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Main cloud services for instructional designers

If you are in the business of creating content for eLearning courses, you will certainly need cloud services that will greatly increase your productivity. Find out which ones

If you are an instructional designer or a producer of eLearning course content, you will certainly need to equip yourself with cloud services or tools that will allow you to lighten your workload and, in some cases, greatly increase your productivity.

Let's find out which are the main cloud services you will need in order to work at your next eLearning course.

Build and maintain your repository of content and authoring product sources

If, like me, you are used to working on the move, at home and in the office with different computers, I strongly advise you to abandon the idea of working with a hard disk where you store all your projects.

Traditional or solid state hard disks are prone to obsolescence, not to mention the possibility that a wrong write could totally or partially compromise your work files.

Having a physical back-up copy is very important. However, if you are looking for an agile and secure way of production, my advice is to get a subscription to a cloud service where you can store your content and sources.

If you often work with video content, you will need to buy a licence for at least 3 terabytes of space, which will allow you to store many files and maintain several versions of your products without having to delete the most bulky files.

The correct management of a cloud repository will give you numerous benefits in the design and production of eLearning courses.

Specifically:

- having a cloud repository allows you to optimise your workflow on different and/or distant workstations; using an online storage service allows you to start working from home or in smart working mode and to finish your work when you return to the office. This choice also gives you the opportunity to check your activities on the fly via smartphone or tablet, even when you are on the move or on your way to an off-site meeting. Managing your productivity means, in any case, having all your documents and products available at all times.
- A cloud database gives you the opportunity to quickly and conveniently share your entire work project with colleagues. Some online services also offer a cloud review service for documents and work projects, a task that becomes complex in presence or via email. The risk of losing information is very great.
- Activating a cloud storage space allows you to quickly share all your exports and sources with your customers. It's an organisational model that you shouldn't underestimate because, as well as improving your professionalism, it will allow your client to access that content whenever they want and they won't need to contact you again and again to get the files.

Testing platform

The cloud also allows you to use a testing platform on which to test your eLearning courses before exporting them in scorm format, for example, and installing them on your client's platform.

With a cloud service you will be able to collect feedback on the video content, which you have created and uploaded online, with your colleagues and with the client who, through a feedback system, will be able to give you revision suggestions directly on the project.

Having a testing and review platform in the cloud allows you to optimise your work and to develop, over time, an agile working system based on the reduction of unnecessary effort and, at the same time, to experiment on projects that will not engage the LMS platform or other resources.

Cloud services for synthesised voices

One of the cloud-based services that I make daily use of in my work and that I recommend you try out (if you haven't already) is speech synthesis. We also talked about it in these article eLearning: How to make effective corporate slideshows and The use of artificial voices in online courses.

Better known as TTS or text-to-speech, text-to-speech services are delivered in the cloud and allow for the creation of truly convincing products at resoundingly low prices.

This kind of service is really effective in case of low budget production or in the prototyping phase for a customer.

Cloud-based speech synthesis services have made great strides in recent months. In fact, start-ups and big corporations in the cloud sector are specialising in a very rich offering.

Based on artificial intelligence and natural language processing technologies, we can subdivide the voices according to the depth of use of AI.

The best voices are those that use neural network algorithms to synthesise the text entered and, in my opinion, the result can be improved by acting on the tone and timbre control panels.

Cloud services for vertical video for mobile and microlearning

The evolution of devices and the reduction in the time available to devote to personal training have led people to use training and educational content directly on smartphones or tablets.

The demand for fast contents and, above all, suitable for mobile use, has led me to develop a format for the creation of products suitable for microlearning.

Microlearning or bit-sized learning is, in short, a learning methodology that makes use of training pills, short videos, quick podcast contents to keep the learner's attention alive and to allow a smart alternative to frontal classroom training or to more complex training units to be followed on a PC.

Designing eLearning courses in a nutshell thus requires a number of production tricks that can undoubtedly be achieved using cloud-based services.

For example, with DynDevice LMS it is possible to create microlearning content consisting of video, audio and multimedia content that allows you to provide customers and employees with a series of short lessons that can be called up on demand. As with traditional eLearning courses, the actual use of the course by users will be tracked on the platform.

The creation of micro-learning content can be enriched by other cloud-based services that you can adapt using graphics, photo filters and video editing services of all kinds. The web is full of solutions and a short search will allow you to enrich your productions.

In terms of cloud-based usability, DynDevice LMS provides native apps for Android and iOS operating systems, with which you can quickly access content and receive notifications.

Animated video production

One of my favourite cloud-based services is motion graphics and character and explainer animation.

Selecting a good cloud-based service for creating animated content and motion graphics allows you, first of all, to always have a content editing platform available and, secondly, to update the libraries on all your devices at the same time.

When I am creating animated content, especially with characters that allow me to create explainers to illustrate good practices to company employees, I need different cloud services.

For example, when I'm designing, I need to have a cloud system that allows me to work on synopses and scripts when I'm at home or on the move.

The best solution is usually what you already have on your phone: a great app is the voice recorder that allows you to quickly jot down your ideas and have them available on various computers connected to the cloud; text notes, which are now very advanced, allow you to jot down synopses and scripts with tag systems, attachments and, with almost all new generation devices, you will be able to use tools such as touch pens to jot down your ideas on the fly.

Another practical solution is to use online services for the creation of video content such as animated explainers, a quick online search will allow you to discover many with the possibility of opening a paid plan that allows you to save your creations in the cloud and have them available to export, for example, in .mp4 format for importing into the eLearning course creation platform on DynDevice.

Investing in a cloud plan provided by the manufacturer of your PC or by a third party is never a bad choice: the possibility of having all your work available on different devices and quickly updated through a home or mobile connection will allow you to save a lot of time and use the time between calls to polish and improve your projects.

Improving your work as an instructional designer means using the right tools, and the cloud is a valuable ally in a world where the workstation is now a disruptive concept, a feature that was clear only to freelance workers a few years ago but has become a reality for all developers in recent months.

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