ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to use the principles of persuasion for your course

Let's find out how to use persuasive communication to create and promote a successful eLearning course

If you are approaching the consumer market for eLearning courses, you will certainly have realized how diverse the offerings are and how difficult it can be to stand out with your own products.

In a marketplace of feedback, reviews, discounted prices, but most importantly, great competition, let's look at how we can tailor our eLearning courses through the six principles of persuasion.

The Weapons of Persuasion by Robert Cialdini

You may not have known that persuasion is a real science. Every project and, in our case, every course we create for the general public must necessarily be proposed to someone who will have to agree to invest time, resources and finances in it.

That is why we have to be particularly convincing and, above all, genuine in our proposal.
In 1984 Prof. Robert Cialdini theorized a series of formulas that he included in his essay "The Weapons of Persuasion." Thanks to these "weapons" any project may be able to use persuasive communication to promote itself with particular success.

Beware, however, you will understand that I am not talking to you about a "magic formula" for success but, essentially, about adopting 6 principles hypothesized by Cialdini to improve your proposal.

Get attention with reciprocity

When you develop an eLearning course, your goal is to offer something useful in exchange for your audience's attention. I take it upon myself to "discomfort "an ancient Roman saying, the famous do ut des, literally "I give so that you give," to explain what reciprocity means in our work.

As an instructional designer and, more generally, as a multimedia producer, I am called to "give something" to people who are "looking for" a particular piece of content.

Therefore, my success will depend in large part on how useful that content will be to a particular niche market, to a specific target audience.

Before doing any work that you plan to sell on a marketplace, my advice is to build curiosity and lay the groundwork for empathy with your audience.

Use social media to understand what your audience is really interested in and, where possible, try to answer real problems, set a course on what your audience's real needs are.

If you are speaking to an audience of video makers, for example, you can unearth the most interesting posts within social network groups and use them as a cue to create a course tailored to them: the best camera to buy, how to set up an effective shot, when to shoot horizontally and when to shoot vertically, and so on in a series of topics that will build your product.

The moment you can give useful and effective information you are one step closer to receiving the trust of your audience. This brings us to an important aspect about content for eLearning courses.

Making authoritative content

When you offer a course, it is not enough to simply answer a question posed by your users, but you will need to gain some authority in the field to be credible.
Gaining authority is not an easy process and, more importantly, it is not a goal that is quickly achieved. It takes years of study and dealing with the market, and in our times, it only takes one mistake to jeopardize your credibility.
For this reason, tackling the process of producing authoritative content is a particularly uphill path.
I recommend, therefore, that you produce content about which you have special knowledge, thanks to in-depth industry studies.
If you are called upon to produce a course for a third party, it will be necessary to study the materials they will provide you with and go in-depth to ensure that the course content proves to be authoritative and, above all, credible.
Let's take a step back: why should I give you attention if your course does not turn out to be credible?
Being authoritative is one of the weapons at our disposal for the success of our eLearning course.

Channeling Commitment and Consistency in Course Users

One of the main levers for project success is the ability to develop in our stakeholders a sense of commitment and, consequently, of pursuing a given goal.
Whether you have recently started your career as an instructional designer or have been a professional in the field for several years, you will be in no doubt: it is necessary to create a user education course that keeps the focus alive and leads to a result.

It is not a coincidence that gamification techniques are increasingly being used to keep attention to the themes and objectives of a course.

Through gamification you have the ability to create pathways and goals for your audience that allow you to deliver content while keeping attention and curiosity about a given topic alive.

Gamification is only one means of "managing" people's attention span, but, of course, there are numerous tools and content development techniques that will allow you to achieve interesting results.

I, for example, always try to divide the content into short training units by including, when possible, pop-up quizzes and insights that allow you to keep the user's attention on the course.

Without these training ploys, there is a risk that our audience will simply click "play" and passively listen to the content of a course.

So one of the elements of success for an eLearning course is to maintain engagement and consistency, have you already thought about this when designing one of your courses?

Propose the course with the leverage of scarcity

One of the most interesting weapons of persuasion is that of scarcity: people tend to want more of what is least available.
What this means. That any kind of product or content is perceived by the community as "valuable" or interesting if the perceived quantity is relatively scarce.
The scarcity principle allows us to act on a really interesting marketing lever, especially if we sell our eLearning courses in the consumer market.
You might consider selling the course only to your community members or only to those who pre-register for your site's newsletter. Of course, it is important that other values such as interest, curiosity about the product and, above all, authoritativeness of the content are not lost.
Without these, you will understand, it will be a bit difficult to perceive the need for purchase by your audience even in a situation of product scarcity.

We could also juxtapose the principle of scarcity with the sense of urgency to purchase a course or attend a training event.
Creating urgency in your audience allows you to get results in a measured period of time and will allow you to verify the results of your sales campaign.

Create empathy mechanisms with liking and liking

When you find yourself creating products and courses for the consumer market you will, of necessity, have to create a community around your project. We talked about this above, if you are going to offer your courses to a specific audience you will have to create a living contact with them.
You will find it really difficult to publish something and be successful without having created a user base that is interested in your projects and likes what you have done or what you plan to develop.
So it is not enough to create curiosity around the product, but you need to have a dialogue with people and, again, try to understand what they might be interested in and what problems need to be solved with an educational path.

If people understand that we have understood their problems they will feel much closer to us and they will understand that we have focused on the topics that we will try to make explicit within our project.

Once again, this is not a marketing trick but a necessary and sufficient concept for the production of effective courses. It is not possible to produce a training product without going to stimulate the curiosity, attention and empathy of the users who are to benefit from it.

What is Social Proof?

When people feel insecure and don't know whether to choose a training course, they rely on the opinions of others.
This reveals the importance of having a good reputation, especially online, producing courses with authoritative content, and, most importantly, getting good online reviews.
When we sell our courses on an online marketplace, the review system is especially important for getting feedback from our community and for continuing to sell more copies of that course to people who may, rightly, still be on the fence.
Surely you have felt unsure about buying a particular product or choosing a particular hotel for your vacation: have you relied on reviews from other users who have already tried that experience?
It is so important to create a reputation based on reviews that, increasingly, we see many producers asking to leave a review directly within eLearning courses.
Personally, I don't think it's necessary to go that far but, clearly, it's important to work on the quality of the content and the other levers we've talked about-your course will be a success.

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