ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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10 mistakes to avoid when creating online courses

Creating an eLearning course can be tricky. Let's explore the 10 most common mistakes made by online course creators to learn how to avoid them

There are many elements to consider when developing content for eLearning: from developing an effective eLearning strategy to ensuring that the course design aligns with the company's vision and values or customer expectations. During this process it is easy to make mistakes because there are so many elements to think about and these must be in sync with each other. In this article, we explore the 10 most common mistakes made by eLearning course designers to help novices in designing a coherent and effective course.

1. Not knowing who the target audience is

One of the most common yet fatal mistakes for eLearning instructional designers is not researching your target audience. If you do not know your audience before you start designing eLearning content they will not be able to be engaged in the material you offer them. To get a general idea of who will be attending the course ask yourself the following questions:

- How **old** are they?
- How much **experience** do they have on the subject?
- What is **their level of education**?

Having a general idea of who is attending the course is the first step in developing an effective instructional design, which is the process of organizing information and designing the best strategy for presenting it to learners.

2. Creating an eLearning course that is too easy or too difficult for the learner

This problem is closely related to the previous point, as a big mistake course designers make is that their content is too difficult or too easy because they do not know their audience. In this case knowing factors such as the age, experience on the topic, and education level of the audience matters a lot. If you are aware of this information, then you can develop a course that is difficult enough **to stimulate** your learners, and, at the same time, simple enough to be **understandable**. Your eLearning project must make learners feel as if they are being **pushed beyond their current knowledge or abilities**. You must not forget that customers pay because they want to learn something new and because they are gaining some kind of experience from the course. Otherwise, they will not be motivated to enroll or continue the course.

3. Lack of attention to learning objectives

Learning objectives must be the priority when designing an eLearning strategy. Every element of the course, from content to graphics, must be aimed at achieving them, and a lack of attention and reminders to learning objectives will result in the creation of a poorly organized or inefficient course. Before you start developing your eLearning project, make sure you have a clear idea of **what your learners want to learn** from the course and **what knowledge you want to share** so that they achieve these goals.

It should not be forgotten that successful eLearning authors are aware that each learner has unique abilities and different learning styles, and this can be an obstacle to achieving training goals. Therefore, eLearning authors put more effort into facilitating **the transfer of knowledge** rather than ensuring that it is remembered. They do this by paying attention to incorporating different methods of presenting information and making use of various learning modalities. They also keep track of students' reactions, feedback and engagement with the entire material.

4. Difficulties in maintaining and updating courses

Today's world is characterized by very rapid technological advances, and this can create problems in designing eLearning courses that will be useful to you and your students in the long term. It is not uncommon to find instructional designs that work perfectly and are well structured, but you cannot update them or share them on other platforms. Keep presentations and eLearning content simple to ensure that they can be **easily updated**. Also, be sure to create courses that can be **shared across multiple platforms** in different formats. If you create a course on one eLearning platform make sure you have the ability to **export** the course for use on other platforms.

5. Disregard the quality of the content

The key component of developing an effective eLearning design is creating **high-quality content**. How do you create quality content? Authors should design in such a way that each piece of content provides some **benefit** to the learner.

Here's how to add value to your eLearning course content:

- Do not include **irrelevant information** so as not to lose the reader's interest. Provide them with the exact information they are looking for.
- Do not create **unrealistic expectations** for the course by offering overly ambitious training objectives.
- Use engaging, real-world examples to help them **relate** to and better understand the concepts.

Adding the latest graphics, images, and other interactive features will do no good if the content is not useful to learners. All eLearning courses should contain consistent content and deliver what is promised to prevent learners from being disappointed.

6. Overloading learners with text.

Flooding the learner's brain with too much information at once can lead to **cognitive overload**. For example, including too much text in the material can lead learners to lose interest. It is best to use short, simple sentences to be clear and concise, avoid irrelevant content, and try to break down complex concepts into simple points or paragraphs.

To develop successful eLearning content, authors should make associations with students' daily lives. Showing how course material relates to what they already know or do in their everyday lives should be a primary goal for those responsible for developing an eLearning strategy.

7. Exclusion of interactive elements

To create an effective and engaging eLearning instructional design, developers can add **interactive elements** such as images, video, audio, or real-life scenarios. If you disregard these powerful **engagement tools** when designing an eLearning strategy, you could end up creating an uninteresting course. These elements encourage learners to feel like active participants during learning and can create a stronger connection to the learning material.

Your eLearning design can include:

- **Video**
- **Audio (such as podcasts or songs)**
- **Images**
- **Infographics**
- **Charts and graphs**
- **Icons and illustrations**
- **Quizzes**

In addition to increasing the level of interest and engagement, these tools can help students **remember** information better. In fact, having the learning material available in the form of infographics or images allows students to review the content **faster** and **wherever** they are. This will make it more difficult to lose motivation or interest in the course.

As with text, overloading with graphics or images can also hinder the learning process. It is not uncommon to find courses that include too much visual content, much of which irrelevant to the course. So be sure not to overdo the visual content and use it where necessary.

8. Not taking exams

Not periodically assessing what learners have learned during the course is another primary mistake that many eLearning instructional designers make. It would not be wrong to say that taking **exams** is a vital part of the eLearning process, as with any type of training.

Thanks to technology, eLearning authors can use several assessment tools to check students have learned the material:

- **Peer assessment and review**
- **Online quizzes**
- **Dialogue simulations**
- **Assessment activities through gaming**
- **Online surveys**

An exam is not only used to test learners' knowledge, but also helps determine whether the content you are presenting is **effective** enough. In other words, it is a useful tool to see if the course is working and where you need to improve.

9. Making the material difficult to access

Another key aspect of designing an effective eLearning course is a **clear organization of course material** that makes it easy for learners to access. Instructional designers of eLearning must ensure that all links they provide are active and that every page is **easy to access**. Indeed, it does not matter if the course incorporates interesting content and uses high-quality graphics if learners are unable to access it when they wish. In that case they will turn to a more effective alternative or lose interest.

10. Not being up-to-date

It is important to design an online course using different learning approaches and technologies. As an eLearning author you need to be aware of the transformations, innovations, and **new trends in the eLearning** world to ensure that you are delivering learning experiences in line with the competition. Similarly, you must stay current on every learning approach, theory, and instructional design model to create an engaging, effective, and informative eLearning environment for learners.

In conclusion

Keeping these tips handy when developing your next eLearning course can help you create successful eLearning courses, even if you are relatively new to the world of eLearning. For those of you who are eLearning professionals and have more experience, I hope this list gives you the opportunity to refine your products while avoiding these mistakes.