E-Course Reviews

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Business experts agree that successful organizations of the 21st century will capitalize on a diverse global workforce and customer base. Whether your company is committed to being one of those organizations, or whether it just wants to comply with federal and state non-discrimination regulations, you'll need an effective way to convey diversity directives to your workforce.

Changing corporate culture can be a slow, conflicted process. Online diversity courses won't provide a complete solution, but they can be an inexpensive and efficient way to introduce these issues to your workforce.

Our reviewer examined several diversity courses, evaluating their relative content and quality. Each course brings a unique set of objectives into the mix, just like the mix of people in your company.

This sampling of courses is rated on a five-star scale. Five-star courses are the best e-learning has to offer; one-star courses waste your time and money. The prices listed are for individual users. Corporate pricing is available in most cases.

Highly recommended

★★★★   *Diversity at Work:* 1 to 2 hours, US$30. Publisher: LearningAction

The goal of this sophisticated course is to inform employees that your company won't tolerate discrimination. The course consists of five progressive modules:

- ❏ Why Diversity?
- ❏ What's the Impact?
- ❏ Tension
- ❏ Working Together
- ❏ Legal Issues.

The overall content is clear and thoughtful. This capable course is a good fit for new-employee orientations.

The course uses simple but elegant graphics, color, animation, and sound to emphasize key points and keep learners engaged. The instructional design encourages participation with well-designed worksheets and guided self-reflection. One drawback: Users can't access the course more than once or revisit completed modules.

Recommended

★★★1/2   *Management Skills for the Diverse Workforce:* 3 hours, US$99.95 for 1 year of course access. Publisher: SkillSoft

Drawing from social science and business, this course outlines theory and practice of key organizational change elements, including leadership, team-building, and focus groups. It closes with a competent overview of mainstream diversity issues.

The target audience and objectives are entirely different from the LearningAction course. Although the content is sound, the format is dull—a text-based slide show with boring graphics, optional audio, and occasional quizzes.

At a Glance

❏ ***Diversity at Work:*** An economical and efficient course that offers sophisticated content and great use of multimedia, but users can access it only a single time.

❏ ***Management Skills for the Diverse Workforce:*** This course puts diversity into a management context, but its interface is boring.

❏ ***Diversity: It's Good for Business:*** A short course that focuses on a business case for diversity. Though the interface is attractive, its examples are often simplistic, and interactivity is limited.

❏ ***Diversity Training: A 5-Step Process:*** This course is merely bulleted ideas that lack clarity and seem out of order.

★★★   *Diversity: It's Good for Business:* 40 minutes, US$65. Publisher: Corpedia

Corpedia's course description espouses, "All employees from senior management to line workers should be considered for training in this program." That's a pretty tall order. But for the most part, this course delivers.

The course briefly addresses moral and legal issues, but the bulk outlines an economic rationale for diversity. The course focuses on how companies that take diversity seriously can attract and retain a higher number of qualified minority employees, improve their corporate images, serve their customers better, and more easily expand into new markets. That argument is clear and persuasive, but sometimes the examples are overly simplistic.

The course has an attractive, almost seamless Flash presentation with text animations and an audio track. Interactivity is limited to intermittent quiz-type questions and a final test. A nifty feature lets learners take notes, which Corpedia emails to them later. Navigation is simple, but the course lacks a fast-forward button.

Adequate

★★1/2   *Diversity Training: A 5-Step Process:* 1 hour, US$45 for 1 month of access to all youachieve.com courses. Publisher: youachieve.com

This is a how-to course for people responsible for designing and delivering diversity programs. It covers vision, cultural audits, task forces, program design, and training for trainers. That sounds complete, but this course falls short in organization and thoroughness.

Although the content is sound, the core ideas are strung together in loosely structured paragraphs and lists. Order and clarity seem to come and go.

This course makes a fine set of handouts, but it's not clear or comprehensive enough to offer substantial guidance. Each module begins with an audio clip, and includes pre- and post-assessments with your choice of feedback options.

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