

A continuous learning approach for policy communication

Anthony Miller, Director, Inmarkets Ltd shares with us how this approach works by taking a closer look at a case study working with Aviva

Over the past decade e-learning has become established as the default channel for regulatory compliance and policy training at financial services organisations. The key drivers for e-learning have been the ability to deliver a consistent message to all employees quickly and cost-effectively, and the ease with which completion rates can be measured and incorporated in management reports. When compared to classroom-based training these are compelling arguments for e-learning but they should not represent the extent of our ambition. If we are prepared to move away from the traditional mindset of one-off training events, be they face-to-face or online, we can use technology to create a far more effective approach to managed learning and policy communication.

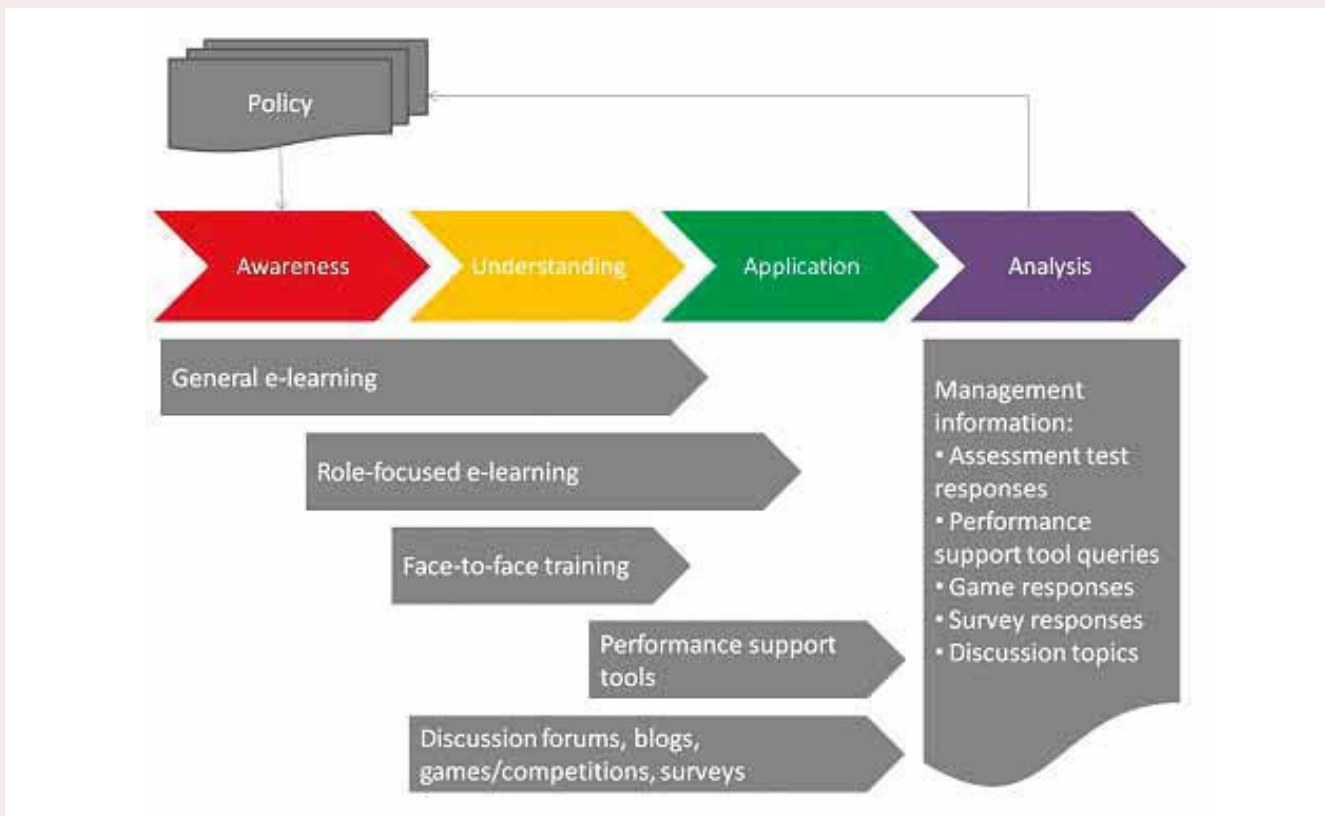
Currently, the prevalent approach is to produce e-learning content, roll it out to the workforce, and then use various communication techniques to drive towards a 100% completion rate before a given deadline. If the e-learning content is well-designed, this approach is effective at creating awareness and understanding of the policy at the time the programme is delivered. The problem with this approach is that if an employee does not apply what they have learned in a training course within a few weeks of completing it, they will usually forget much of the detail. To address this problem we require a continuous learning approach based on sound instructional design principles and related disciplines such as change management, marketing and knowledge management. In this approach an e-learning course is not viewed as a one-off training intervention, but as part of an ongoing process to create awareness, understanding and successful application of the policy.

