

# Tips for Engaging Digital Learners

An eLearning pro's  
eight rules and two insights  
to get and keep your  
students interested

Ellen Wagner is senior director of worldwide eLearning solutions at Adobe Systems ([www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)). She works with product teams throughout the company to help set the



strategic direction for eLearning in all of Adobe's markets. Wagner is well known in higher education, having worked as Macromedia's senior director of

worldwide education solutions prior to Adobe's 2005 acquisition of that company. Many of her previous posts have encompassed higher education technology, including a tenured faculty position at the University of Northern Colorado. She has published more than 80 articles and book chapters on learning and instructional design, and frequently speaks as a keynote or featured speaker at professional conferences. Her Ph.D. in educational psychology is from the University of Colorado. Here, she shares ways to engage learners.

Want to be considered for  
Campus Technology's Top 10?  
Send your countdown and a  
brief background/bio summary to  
[mgrush@1105media.com](mailto:mgrush@1105media.com).

- 10 Rule: Capture their attention.**
  - Learners deal with an enormous number of sensory inputs on any given day.
  - Helping them focus attention is a critical first step when engaging students.
- 9 Rule: Convince them to care.**
  - Getting their attention is only the first step.
  - Be sure you have something to keep your learners' interests piqued. You want them to stay for a while!
- 8 Rule: Motivate them to change.**
  - Learning can be defined as a sustained change in capacity that persists over time.
  - Consider what it will take to compel students to do things differently.
- 7 Rule: Give them choices.**
  - Learners want to engage with ideas, information, and each other on terms they define for themselves.
- 6 Rule: Connect them with community.**
  - People learn from watching, showing, and sharing with people who care as much as they do.
  - Social learning is alive and well!
- 5 Rule: Induce them to participate.**
  - Participation gives learners a sense of feeling personally engaged.
- 4 Rule: Enable opportunities to contribute.**
  - Engage learners in the active negotiation of new knowledge.
  - That new learning will be more relevant to each and every contributor.
- 3 Rule: Make learning an experience to remember.**
  - The more memorable a learning experience, the greater likelihood students will remember what they've learned.
- 2 Insight: Consider that maybe it's *not* about putting the learner at the center.**
  - It's more about giving learners the skills to decide *where* to engage.
  - In today's socially networked world, it's important to help students feel connected to the community.
  - Relationships that operate in a networked manner may inspire lifelong learning.
- 1 Insight: Always remember, learning is personal.**
  - Despite the many psychological theories and principles proposed to explain what is going on inside our heads, learning continues to be unique to each individual.
  - No one of us can ever really "do" learning to someone else, at least not without permission or willingness to be persuaded. **CT**