepts you are trying to convey. To do this effectively, you'll need to do your homework on the audience in advance. Stories can bring theory to life and help learners connect with the information.

Digestibility

1. **Reduce the amount of overall text and break the text you do have into more readable chunks.**
Whether you are creating an online course or giving a webinar, too much text can be overwhelming to the learner. For an online course, try to cut back to the minimum amount of text you need to make your point and think of other ways to convey the information (images, charts, graphs, etc.).

On a webinar, resist the urge to put a lot of text on your slides and try to avoid slide decks that are nothing but bulleted lists of text. You can always give a handout after the fact or record the webinar and make the speech content available that way.

2. **Make graphics meaningful.**
Rather than finding random graphics to break up the text, create graphics that convey actual content and information to be learned. A good graphic should convey information without text having to be read. Graphics can be any shape and size, but should always add to the page, rather than simply filling up white space.

3. **Be consistent with styling.**
Consider your font usage - colors, sizes, font family - for headings and paragraph text. Keeping the fonts consistent throughout the training will make it easier for learners to scan pages and slides. Keeping layouts to a minimum (3-5 variants) will also be helpful to learners.

4. **Consider attention spans and amount of time learners might have to participate.**
If your online training course is lengthy, try to break content up into chunks that are no more than 15-20 minutes long. Learners may need or want to do bits at a time, rather than take hours to go through a training.

Webinars should be kept to shorter period of time too - an hour seems to be a reasonable amount of time. Multiple webinars can be held if content is too much for a single session. Remember to record webinars and make them available to participants in case they are unable to sit through the entire session or to attend multiple sessions.

Final thought: What you can do depends on the software or tool(s) you use.

Do your research before choosing tools. Sometimes you don't know what is possible until you read about features of various tools, so your research may spark new ideas as well.

Information can be found online with a little searching, for example, here is a chart comparing e-learning software packages:

Comparative chart

	Ease of use	A wealth of interactions	Smart quizzing	Collaboration tools	Easy publishing / sharing	SCORM / Tin Can compliant	Price
Adobe Captivate	+/−	+	+	+	+	+	$1,099
Articulate Storyline	+	+	+	+/−	+	+	$1,398
dominKnow Claro	+	+/−	+/−	+	+/−	+/−	$997
EasyGenerator	+	−	+	+/−	+	+	$228
Elucidat	+	−	−	+	+/−	+	$2,400
iSpring Suite	+	+/−	+	+	+	+	$697
Office Mix	+	+/−	+/−	+/−	+	−	Free
SHIFT Learning	+/−	−	+/−	+	+/−	+	$1,200
Trivantis Lectora 16	+/−	+	+	+	+	+	$2,374
Udutu	+	+/−	+/−	−	+/−	+	Free

Source: https://myelearningworld.com/top-10-authoring-tools-to-deliver-engaging-courses/

Additionally, Wikipedia has a really BIG chart comparing webinar software packages (too wide and long to embed here): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_web_conferencing_software#Comparison_chart
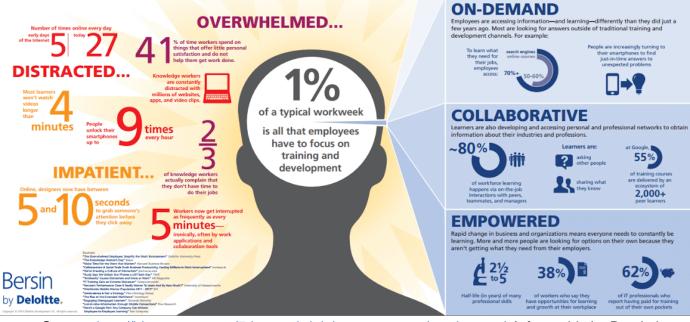
Image Source: http://blog.grovo.com/7-learned-deloittes-meet-modern-learner/; Infographic by Bersin by Deloitte