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7 tips for creating effective and inexpensive eLearning courses

Not sure how to calculate the expenses of an eLearning project? Is your budget limited? In this article we explore 7 tips for developing effective and inexpensive eLearning courses.

Entry costs for those starting an eLearning project can vary dramatically. Some educators familiar with technology may start with a computer and a cell phone, but those who manage training in a large company or those unfamiliar with technology may have to deal with significant costs. Developing cost-effective eLearning courses is an increasingly difficult topic to navigate in part because new products, online platforms, and management software are emerging every month with costs ranging from a few hundred to thousands.

In this article we look at some tips on how to optimize every penny and invest the funds available for eLearning in the best way, especially if you are working with a limited budget.

The Costs of eLearning

Before exploring tips on how to optimize the costs and effectiveness of eLearning let's see what the main costs are for online training providers. There are three main areas:

Content creation

The cost of content creation is often underestimated. Large companies must hire subject matter experts and instructional designers to create the quality content from authentic sources and then design and develop it in the form of eLearning courses. Similarly, freelance educators must spend time and resources to be able to create the content themselves.

Technology

One of the most significant costs associated with eLearning is that related to technology. The best management systems cost the most, and the more advanced the system, the more the costs increase. Quality authoring tools, **learning management systems** (LMS), storage spaces, expert support, and chat options are some of the modern technologies that have become necessary for eLearning programs, and this increases the cost.

Maintenance

Because the knowledge required for training and updating employees is constantly changing, as are eLearning trends, the content and design of eLearning courses must be updated and focused on meeting the needs of learners and maintaining their interest. This involves constantly reviewing materials and monitoring what learners think of them. This adds to maintenance costs.

7 tips for cost-effective eLearning

Now that we have established the costs of eLearning, the question that arises is what can educators and companies do to implement eLearning cost-effectively? Here are some tips that will help keep eLearning development costs low and make the most of your budget.

1. **Analyze existing resources**

It is not uncommon to find educators who are reluctant to switch to eLearning because they believe they will have to throw away all the learning materials they have collected and used for years, but this is a false myth. In fact, one of the best ways to manage eLearning costs is to use the learning materials you already have. In many cases, **you can use existing resources** again, such as printed materials, old Power Point presentations, or old videos. For example, learning management systems (LMSs) are often integrated with conversion systems that allow old materials to be incorporated into online lessons. Not only that, there are a number of **conversion tools** available on the Internet that can be used for a variety of purposes, such as transforming PowerPoint presentations and other outdated content into content that is more modern, interactive, and suitable for mobile devices.

2. **Get the most out of available resources**

Carefully examine your current training strategy and figure out how it can be transformed into an online format. Don't forget that online training gives access to a **wider range of multimedia tools and delivery formats than traditional training**. So, **there are plenty of ways to create and share training content**, not all of them necessarily expensive.

For example, producing videos, audio narratives, and images can be an expensive endeavor if you do not have directing, editing, and editing skills. People often rely on experts in the field, however, there are several alternatives to alleviate costs. Online there are several sites and platforms that allow you to create videos, edit photos, and create slideshows. Not only that, there are many sites for downloading royalty-free photos, video and music sharing platforms, or free sound effects where you can find high-quality content. Many eLearning management products also have online resource libraries that include a myriad of other online resources that you can use for eLearning course design.

3. **Select the courses and training modules you need**

Managing eLearning content is a great way to manage eLearning costs. In addition to reusing what you already have, you need to be able to choose the right **eLearning materials** and **topics**. This involves narrowing the scope of the eLearning project and identifying key points from the beginning. Instead of trying to cater to every possible student need, you should keep it simple and straightforward. For example, if your business learners only need to learn a certain process, you should include only the skills and information they need to complete the steps in the process and avoid talking about related activities that are not part of their daily tasks. Therefore carefully evaluate the courses and training materials you use to determine which are necessary and which can be omitted from your training strategy.

You can do this by conducting student or employee **surveys** and performing a thorough analysis to determine whether what you are offering is actually effective. Ask students to complete a quiz after completing the training to see what they learned and how effective the module really is. This will not only allow you to identify modules that can be cut, but also fine-tune the courses you need to retain.

4. **Create microlearning content**

One of the most effective ways to manage eLearning costs is to create microlearning content. This method involves **short duration activities** and modules of 5 minutes or less, and the purpose is to provide learners with interesting and useful information in line with the training. For example, short videos on social media posted by the teacher to summarize the day's lesson is a form of micro-learning. The development cost is generally less than that of a full eLearning course. The key is to focus on a topic or task and include only the basics. In short, you need to include only the essential information, images, and graphics to avoid information overload. Keep in mind that online learners will repeatedly access these microlearning activities to refresh memory and improve comprehension.

5. **Reaching learners when and where they need it**

Microlearning content can be used to reinforce your instructional strategy. Specifically, they allow you to offer "on-demand training," meaning immediate and easily accessible training when and where learners or employees need it most. For example, if employees have access to guides and instructions when you introduce new processes or machinery this content can assist them and improve their performance. You won't have to design a long and expensive new module, but a smaller, more focused one, and you will still reap the benefits of employee development training. Not to mention that you will not have to allocate employees' working hours to training, **since they will learn on the job**.

6. **Update your knowledge**

Another important tip shared by most educators is to **become an expert in content creation**. This aspect is becoming essential for those involved in eLearning. As we mentioned in the previous point, one of the most significant investments in online corporate training is content creation. People often enlist the help of a subject matter expert, who can highlight vital information and create the content to be used for online training modules. However, if you become a subject matter expert yourself, you can eliminate this cost completely.

7. **Invest in responsive design tool**

Responsive design has become increasingly popular in recent years due to the increased use of mobile devices. Responsive design allows a web page **to adapt to the size of a user's screen**. The tool adjusts the layout of the page based on screen size and resolution so that each member of your audience has the best viewing experience. As a result, you will not have to spend valuable time and resources creating multiple versions of your eLearning course.

Conclusion

Use these 7 tips to reduce eLearning costs and ensure that every penny is invested wisely. Although every eLearning project has different needs and, consequently, different costs, these tips were selected because they apply to every type of eLearning project. The costs of creating content, purchasing the necessary technology, and maintaining and updating your content are the three main costs of an eLearning project, whether you are a freelancer or a large company. Tailor these tips to your needs and you should be able to get a better idea of the costs you will face. If necessary, consider hiring professionals: it will increase costs but can save time that you can devote to other things.