ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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Authoring tool for eLearning: what it is and how to choose it

An authoring tool is essential to create effective online courses in just a few clicks. But how does it work and how to choose it?

When it comes to training, choosing the right **authoring tool** is important for the success and effectiveness of an online course. In this article we will explain:

- What is an authoring tool;
- The benefits of an authoring tool for eLearning;
- Types of authoring tools for eLearning;
- Essential features of an eLearning authoring tool.

Authoring tool: what is it?

An **authoring tool** is a software program that allows you to create educational content, lessons and courses using text, slides, images, video, audio or any other element on the screen.

In the early days of eLearning, developing online courses required a lot of time and expertise, as even the simple combination of text, images, and learning quizzes required the intervention of programmers and designers. Therefore, the introduction of **content authoring systems** has made the creation of interactive eLearning courses much easier and faster.

Advantages of an authoring tool for eLearning

Ease of use

Generally, modern authoring tools are very easy to use. For example, many include a set of pre-packaged **graphical templates** for courses and WYSIWYG editors with which you can create an online course without coding or involving IT developers and programmers.

WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) **editors** allow you to edit your course using a simplified, code-free view that is similar to the actual page layout.

Reduce production time and costs

As we've seen, a good authoring tool allows you to **create your eLearning course in a few simple clicks**, without having to bring in technicians and programmers to create the layout or develop the interactions. This way, you'll save time in creating your course and you'll be able to complete it with much lower costs.

Multi-device compatibility

Relying on an authoring tool with predefined templates also allows you to create **responsive courses** that can be enjoyed on any device. This way, you can easily create content that looks as good on smartphones as it does on monitors and smart TVs.

Adding interactivity

Some of these systems include different types of interactions to make the course more dynamic and engaging. Quizzes, drag-and-drop exercises, gamification are just a few of the key interactions offered by eLearning creation tools and that can be

added to your course.

Branded templates

Many creation tools allow you to apply corporate colors and logos to your content: this way you can promote your brand and make your course look more professional.

Types of authoring tools for eLearning

1. Cloud-based authoring tools

Also known as **SaaS** (Software as a Service) tools, these authoring tools are becoming very popular for several reasons. First, because they are hosted on the cloud, they do not require any software to be installed. Therefore, to use these authoring tools, all you need to do is connect to the internet and access the platform using your credentials. This gives greater flexibility to content creators, who can use the platform anywhere and anytime to create and edit learning materials.

Another advantage of **cloud-based authoring tools** is that, in most cases, the platform manufacturer also takes care of keeping the system up to date and ensuring that it works.

An authoring tool in the cloud is, for example, the one that **DynDevice LMS eLearning platform** is equipped with.

2. Locally hosted authoring tools

This type of eLearning authoring tool is installed on the **local hard drive**. In the past, this was the only type of authoring tool that existed.

Although, in some cases, these systems offer more advanced functionality, they are more difficult to use and require more training. In addition, they generally do not include upgrades, which must be purchased separately.

On the other hand, with a local authoring tool, sensitive data remains in-house and no third party has access to the information contained in the platform. This type of authoring tool is therefore more suitable for companies that, as a matter of company policy, require data to reside on local servers and not be managed by third parties.

3. Authoring tools integrated into the LMS

Learning management systems (LMSs) or online training platforms often offer an authoring tool built into the platform (such as **DynDevice LMS**).

This type of software is particularly effective because it maximizes training delivery and evaluation capabilities. But that's not all: they're also generally easier to use because you'll only need to understand the dashboard of a single platform to manage both the content creation and training management parts.

Essential features of an eLearning authoring tool

1. Content Management

Content management features allow you to maintain control of all the tools and resources you need as you develop your online course:

- **Course library and lessons**
- Test and question repository
- Templates library
- Resource library (video, audio, images, etc.)

2. Collaboration Tools

Creating an online course requires the involvement of many different people. For this reason, collaboration features are particularly useful within an authoring tool as they allow you to quickly and easily share course files with anyone else who may need to work on them.

3. Accessibility

Ensuring that everyone can follow your eLearning course should be at the heart of your design strategy. So make sure that your authoring tool includes accessibility features to meet different audience needs: WCAG support, subtitling, accessible keyboard navigation, etc.

4. Branching Scenarios

Creating branching scenarios makes sure that student choices affect course delivery. Unlike standard linear courses (in which the user must do the course in the order in which it was designed), branching gives students individual learning experiences and allows for better assessment of their learning.

5. Support for mobile learning

Smartphones and tablets have become an essential part of our lives, including in education. For this reason, make sure that the authoring tool you choose is able to automatically adapt the course layout to all screens and orientations. This way, you won't have to make any manual changes or (as some systems require) create multiple versions of the same course for every possible layout.

6. Auto-transcription of video and audio content

The automatic transcription of the content of videos and audio tracks of your courses is an extremely important feature. On the one hand, it lets you automatically add subtitles to your courses, guaranteeing accessibility for the deaf; on the other hand, it lets you use these transcriptions to translate the course into other languages.

But that's not all. Some authoring tools allow you to use auto-transcriptions to index and make your courses searchable with respect to the real and complete content they display. For more information, also read " **Auto-transcription of video and audio content with DynDevice LMS**".

7. Support and training

Any authoring tool, even the easiest to use, must include support for administrators. When choosing an authoring tool, make sure that the vendor you choose will also provide you with fast and qualified technical support.

The support channels can be different: chat, ticket support, e-mail, telephone support, tutorials and practical guides, webinars, live demos, etc. Finally, also check the hours and times of response to support requests.

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