The continuous learning approach should be tailored to the organisation and the nature of the policy, but it must follow two key principles:

- 1) Use a blended learning approach to support employees from initial awareness to successful ongoing application of the policy. This blend may incorporate e-learning, face-to-face training, social media, games/competitions and performance support tools.
- 2) Use the management information generated from the various interactions to feedback into the policy formation and communication processes.

“The problem with this approach is that if an employee does not apply what they have learned in a training course within a few weeks of completing it, they will usually forget much of the detail.”

Case Study: Aviva Information Security Programme



The Business Protection team at Aviva have a wide ranging mandate to create, communicate and monitor compliance with policies and standards relating to the way employees conduct themselves at work. These policies deal with diverse topics such as information security, physical security, and health and safety in the workplace. Managing compliance with these policies is essential to reduce the operational, legal and regulatory risks faced by the organisation. The team had identified information security as the highest priority risk for the business and worked with Inmarkets to implement a continuous learning programme for more than 60,000 employees.

Creating awareness and understanding

An engaging e-learning module was developed to communicate the policy to employees. A key challenge here was to avoid trying to say too much. We believe after completing a well designed e-learning module learners will understand and retain up to seven concepts. Trying to cram in any more can result in learners missing the key messages that we want to convey.

The content was clearly linked to business practices and used recognisable examples and scenarios. Inmarkets worked with the subject matter experts at Aviva to identify the key learning objectives of the course. These were then aligned with business practices to give a realistic and appropriate context for the learning. For example, when dealing with the appropriate use of Aviva communication systems, realistic depictions of the Aviva desktop were used; when dealing with confidentiality and NDAs, valid Aviva sample documents were shown; when dealing

with physical security, photographs taken on Aviva premises were used to illustrate the risks.

The Business Protection team launched a variety of marketing initiatives in the run up to the course release:

- ❑ Poster campaigns were sent to each Business Unit who translated them into the local language and posted in communal areas
- ❑ Rolling PowerPoint Presentations – in the run-up to launch day these were shown in staff canteens and areas where staff gathered
- ❑ A video message from Andrew Moss, CEO Aviva – a video was filmed of the Chief Executive outlining the strategic importance of the course which was run in shared communal areas and incorporated in the e-learning content

Role specific knowledge

For many employees the level of understanding created in the awareness phase was sufficient. For others the correct application of the policy would have an important impact on their work. For these employees additional role specific classroom training was used to create a deeper level of understanding and demonstrate how the policy should be applied in scenarios relevant to their work.

Application

The e-learning module succeeded in raising awareness of the need to correctly classify, handle and manage information, but it was recognised that the details would not always be remembered by staff as they dealt

with various types of information on a day-to-day basis. Inmarkets and Aviva designed a just-in-time support tool that provides staff with answers in seconds when and where they need them.

The Information Security Wizard asks a series of questions to help employees understand how to classify their information. The employees then specify whether they are creating, storing, transferring or disposing of the information. Depending on the activity selected they answer additional questions about the nature of the activity – for example, who are they transferring the information to?

Based on the activity and classification, the decision support tool provides the user with an interactive checklist defining how the information should be handled. The user can roll over each item for more details, access handling advice to paste into documents and emails, print the checklist for future reference and find out who to contact if they are still unsure about what to do.

After initial awareness and understanding have been established, various tools can be used to keep employees engaged with the policy and support them in applying it correctly. Games with leader boards and regular prizes provide a fun way for employees to test and reinforce their knowledge. Decision support tools such as the Information Security Wizard can often be used to make the details of the policy more accessible and help employees to apply it correctly in different situations. Discussion forums, blogs and surveys can be used throughout the learning programme to promote collaboration, gather feedback and develop a network of local champions.

Analysis

The policy education programme generated several important sources of management information:

- Diagnostic reports from the e-learning module assessment test: aggregate information for individual business units and countries on which options were selected by users when answering questions. Based on these reports the Business Protection team were able to pinpoint areas of weakness. For example one question concerned the appropriate use of the Internet – this was answered correctly by 97% of the employees in Poland but only 68% of the employees in China – highlighting the need to address this issue in China.
- Survey results
- Frequent queries in the decision support tool

This information is currently being used to identify knowledge gaps across the business and in specific locations and business units. The results of this analysis are being used to refocus the programme and create refresher training for next year.

Anthony Miller, Director, Inmarkets Ltd
amiller@inmarkets.com