



Rapid guide

How to Market Rapid E-learning

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In 20 minutes you will understand:

- Why you should market your rapid e-learning
- How to market rapid e-learning
- What to include in a rapid e-learning marketing campaign.

Why market your rapid e-learning course?

Developing effective training isn't simply about delivery. With so much effort needed to create a course it's easy to underestimate the amount of effort to get it out to the audience, accepted and used.

Of course it's common sense. A successfully marketed course is likely to:

- Increase take-up of the training
- Ensure return on investment in training – unused training is a waste
- Ensure staff are trained in the skills and knowledge they need to do their jobs successfully.

Other benefits include:

- Well trained people are generally more efficient, productive and motivated
- With a successful implementation you are likely to get the recognition and reward you deserve for getting the course ready and launched.

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What's different when marketing rapid e-learning?

In reality, you will take a similar approach whatever you market in training; however, the ethos of rapid e-learning will be to do it quicker, more simply and cheaply than a conventional approach.

Traditional e-learning

Activities	Launch events
	Road shows
	Team meetings
	Lunch / breakfast events
	Direct mailings
	E-mail
	Newsletter
	Intranet
Collateral	Colour posters
	Brochures
	Flash animation teasers
	Desk drops (art directed, colour printed)
	Colour post cards
	E-mail templates
	Powerpoint decks
	E-learning demonstrators

Rapid e-learning

Activities	Team meetings
	E-mail
	Newsletter
	Intranet
	Podcast
	Teaser animation or challenge
Collateral	Photocopied posters
	Desk drops
	E-mail templates
	Demo e-learning

Rapid angle : Keep it simple and keep it cheap – but not at any cost!

You can use many of the same channels for communication as for any other training initiative. For rapid e-learning, we recommend those which involve minimal direct cost or exploit existing slots in existing scheduled events. Check out the 'rapid angle on guerilla marketing' below for more low cost ideas.

Caveat: if you are launching a major change initiative, you should consider investing in some of the traditional e-learning events such as the road show or launch event as these will have a higher visibility and impact.

Rapid angle : Use guerilla marketing tactics to maximise impact with minimum investment

Heard of guerrilla marketing? It's been around as a concept for over 20 years now. It's all about getting the most impact on a very low marketing budget, where time is more available than money. Many of the guerrilla tactics are directly relevant to how to market rapid e-learning, be it as part of an overall organisational change or for a specific intervention:

- Give stuff away: make it easy for people to sample the e-learning
- Remove the fear factor through hands-on demonstrations in as many contexts as you can: in the cafeteria, webinars, printouts, whatever it takes to make an impact
- Publish lots of articles: bring evidence and proof that it works, from outside your organisation and through testimonials
- Contribute to forums – become a maven of e-learning in your organisation
- Get speaking slots – show and tell at conferences, meetings etc.
- Have passion for what you're doing – it's infectious
- Have expertise that your customers lack – be the person how knows how to solve their problem via rapid e-learning and build a reputation for expertise and rapid response
- Have resources that your customers lack – show how you can solve problems quickly and build a reputation for efficiency
- Get testimonials: from learners, managers, stakeholders. This all about building a relationship with your target audience so that you establish trust in the organisation and in the rapid approach.

When should you start planning?

It's important to think about your marketing requirements early on. Ideally start thinking about the requirements at the project initiation stage. See the Rapid Guide Project Initiation Checklist for more information on what to cover. It's available at www.rapidelearningstore.com

Marketing campaign approaches

If you are looking to communicate your training launch, a basic campaign can look as follows.

Activity	Timing	Why?
Teaser e-mail	1 week pre launch	Awakens interest and fore-warns of arrival of the course
Launch day e-mail	At launch	Announces readiness and invites action
Intranet update	At launch	Publicises course through a second channel
Two week reminder	2 weeks post launch	Refreshes memory and rein-vites action

If you have capacity to run a more involved campaign, some or all of these activities will be relevant.

Activity	Timing	Rationale
Teaser e-mail + challenge	1 week pre launch	Awakens interest and fore-warns of arrival of the course, includes taster of course
Identify advocates or champions when you pilot	2 – 3 weeks pre launch	Advocates can help sell the course benefits to peers
Launch day e-mail	At launch	Announces readiness and invites action
Poster campaign / desk drop	At launch	Advertises the course in hard copy
Launch event	At launch	Sponsor or senior figure endorses training publicly at an event
Intranet update	At launch	Publicises course through a second channel
Team event for launch	At launch	Team leader confirms support for the learning; addresses concerns; motivates team to be proactive
Team meeting reminders	1 – 4 weeks post launch	Shares progress and learning issues in the team forum
Two week reminder	2 weeks post launch	Refreshes memory and rein-vites action

Post launch follow-up

Here are some activities that you could add to a marketing campaign, depending on your goals and resources.

