ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 4 - number 124 Wednesday 2 september 2020

How to select music for an eLearning course

With eLearning, the choice of music has an emotional and didactic value. Here's how to choose the "soundtrack" for an online course

Cinema, television and videos in general show that musical accompaniment is essential to mark the highlights of a story, generate emotions and involve the audience. Music can play the same role in eLearning, especially when it is based on **storytelling** and **immersive learning**. However, when it comes to educational or formative content, music should be chosen very carefully to avoid it having the opposite effect: distraction and alienation of the participants. Here are some tips to select the perfect soundtrack for an eLearning course.

1. How to choose the music according to the beneficiaries of online training

For an **instructional designer** the beneficiaries of an online course are both the company, indirect beneficiary, which has its own brand and values to defend, and the employees or managers who become direct beneficiaries, since online courses are addressed to them. When choosing the music for an online course it is good to keep both beneficiaries in mind in order to reflect:

- **The image of the company**. An online course should reflect the image that the company wants to give of itself. If you pay attention to the colours, the font, the tone of the written texts, in the same way you have to take care of the choice of the music that accompanies the courses. A pop piece, for example, might not be suitable for a health care company.
- **The beneficiaries' personal details**. The average age of the beneficiaries, gender, cultural background are other elements that influence the choice of music. By selecting well-defined genres, some students could be involuntarily excluded. Classical and jazz music is good for an adult audience; young people and children may have more difficulties.
- **The language of the beneficiaries of the courses**. If the music is accompanied by lyrics, attention should be paid to the meaning of the words. Some foreign songs, although they have a catchy sound, may use language that is unsuitable for a professional context. Furthermore, if some lyrics are functional to the training and it is important for the beneficiaries to understand their meaning, they should be translated so that the **localization**.

2. When to include the sound aspect in an online course

What kind of online course is offered? Sometimes, it is better not to include **music** at all because it might distract from the content of a course. Other times, however, the very presence of the music helps to **memorize** what you have learned.

On the text that contains rules and procedures, perhaps it is better to avoid disturbing elements. In a simulation, a game that involves a character making choices, music could help you understand the situation and make the right decisions.

If you use other sound effects such as a **narrator's voice**, you should carefully consider adding a soundtrack. To understand whether or not the music is helpful, two small focus groups, one with and one without sound accompaniment, could be done and a questionnaire should be made to the beneficiaries to get their comments on the learning experience.

3. Select sites for royalty free or paid music

The last issue related to music for an online course is **copyright**. Especially in corporate training, it is of primary importance to select royalty free music or pay royalties when required. In this way, the trainer also protects his or her client from any risks. There are many online sites that offer soundtracks for videos, PowerPoint and eLearning courses, free or for a fee.

The reason to include music in an online course is clear: to improve the **training experience** by involving the beneficiaries emotionally and helping them to better remember what they have learned. In order to be effective, the music must take into account the image of the company and the composition of the beneficiaries. Moreover, the trainer has to choose carefully the moments when to insert the music in order to avoid distractions. Finally, the soundtracks must be inserted legally, in full respect of copyright or through royalty free channels.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator