ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 7 - number 258 Wednesday 13 October 2023

Audio for e-learning: here's how to use it effectively

The use of audio tracks within e-learning courses can be a very effective tool. Let's find out how to create effective audio to include in online courses

In an **e-learning course** it is essential to take care of the graphic aspect: the user interface must be clear and intuitive and the lesson icons captivating. But these aspects, alone, are not enough. Online training, in fact, is not reduced to just a written text accompanied by images. For the course to be successful, it may also be useful to include good quality **audio tracks** or short podcasts, which explain the concepts completely, delving deeper into some aspects or adding important information to understanding. Sometimes, however, the use of audio is belittled and simply reduced to an alternative method to learning information also present in the form of text or as an accompaniment to the text, with the oral repetition of the notions expressed by images or slides.

However, the presence of an audio track, in itself, cannot add anything to an e-learning course. For the presence of a voice to be **effective**, the creator of the training program must include it in the course already at the time of its design, to ensure that it has a precise role within the learning path and that allows students to deepen or understand the topics covered in the various lessons are better.

Why use audio? The advantages

An e-learning course can also be **effective** thanks to the sole use of text and images, but audio can give an edge and make the lessons more engaging and push students to learn more completely. But why can remembering audio in online courses be useful? Here are the five main benefits:

1. **Enrich** the textual part through the story or description of other in-depth material, so as to allow the student not to stop at understanding and learning the mere concept, but giving him the possibility of accessing targeted and quality content.
2. **Explain** concepts that may not be clear at first glance or that need a voice to guide the student in order to be fully understood.
3. **Involve** the student, who feels more included in the training path and who perceives the teacher in a more concrete and close way. Hearing the voice allows greater closeness with the trainer. Furthermore, audio can be very immersive: expert and engaging voices allow the student to be overwhelmed, concentrating fully on the content exposed by the audio lessons.
4. Increase and improve the **accessibility** of online courses also to people who are blind or have reading-related disorders. Audio allows you to replace or accompany the text and images present in the lessons. In addition to software that automatically reads what is written on a page, audio can guide students with vision or reading problems through the training process. The use of the recorded voice allows greater accessibility to the course even by those who suffer from attention disorders, which lead more easily to distraction in front of a static text.
5. Reach a **wide audience** of people without needing a screen or a static physical location. In fact, the student can decide to listen to the podcast included in the course or the teacher's voice explaining a concept of the training program at any time, in any place and while doing other activities: for example, students can access content audio while driving, traveling in public transport, playing sports or doing home activities.

How to make the use of audio effective

Using audio in e-learning courses presents a series of advantages that allow students to learn more thoroughly and more **effectively.** The training path is made more complete and engaging thanks to the use of the oral dimension, which can also ignore the viewing of a screen and which, for this reason, allows it to be used in any place, without the need to stop in a physical place. But for the use of audio in an e-learning course to be truly effective, it is best to follow the following **advice**:

1. **Avoid repeating concepts** already expressed in the written parts. The audio included in an e-learning course should not simply act as a reader of the text shown on the screen, but could be useful to delve deeper into the topic covered in the lesson. A possible technique could be to highlight key words in the text provided to the student, which can then be taken up and explored further by the audio tracks loaded for that specific lesson. In this way, the student will be more involved and will not get bored due to redundant content.
2. **Involve students** in the oral training process, to evaluate the skills and knowledge achieved up to that specific moment. To do this, it is possible to ask students to develop presentations of some topics covered during the e-learning course and develop them using audio tracks to record. The audio comes in the form of a narration, song or podcast, also including several voices, in the case of setting up work carried out in groups.
3. Remember to give students the opportunity to **manage the audio tracks**. Each student has different needs and given the versatility to which audio lessons lend themselves, which can also be listened to while carrying out other activities, it is a good idea for those taking part in the e-learning course to have control over the audio. In the design phase, therefore, it is better to provide the possibility for the student to control and manage the reproduction and volume of online narratives.
4. Don't just use audio, but **combine it with images, graphics or texts**, especially if it concerns more complex topics that require a more in-depth explanation. The images and text could, in this situation, be useful to establish the concepts and guide the student through the more complex passages, which could be missed simply by listening to the lesson. This technique could be very useful in the case of explanations of practical instructions, where the image can give the student an idea of the passage he will actually face.
5. Take care of the **quality** of the sound track. Poor quality audio could compromise the work done previously and reduce the entire value of the e-learning lesson. For this reason, a quality recording that is clear, concise and easy to understand can make the difference. Eliminating background noise and choosing a narrator who speaks clearly, with an engaging voice, helps the student focus on the lesson and stay involved in learning.
6. **Adapt the audio** based on the overall message of the course. To do this, it may be useful to use language and jargon that adapts to the audience for which the course was designed, without inserting too many technicalities or words that are difficult to understand. The pace of the narration is also fundamental, which must not be too slow, to keep the students' attention high, without giving them time to get bored with redundant sentences and overly repetitive concepts.

How to create an audio track

Once the importance of using audio in e-learning has been understood, the course inventor will be faced with the concrete need to create sound tracks to accompany the various lessons. Here are the steps that could be followed to actually build an audio to include in an e-learning course:

1. **Design**: when you design the entire e-learning course, alongside the graphics, interface, written text and accessibility, also consider the audio and try to understand how and in which lessons it can promote understanding of the topics and improve the student's educational experience. Starting to think about the audio part right from the creation of the project will allow you to make sense of its introduction in the course and not leave its presence to chance, instead giving it a very specific role within the lessons. Furthermore, the design allows for the homologation of all the audio tracks present, to avoid there being discrepancies in voice or narrative methods, which could confuse the student.
2. **Narration**: after having planned the inclusion of audio tracks in e-learning courses, it is necessary to materialize them. To do this it is necessary to use a narrator who lends his voice to narrate the established text or explain a complex topic included in the training course. The use of multiple narrative voices can be useful for impersonating different roles, if you want to stage a story with multiple characters. Furthermore, the use of multiple voices makes the lesson less flat and involves students more, since varying the person speaking allows them to develop greater attention.
3. **Recording**: once the audio course has been designed and the narrative voices have been found, the time comes to record the lessons. To **record** quality audio, it is essential to find a soundproof environment, where background noise cannot disturb the narrating voice, or to use headphones and a microphone that only capture the voice of the person telling the story. Before recording, it may be useful to test and listen to it again to identify any errors.
4. **Editing**: after recording the audio it is advisable to also pay attention to the moment in which the oral tracks need to be **edited**. In order to combine the various contents it will be necessary to use editing software, which allows you to combine and modify sounds, adjust the volume and eliminate any background noise. Furthermore, with this software it is also possible to cut the audio tracks, to edit them in a particular way.