Activity	Timing	Why?
Run virtual classroom sessions	At launch / Post launch	Walk potential users through the course highlights; use them to support learning
Newsletter / intranet write up	Post launch	Re-awakens interest; celebrate success
Survey	Post launch	Gather feedback directly from learners on what worked and what needs reworking; possible source of testimonials and quotes
Identify experts	Post launch	If learning needs to be supported, experts can be on hand to answer e-mail or phone queries
Prize draws for completion	Post launch	Incentivise early completion with a prize
Show how to take it further	Post launch	Give links to other related learning / experts for people who want to know more
Capture success stories	Post launch	Encourage users to share examples of successes as a result of completing the course (e.g. "I was able to perform X better")

For more examples of activities you can undertake post-launch of your rapid e-learning that both market the e-learning and motivate learners, see our Guide on how to sustain learner performance in rapid e-learning.

Rapid angle : Line managers are the key to success

Marketing e-learning doesn't stop with the learner. Research shows that the person who had the most influence on whether they completed e-learning were their line manger. "My boss didn't say it was important" is all it takes to kill an e-learning initiative.

So, how do you get the boss to say "this is great, make the time for it"?

Three things you can do:

1. Sell the benefit to the manager

As above, you need to understand what motivates your managers. It is most likely to be team or business unit performance. You need to involve them in making sure the e-learning is a tool to improve that performance – and communicate how it will do so to them.

2. Get them involved

Don't wait for your development to reach the end stages before you start asking managers what they think. Because they will think "you should have involved me sooner". Make managers part of your testing group.

They're far more likely to champion it, to peers and learners, if they feel part of the solution. There's a time commitment, and this can slow development, but better that than rapid deployment of e-learning that nobody uses.

You've also got to get your message out there. Ask for five minutes at regional meetings, send them updates on the project, go to internal conferences and tradeshow...you will repeat yourself many, many times. But that's what it takes to get a marketing message through.

3. Get them really involved

Managers are probably one of your primary sources of subject matter expertise. Get their views, names, pictures, voices, video in your e-learning. It's really easy to create a podcast or vodcast to promote what you're doing, many firms have internal team members who do it either as a hobby or professionally. Get senior managers and peers of the learner involved - appeal to their egos and make them look good – they will talk up the e-learning as a result. It may sound base, but self-promotion is a very strong motivator, so take advantage of it.

Case study: Marketing campaign for new ethics training programme

In this example the training team is preparing to launch a new ethics training programme for all staff. Their organisation is 10,000 strong and spread over many locations in different countries.

This is how they handled it:

1. At initiation the team select the communications channels for the training:

- A two e-mail teaser campaign with headlines on core ethical policy
- A message from the CEO to endorse the programme with a link to the content embedded in it
- A pack for line managers to launch the learning in their teams at their team briefing meeting
- A follow-up 'time is running out' e-mail
- No posters or deskdrops are envisaged for logistical reasons.

2. Two weeks before launch the first teaser is sent out along with a line manager briefing note

3. One week before launch a second teaser is sent out

4. On launch day the CEO e-mail is sent out along with a briefing reminder for line managers to run their team meetings using the pack

5. Three weeks down the line a reminder e-mail with a couple of success stories are used to follow up.

The next sections look at practical writing and structural tips for two aspects of marketing collateral for e-learning:

1. Teaser campaigns

2. Launch emails

How to put together a teaser campaign for rapid e-learning

Teaser campaigns can be very effective in stimulating interest and curiosity in your e-learning. It may be sufficient to simply forewarn your audience of the arrival and be direct in your teaser e-mails. Or you may want to progressively reveal more information through several e-mails. Here are a few points to bear in mind if you are considering a teaser e-mail approach:

1. Plan the sequence

Plan the timing and full sequence of teaser communications in advance. Decide if you plan to issue just one teaser e-mail or run a sequence. In either case, determine what kind of gaps you want to leave between the initial teaser message and the final 'reveal' to launch your course. Consider including the launch date in all your teaser messaging so there is a clear 'reveal' in sight for your audience.

2 Plan the content

It's common in reveal campaigns to add a little more information with each release so that the picture gradually becomes clear. This might involve using the course title without referring to it as such, or referring to key content or models form within the e-learning. You may also try to gain interest by referring to common problems and how the training will help to resolve them, e.g. "What if you had an extra hour in the day? Find out how to get it on the 10th of December" (for a time management course).

How to write effective launch e-mails for rapid e-learning

If you want people to take action and complete your course as a result of your e-mail, you need to do more than inform. You need to persuade. Here are five tips to help you persuade your audience.

