



## Everything DiSC Pulse: Challenging your assumptions about e-learning

Prepare to be surprised – we were. There are a lot of assumptions about e-learning, both positive and negative. Suppliers tout convenience, while critics say that e-learning doesn't engage participants. But what do learners say about e-learning? Everything DiSC Pulse recently surveyed 4,384 recent classroom-training participants about their previous e-learning experiences to determine just that.

### **Assumption #1: Convenience is king**

When you hear about the benefits of e-learning, one of the first things mentioned is always convenience. Because the learning is self-directed and online, the argument goes, learners can choose the time and place that works best for them. But do learners agree? Yes; 94 percent said that the training was convenient for them. And 90 percent of those surveyed said that the computer-based, self-directed format was a big time saver. In addition to saving time, e-learning allows for more freedom. Participants are taking advantage of the “anytime, anyplace” format: 43 percent said they completed their training outside of normal work hours.

We did, however, find one inconvenience of the e-learning format: the lack of human interaction during the process. Simply put, if anything comes up that you don't understand, you're on your own. Thirty-nine percent of those surveyed said it would have been useful to have someone available to answer questions. The good news, however, is that only 11 percent said that they were confused during the training.

### **Assumption #2: Tune out, click through**

One of the fears that many classroom-training practitioners have about e-learning is that participants aren't fully engaged in the process — that they'll just click through the training rather than absorbing the information. So, are they right? Not exactly. It's difficult to give this one a hard “no,” because while 88 percent of learners surveyed said the training held their interest, 64 percent also said they got the training done as quickly as possible. And 25 percent said that they did other things, like talking on the phone and checking email, during the process.

Survey participants gave e-learning good marks for the “stickiness” of the training. Of those surveyed, 88 percent said they still remember what they learned in the training. In addition, 88 percent said that being able to move at their own pace made the training much more effective. However, only 43 percent said they learned more from the e-learning format than they usually do from classroom training.



### **Assumption #3: It's only for Gen Y**

Another common assumption about e-learning is that it only appeals to the younger, Gen-Y crowd. Having grown up with technology integrated into every aspect of their lives, Gen-Yers would seem the obvious champions for e-learning. But this does not mean that mature learners are put off by e-learning. For us, this was the most surprising of our findings. We assumed that e-learning would get high marks from Gen-Y and lower ratings from everyone else. In fact, of those surveyed over the age of 56, 81 percent said their last e-learning experience was enjoyable, while in the 18-25 age bracket, 77 percent agreed that it was an enjoyable experience. The difference was also negligible when asked about engagement; 77 percent of Gen-Y and 82 percent of the over 56 crowd felt the training was engaging.

The age gap became more significant when we asked about the video used in the training. Of those who responded (N/A was an option), 35 percent of Gen-Y learners thought the video appeared out-of-date, as opposed to only 18 percent of the 56+ group. Gen-Yers' lives are so saturated with technology that they have higher expectations — or maybe they just want hipper video.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, learners appreciated the convenience and flexibility that e-learning offers. The self-directed aspect saves time and can add to perceived effectiveness. Engaging e-learning also has the ability to appeal to people of all ages. What e-learning may lack, however, is the ability to adapt to what the learner needs in the moment. But the high level of self-reported retention shows that e-learning has the potential for great payoff — for both the learner and the organization.

### **About the authors**

Mark Scullard is the director of research at Inscape Publishing, a leading provider of training materials for the corporate market. He has over a decade of research and data analysis experience in the development of psychological evaluation tools and methods. Mark received his doctorate in psychology from the University of Minnesota, with a supporting program in statistics.

Jeffrey Sugerman is the president and CEO of Inscape Publishing. He has over 20 years of experience in senior management, marketing and business development in the technology, training and publishing industries. Jeff holds doctorate and master's degrees in psychology from Washington University in St. Louis, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Northwestern University.