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Online courses: ADDIE and other models for instructional design, which one to choose?

What are the major models for instructional design and how to use them for online training?

E-learning has in common with traditional training different models, theories and best practices that aim to simplify the work of designing courses to ensure the most important objective: to facilitate learning. There are several models that can support the design and delivery of a course in eLearning, the choice depends on the objectives of the instructional designer and the needs of the students.

The ADDIE model

The most classic model for designing online courses is ADDIE. This acronym stands for:

- **Analysis**, the preliminary phase where the needs of students and companies are analyzed;
- **Design**, the phase of defining objectives based on the needs identified together with the tools and methods for delivering the online course;
- **Development**, entering the operational phase where the contents of the online course are developed based on the preliminary analysis;
- **Implementation**, the course meets the need of the learners and is modified and adjusted based on their feedback;
- **Evaluation**, the final evaluation with which the sums of the work done are drawn and it is understood if the didactic objectives have been really achieved.

The principles of Merril

Professor David Merril's model includes five basic principles on which every classroom and online course project should be based:

- Activities
- Activation
- Demonstration
- Application
- Integration

The idea is the one taken up by many startups, that is **starting from a real problem** that needs to be answered with activities that are within the reach of students. The course based on the principles of Merril is therefore essentially practical, exploits the pre-existing know-how and helps the students by making practical demonstrations of the notions transmitted and helping them to put into practice the new knowledge in time of need. The last principle, that of integration, foresees a moment of reflection where the students present the results of their activities and confront each other.

Gagné model

Among the models for the constructive design, the one by Robert Gagné is one of those that pays more attention to the relationship between the students and the trainer. It is a guide to delivering an online course effectively by following nine key events:

- **Capture students' attention**. At this stage the instructional designer tells a story or asks questions that facilitate learning;

- **Inform students about course objectives**. In this way, expectations are created that help to understand at the end of the course, whether the objectives have been achieved or not;
- **Remind students of the concepts** previously learned so as to start from already acquired knowledge;
- **Present new content** and provide extra material to learn more about the topic;
- **Stimulate students** to use the learned content and use the feedback received to strengthen knowledge;
- Implement strategies to **use the learned content** in a practical way.

The models for instructional design are many and accompany the designer at different times. The ADDIE model is a general reference point for designing, monitoring and evaluating the online course. Merril's principles are a guide on how to make learning effective through content that addresses a real problem. The Gagnè model is instead a typical model that focuses on the interactions of the trainer with the students and which aims to make learning effective.