ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to use affordance in e-learning

The graphic aspect of an eLearning platform, besides making the course more enjoyable, also has a practical value. Through the conscious use of design elements it is possible to make the interface more useful and more intuitive for students.

One of the most important concepts, especially when it comes to the design of a platform, is that of "affordance", a term that does not have an Italian equivalent. It is used to indicate the property of an object that allows those who are about to use it to intuitively understand its use. This concept applies to everything: a door handle, a cup handle or, in an online course, the "buttons" of the platform.

In fact, everything in a site, from links to buttons, must be easy for users to use. This concept is also fundamental in the world of eLearning, as each student must be able to easily and intuitively use the platform, without having to waste time understanding how it works he must have the opportunity to simply concentrate in the studio. Here are some tips to make the most of the concept of affordance in your online course.

1. Follow the predefined design standards

An eLearning platform, although not primarily a creative product, must be aesthetically appealing. However, it is preferable that the platform follows the standards of the web design industry without using new interpretations. This does not mean letting it become obsolete, but simply creating a structure that can be well understood by all the users who will participate in the course.

2. Use short and direct texts

In addition to the content that is part of the training path, all other information that allows you to navigate within the site or access other sections of the course must be concise and brief, but above all easy to understand. For this reason, it is preferable to use verbs that clearly indicate an action to briefly suggest to the student what to do in order to reach a specific section of the course.

3. Use "metaphors"

It is not just words that help the user navigate the online course platform. The same button design, in fact, can already suggest their function without the need to use one or more keywords. We can use small images that are usually universally known (a magnifying glass, a cart, etc.) to communicate to the students how to access other areas or sections of the course.

4. Evaluation of the usability of the platform

In order to really know if the goals we have set ourselves, in this case in terms of affordances, have been achieved, it is essential to receive student feedback. At the end of the training course, in fact, in addition to an evaluation of the contents, it is essential to ask the students if they have had difficulty in using the platform. This data is valuable for improving the course itself and the design of the site.

5. Make the whole platform uniform

It is essential, after having created a style that allows the principles of affordance to be put into practice, that this remains unchanged throughout the platform. For this reason, it is essential that, within the platform, the same type of graphic elements is always used, to allow students to learn to recognize and use the online platform and course more easily.