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How to set up learning touchpoints

How do we structure touchpoints between content and our target audience?

The modern design of eLearning courses, as addressed in the previous articles on **setting up a format** and the **rules for transmedia storytelling**, necessarily requires that our learners receive a formal delivery of content but are, on the contrary, surrounded by information through learning dynamics 'augmented' by technology.

The OK-LCD model, a support for the new digital training

One of the most interesting models for the design and management of eLearning courses is the OK-LCD model (Crystal Kadakia and Lisa M.D. Owens, Il design della formazione, FrancoAngeli 2021), which we have already discussed in a previous article, and which envisages the specific creation of a surround action in the design phase of eLearning courses.

The surround action derives from a specific need of learners, especially in the corporate environment. Usually, the supply of training or tutorial content is extremely limited or administered through a methodology that is not very scalable. In addition, information cannot be easily searched for and people often find themselves in need of reaching a certain piece of information as quickly and easily as possible.

The traditional way of managing internal information within the company is to manage learning by following a classroom or eLearning course, by activating a competence assessment process, by talking to colleagues or the manager or, pragmatically, by searching for the necessary information in internal documentation or operating manuals.

At this point in the reading it will also be obvious to you that much of the necessary information can be sought online or by using other external options such as reading a blog, using a specialist forum, consulting a wiki, buying books and in-depth content or, in cases of curricular upgrading, enrolling in university or higher education courses.

As a result, information obtained outside the corporate organisation may be fragmentary or irrelevant to the actual in-house culture. Not to mention the difference in technologies and tools that may have been customised for a specific corporate use.

All this knowledge therefore needs new tools that shift the focus towards extended training portals, towards learning methodologies that prevent a possible leakage of information and learners outside the organisation.

The watershed in this respect was certainly the need for organisations to activate new channels of communication between people after the pandemic and with the phenomenon of smart working increasingly used and appreciated.

How, then, to equip oneself with suitable tools for enhancing content and designing high-impact eLearning courses?

The OK-LCD method provides the possibility of setting up different types of touchpoints to engage modern learners.

Touchpoints for learning

All too often we are accustomed to thinking of the users of our courses as if they were, in a sense, obliged to be trained. Nothing could be more wrong.

They are driven by a multitude of emotions and, above all, needs.

The urge to train and inform oneself may stem from a period when one is more unloaded on operational processes, the need for additional information on the functioning of a machine or a process or, trivially, the first acquisition of skills useful for achieving a professional goal.

This is why our focus, when realising eLearning courses, must be on the ability to interact with people.

The OK-LCD model starts from the idea of touchpoints for learning, taking up a theme so dear to business and marketing people.

Kadakia and Owens simplified the concept into three categories of learning interactions, taking up neuroscientific studies and research on how people learn.

The **formal touchpoint** is the most frequently used interaction mode. According to this interaction, users of eLearning courses start from a predefined interaction point of departure (START) and one of conclusion (END). The path to follow is more or less branched and the process ends, usually, with a certificate attesting the completion of the course.

The organisations I usually work with prefer this type of approach because it is the most canonical within the corporate culture. The possibility of integrating gamification and recognition elements makes it possible to create courses that are highly sought after by modern learners.

This is essentially due to the need we have, as people, to immerse ourselves in knowledge and to be stimulated by a network of content that allows us to consolidate our skills. Formal training can be delivered through different channels, both in-presence and online. The possibility of creating engagement mechanisms, as well as the introduction of certificates, allows us to achieve excellent results and, through modern LMSs such as DynDevice, to track the path of each user or a cluster of people.

When the level of interaction is aimed at other people, we speak of a **social touchpoint**. This type of touchpoint involves, as you may have guessed, interaction with other users. The purpose of the interaction is to ask for help in understanding the contents, validation of the contents and, sometimes, evaluations and comments on the proposed information. The management of this particular type of touchpoint can be structured (see the case of wikis) or unstructured (comments and feedback for analysis). Modern learners are looking for social learning activities through internal company platforms (there are many organisations investing in centralised service and personnel orientation systems) or through third-party platforms, social, community or, as is often the case, numerous eLearning course marketplaces. Marketing ploys are often used to entice people to follow a certain type of course.

The ability to access training resources 24 hours a day is referred to in this context as an **immediate touchpoint**. This type of touchpoint makes it possible to administer corporate knowledge and a whole series of information automatically and, above all, across the board. As mentioned earlier, learners cannot necessarily wait for a structured course to learn something. The need to know data, functions of a product or specific processes could arrive at any moment. This is why all kinds of resources are available online and centralised, often accessible from innovative search systems or, in my preferred cases, through Natural Language Processing - NLP i.e. natural language recognition and automated response. Part of these systems are chatbots, for example, which allow people's needs to be recorded, large quantities of documents to be analysed and answers to be provided quickly. Usually this touchpoint, by its nature, is poor in content. The task of a good instructional designer and content creator is to create a series of useful content to populate this touchpoint.

In addition, it is necessary to create a guide to these resources and a way to create semi-automated paths for accessing all available resources.

Structuring training through a touchpoint system allows you, within an organisation or through the provision of training products and services to customers, to assess the balance of resources.

You may wish to opt for a still massive use of formal touchpoint training for your offering within an organisation or for a customer but, experimentally, steer your learners towards solutions that employ tools and resources with immediate social touchpoints to change the asset over time.

The immediate touchpoint often involves IT resources that will enable the creation of computerised systems. Thanks to these systems, it is possible to develop platforms with services that will revolve around people and be able to respond to their needs in a practical and fast way.

The kind of approach to have, in any kind of case, is experimentation. Initiating training necessarily means interfacing with the needs of the audience and sometimes conditioning them to create an improvement within the corporate culture.

The use of touchpoints makes it possible to balance the training course and to analyse, on a case-by-case basis, the performance of the entire training offer in relation to the engagement of modern learners.

What is your next step towards improving interactions with your learners?

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