1. Sell the sizzle

Sure, we could have written 'principles of effective e-mail marketing' as the title of this section - but that's not very enticing. By selling the value (i.e. as a result of this Rapid Guide, you will be able to write e-mails that will make learners want to complete your e-learning course), it focuses on the outcome, not the course itself. Your header should sell the sizzle, not the sausage. The course may be 20 minutes. That's a feature. The benefit is that it's short and focused. Your writing should sell the benefits, not the features. The more relevant to your audience the better. Other headlines that do this:

- 20% more productive? Here's how...
- Born to lead? Start here
- Don't waste your lunchtimes catching up on X
- An extra hour in your day for free

2. Start the bandwagon

People don't like to feel left out. If people think they're missing out by not completing your course, motivation is higher. You can create this sense by citing what percentage of their peer group has already taken the course (not in a launch e-mail, but in reminders). You can also benchmark against other organizations e.g. find out how XYZ company become number one in their industry. Healthy anxiety is very effective as a motivator, particularly among competitive audiences like sales teams, who do not like to think that someone else has knowledge or information that they should have. See the C&W case study below for an example of this.

3. Quote peers

Using testimonials from your audience's peers and leaders is a great way to motivate enrolment and completion. Try to get it during the pilot phase and of course get permission to use it. It can be good to run a 'what they're saying about course x' e-mail as a reminder.

4. Tell the time

E-learning can be completed at any time. That is a challenge for you, as it's easy to procrastinate. Focus your learners by giving a deadline (endorsed by their leadership). This could be: complete by end of quarter, complete before the regional meeting. This enables follow-up emails to focus on the time remaining for further motivation.

5. Tell the truth

Finally and most important: be honest. Don't promise more than the course delivers. Be fair and accurate in your messages, or people won't trust you the next time.

Case study: Cable&Wireless challenge their learners - and win them over...

Kineo and Cable&Wireless recently collaborated on a large suite of rapid e-learning product knowledge modules. We needed a hook to get learners' attention. We decided that given the competitive nature of the sales team, a challenge was the best way to hook them in. The basic premise was 'if you think you know what you need to about our products, you best think again...'. We developed a short introduction module called 'Know your Telco stuff' and sent it around to the target audience.

It consisted of a rapid fire set of product knowledge questions, fired at the learner by a range of C&W team members, set in a range of C&W offices. Learners scored points for correct answers, leading them to the awards gallery or the first aid room. Its light but competitive nature appealed to the target audience, and the 'payoff' – a link to the LMS where learners could fill their knowledge gaps through rapid e-learning product knowledge – drove up usage.

C&W also added embedded surveys to each of the modules, using SurveyMonkey, to gather learner feedback at the end of each module and provide quotes and useful insights for module updates.



Screenshot from 'Know your Telco stuff'

Rapid angle : Great marketing! Shame the e-learning stinks...

There's no point in pouring your heart into a great marketing campaign for your rapid e-learning, if the learning itself has them reaching in their millions for the 'quit this course' button. All effective writing is about selling an idea or concept. So is your e-learning living up to your marketing campaign?

Here are three simple ideas for making sure your e-learning markets itself from screen one.

1. Sweat the first ten seconds

We've all lost the will to live when we see those objectives appear bullet..after bullet...after bullet. It's about as welcoming as a reading of the fire regulations at the start of a training session – and about as innovative. All other media forms aim to shock, entertain, provoke or otherwise wake up the viewer in the first ten seconds.

Why should e-learning be exempted? Work hard at those first precious moments and give the learner something they don't expect. This doesn't have to be 'expensive' – a shocking fact, a quote from a senior person that you wouldn't expect them to say, a question well asked with a revealing answer – any of these, if well written, can do it.

2. Keep it short

Otherwise known as: any idiot can write a long sentence which in and of itself is not incorrect but fails to convey a point that on a second read one realises it could have been communicated in a more succinct and less needlessly florid manner.

But really:

Short is better.

3. Who's asking the questions around here?

If you've gone more than a minute of screen time without challenging, asking the learner to do something, answer a question, think about a situation, reflect on something...you are slipping into lecture mode. That means your learner is slipping into semi-consciousness. Both of you need to wake up. When's the last time you asked a question?

There's a lot more to writing and designing effective e-learning, of course. See the Rapid Guides on designing and writing Rapid E-learning for more.

Key actions

How to Market Rapid E-learning:

- Make sure you consider how to market your rapid e-learning
- Plan your initiative and communications from initiation
- Get key stakeholders on board from sponsors to users
- Decide what resources you have available for communications and plan your campaign accordingly
- Keep it simple but exploit all available communications channels; communicating once is probably not enough
- When writing communications think about selling benefits before features
- Success stories are particularly valuable for promoting training

Take it further

What do you want to do?

Determine how your stakeholders could play a role in being champions and advocates in your marketing campaign

Determine how you could combine marketing and support activities at launch

Determine how you can continue to market your rapid e-learning through motivating learners

Determine how to write effectively for rapid e-learning and related marketing

Check out these Rapid Guides

Rapid Approach to Stakeholder Management

How to Design Learner Support for Rapid E-learning

How to Sustain Performance from Rapid E-learning

How to Write for Rapid E-learning

All available from:
www.rapidelearningstore.com

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