ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 2 - number 11 Wednesday 7 february 2018

How Long to Develop One Hour of Training?

How long does it take to develop an hour of eLearning training? How has the production time changed in 2017 compared to 8 or 14 years ago?

In 2003 Karl Kapp (expert in learning technologies) tried for the first time to answer the question: how long does it take to develop one hour of eLearning training? The research was updated in 2009, given the innovations in the authoring tools that emerged on the market (Karl Kapp, Robyn Defelice).

The results of the 2017 study will help online training professionals to **estimate production times for eLearning courses** and then to respond to customers who need to calculate development times.

The 2017 study

Data were collected in summer of 2017 through a survey aimed at online training professionals. Among these, the majority (76%) said they were involved in the design and development of classroom training, while 49% said they were involved in the development of eLearning training.

Furthermore, regarding the level of interaction of the online training developed:

- 49% say they design and develop **passive eLearning training**, in which the student "simply absorbs" the information proposed.
- 49% say they produce **eLearning training with limited interactivity**, in which the student offers simple answers to the training requests.
- 29% plan and develop **eLearning training characterized by complex interactions** that require the student to give elaborate answers to the course requests.
- Only 12% of respondents deal with **eLearning training characterized by interactions in real time** (this type of training appeared after 2009).

Although the majority of respondents expressed their preference for eLearning, the most widely available training is still the one in the classroom. This data shows that, although the development time of eLearning courses has been greatly reduced over the years (from 69 hours of design in 2009 to 28 hours in 2017 to produce 1 hour of training), many customers still prefer to buy classroom training because they see limited possibilities of interaction in eLearning.
And indeed, as we have seen, **the most interactive forms of eLearning training are also the least widespread.**

What are the factors behind the development time?

Observing the data from 2003 to 2009, we note that the development hours needed to develop just one hour of eLearning training have increased (from 55 to 69 hours) and then decreased significantly from 2009 to 2017 (from 69 to 28 hours). This is due, according to the authors, "to the way they introduced the survey and to the large amount of information requested to respondents in 2009 compared to 2003". Regarding the 2009-2017 results, this problem does not arise because the aim of the 2017 study was simply to update the 2009 estimates.

In the future, for a better approximation of development time, it will be necessary to **obtain more information on how individual respondents determine their time estimates**. For example, it would be useful to know how many years of experience the interviewees have on their shoulders and whether they have technical-specialist skills (UX designers) or more transversal (project managers); it would also be useful to investigate if the developers work for third parties or are part of an internal team that develops training products dedicated to the company itself and if they are specialized in certain levels of interaction; finally, it is necessary to understand what kind of authoring tools the professionals in question use.

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