ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to choose the navigation style in the eLearning course?

Intuitive navigation is fundamental to the success of an online course, but how to choose the most suitable type of navigation for your course?

Offering **clear and intuitive navigation** within an online course is critical to the success of the course. You can create an online course full of attractive, high quality content, but if moving around in it is difficult, it is very likely that students will end up giving up.

Good navigation also has a huge impact on how content is processed and stored by the student.

In this sense, choosing the type of navigation to use to allow the student to move around the course is extremely important. In fact, there are different **styles of navigation**, each with its own characteristics and peculiarities that are adapted to the structure of the course, to its specific teaching purposes and to the different types of audience. Let's discover the main styles of navigation.

1. Horizontal bar navigation

The horizontal bar navigation consists of a horizontal menu that runs through the top of the screen. It is a pillar of web design and is the foundation of many websites. For this reason, it is familiar to most users and is very easy to use.

It can also be combined with drop-down submenus that show secondary navigation elements.

However, due to the limited size of the horizontal bar, this navigation style may not be suitable for more complex courses with large volumes of main content.

2. Vertical sidebar navigation

In this case, the navigation is formatted as a side vertical column in which the navigation elements are arranged one above the other, usually on the left side.

This type of navigation allows you to add more menu items (but remember not to exaggerate: too many menu items can confuse the student) and to structure the information in a chronological and consistent order.

As with the horizontal bar, it can provide submenus showing secondary content.

3. Tabbed navigation

In this style of navigation, a series of tabs positioned vertically or horizontally are shown and the navigation mechanism is quite simple: when a user clicks on a tab, the content is shown just below or next to it (if the series of tabs is vertical).

If you choose this mode, make it easy for students to distinguish where they are in the course (for example, by changing the colour of the tab they are currently viewing).

4. Forward/Reverse Navigation

It is the simplest and most widely used eLearning navigation style and consists of "forward" and "back" buttons that allow students to easily navigate through consecutive content. In this case, the buttons can take the form of arrows or be simply textual and should be placed at the bottom of the screen (centre or right).

This style of navigation is especially suitable for linear courses, i.e. courses where the content is sequential, unless it is integrated with another style of navigation.

Finally, this navigation format tends to work better with less technological students, because it provides a clear visual clue that allows them to know how to progress through the various modules.

Alongside these main navigation styles, there is one that is often used to support the main navigation system. This is **breadcrumb navigation**.

This type of navigation consists of a horizontal list of clickable secondary navigation elements that show you the route you take to get to the section of the course you are using.

The breadcrumb menu, generally located at the top of the screen, is useful to show the student which section of the course they are in and the route they have taken to get there, and to give them easy access to the home page of the course or one of the sections they have just visited.

Whatever type of navigation you choose, be sure to explain to the student how they should move around the course content right away. Remember that the first time a student accesses the course, they will need to immediately understand where the material is and how to access it. This first impression will influence the next experience.

Provide a **welcome area** where you can explain to students how to start the course and where they can find everything they need. If the structure of the course is simple and straightforward, a few text paragraphs will suffice; if the structure is more complex, include a video tour of the course to show **how the contents are organized**.

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