ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to create an effective storyboard for eLearning

The storyboard represents a real strategic document for the success of an online course. Let's find out what it is and how to use it effectively.

Creating an **eLearning** course is a complex process, which must be taken care of in detail, to ensure that the training is effective. For this reason, it is essential to create a **storyboard** that is complete and clear, so as to allow the course developers to create it in the best possible way.

What is storyboarding?

We usually think of the **storyboard** as a sort of graphic script, linked to comics or films. The term, in fact, derives from the English literally translated as "story table" and, in a general sense, indicates the illustrated representation of a story, through sequences drawn in chronological order. The storyboard, however, is not only exclusive to the design of a film, a series or a comic, but is also used in the world of eLearning.

In the case of digital training, the storyboard is not limited to a story illustrated with graphic sketches, but represents a real **strategic document**, which brings together everything necessary for the design of an eLearning course, without the risk of forgetting to take into consideration some actor in the process. Creating a digital training project is certainly not a simple process, but it is the result of a combination of different elements, which must find the perfect balance between them for the eLearning course to be effective. These are textual elements, videos, images, tests and audio which, combined together in the correct way, allow users to easily enjoy the content of the lessons. In concrete terms, Word or Power Point templates, which are editable, are usually used to insert the fundamental information of an eLearning course.

For all the elements of online training to be in harmony, however, the **initial planning** phase, which precedes the creation of the course, is fundamental. And, in particular, it is important to create a **storyboard** with attention to detail, so that it contains the structure of the course, both from a textual, graphic and visual point of view. A well-constructed storyboard allows the developer to create the course as it was imagined by the designer: it is, therefore, a sort of instruction booklet for creating an eLearning course.

Why is it important in eLearning?

The storyboard allows you to provide a **unique interpretation** to those who will be responsible for creating the course. For this reason, it is not enough to translate the visual or audio component into words: this could, in fact, give rise to misunderstandings and risk compromising the actual success of the creation of the training project.

On the contrary, a document containing all the information regarding the development methods of the eLearning course allows the complete development of the online course, in line with the ideas of those who created it. The importance of the storyboard is due to the content of this special document which, alongside the textual part, places **graphic examples**, interface prototypes and indications to make it clear where to insert possibilities for interactions, tests, videos or audio. This document allows the course developer to work while respecting the ideas of the person who created it.

Another reason that makes the creation of an effective storyboard important is the possibility of **reducing the processing and implementation times of the eLearning course**. Already having a complete design of every detail allows you to save time in the subsequent phases, because there is no risk of misunderstandings and any corrections necessary to fine-tune the educational project are reduced.

How to create an effective storyboard

To ensure that the storyboard of an eLearning course best performs the function for which it was created, its development must be complete and clear. We have already talked about how to **write a storyboard**, but here are the tips to make it effective:

1. Identify your **objectives**: before you even start writing the storyboard you need to understand the purposes for which you want to create the online learning course. Once identified, it is best to always keep in mind the main objectives of the training program, to ensure that they accompany the creation of the course in its entirety. From the outset, therefore, it is good to ask ourselves what learning levels the student should reach and what information he should learn. For this reason, it is important to immediately think about the contents you want to create for the different objectives, writing down your idea and the key points to include in the actual creation of the course.
2. Put the **recipient** in the foreground: to write an effective storyboard you need to be clear about the target you want to reach. Then, based on the level of experience, skills and knowledge of potential students, it is possible to build an effective design document, which takes into account all the information on the audience you want to reach.
3. Organize the **material** with which to create the contents: collect the material and divide it according to the objectives you have hypothesized. To represent them effectively in the storyboard you can group them into blocks and organize them into sequences, based on how you would like to build the online course. Titling the various sections of your storyboard can help provide effective order. The organization of the material is important to create a coherent set of lessons.
4. Decide on the **multimedia elements**: before physically creating the online course, already decide which multimedia elements to insert and plan the lesson or moment in which to introduce them. Images, animations, videos and interactions will certainly help to attract the user's attention and maintain high concentration, but they will only be effective if inserted within the course in a coherent way, so that they support the learning contents and help to achieve the training objectives set at the origin of eLearning. In the storyboard, enter a detailed description for each multimedia element you intend to insert and plan the right position on the screen, so that every detail is clear in the development phase. To do this, you can draw a sketch of the page you want to create.
5. Don't forget the **evaluation**: immediately take into consideration the evaluation elements you intend to include in the online course and plan the position of the different tests and exams that the students will face in the storyboard. It is also useful to plan any summaries for each lesson or summary maps and any exercises linked to the different topics.
6. Think about the **details**: leave nothing to chance and specify all the information on all the elements that make up the eLearning course, including the relationships and references between the links or buttons you want to insert. It is important that each activity, lesson, assessment and navigation icon, to avoid running the risk of having problems with the links during development.
7. **Don't include too much content** in the same lesson: carefully evaluate which and how much content to include in each lesson. Be careful not to make parts of the course too rich in content, to avoid **cognitive overload**, which would push the student to struggle to understand all the information contained therein. If so, it would be better to add an extra lesson and distribute the numerous information on each topic more evenly.
8. Decide on the **graphics**: don't forget to take care of the interface right from the initial design phase. Once you have decided where to place the menu drop-down and which buttons to insert, be sure to leave a detailed description of the position and how you want them to be inserted in the interface. Also take care of the graphics of the site and foresee a reaction to every action of the student. The storyboard must also contain all this information, to allow the creation of an effective learning program.
9. Also think about **transitions** between one lesson and another, including in the storyboard how you would like to move from one lesson to another or from one slide to another within the same lesson.
10. **Review** the storyboard from scratch, taking care to put it in a different perspective than when you created it. First try to imagine that you are the programmer and developer of the project, who has to create the site on the basis of the document you left written: if upon rereading the storyboard everything seems clear and complete, then the document will be ready to be shared with the programmer, to allow him to develop the eLearning course. Secondly, try to imagine yourself as the user of the future learning course: if the interface and features of the course seem coherent and easy to understand, then you will have created an effective storyboard.

The storyboard is therefore a document of fundamental importance for the success of the creation and development of an eLearning course. But only if implemented in an effective and detailed way can it really help to put into practice a complete learning path that is easy to access for everyone.