ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 5 - number 161 Wednesday 2 june 2021

Design thinking to support eLearning design

How to apply design thinking to eLearning design to develop people-centered learning solutions?

Now more than ever, eLearning needs creative approaches to **instructional design** that help meet modern training needs. From this perspective, design thinking represents an extremely interesting methodology.

Design thinking: what is it?

Design thinking is a design model used to solve complex problems through **creative vision** and **scientific management**.

It is an anthropocentric method that revolves around a deep interest in understanding one's target audience. In other words, it helps people discover and develop empathy with their audience.

Design thinking is applicable to all kinds of problems, whether they be strategy, organization, or **new product and service development**.

Design thinking: how to use it in eLearning design

For the reasons seen above, design thinking can offer instructional designers a powerful and proven methodology for developing **people-centered training solutions**.

In fact, the starting point for applying design thinking to eLearning design is to **understand the learner**, with the goal of discovering their unmet needs, framing new learning opportunities, and generating instructionally effective solutions.

The 5 phases of design thinking applied to eLearning

1. Empathy

Empathy involves more than simply analyzing your target audience and is one of the keys to design thinking. This first phase consists of putting yourself in the shoes of your target audience to understand their views, feelings and needs.

Is it easy? Not at all. Here are some tools that can help you in this process:

- **Field Research**. Observe your audience and learn to put yourself in their shoes for a deeper understanding of their needs.
- **Interviews**. Talk to your learners to understand their characteristics, discover their preferences, expectations or to bring to light any other latent issues. If you have to design a corporate training plan, interview both employees and their managers to find out the learning challenges and issues that need to be addressed.

2. Identifying and defining the problem

To design an effective training proposal, it is important to accurately define the problem your learners need to solve. With the information and data gathered during the first phase of empathic research, you can then now look at your students' needs from many angles and perspectives.

This will help you **define the problem** and provide you with a solid foundation to begin identifying **possible solutions**. And remember: a training course is not always the appropriate solution to your audience's problem; sometimes, it may be a partial solution that will need to be coupled with other actions.

Once you've defined the problem, write it down as a measurable goal. This will help you determine the effectiveness of the training.

3. Generate possible solutions

The only thing left to do now is to identify possible solutions to the problem. This can be done by involving a cross-disciplinary team and, where possible, by asking a small group of students to provide input.

Try to generate as many ideas as possible: the more ideas, the more potential solutions. The more ideas, the more potential solutions, the more ideas, the more potential solutions, and above all, remember to collect all ideas, even those that seem less effective or brilliant.

Here are a couple of extremely useful tools for idea generation:

- **Brainstorming**. This is a fun and very creative approach: all members sit down together, think of all possible solutions, jot them down and discuss them. At the end of the session, participants can organize the ideas into logical groups, analyze them and gradually eliminate them until the most powerful ones remain.
- **Mind Map**. This is a great way to visualize the central problem and potential solutions. A mind map helps to visibly connect the dots, identify patterns and stimulate new ideas.

4. Prototype

Creating a prototype allows you to test your solution to make sure it meets your objective and to predict results without investing too many resources.

In the case of eLearning, this might involve creating some **sample screenshots** to show how the course will work, what the screens will look like, and what the menu and navigation might look like. Alternatively, you could make a scenario storyboard that gives a mapping of the course structure.

5. Testing

The last step is to see if what you have designed works in the learning environment. Then ask for feedback from students and stakeholders; this will help you refine the prototype and optimize the final solution.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator