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Strategies for creating successful Learning Objects

Learning Objects are like Legos, bricks that can be used over and over again to create different constructions. Here are some ideas for planning some really reusable learning objects.

The **Learning Objects** are digital resources that, inserted within an eLearning program, help to achieve the learning objectives. Their peculiarity is that they are like small pieces of lego that can be reused, potentially indefinitely, for different online course constructions for different beneficiaries. It is immediately clear that these learning objects are called to simplify **online training** both from the point of view of the **instructional designers**, i.e. the professionals who create the courses, and from the point of view of the beneficiaries of the courses themselves, such as companies and their employees. This dual function, both design and training, makes Learning Objects almost a mythical creature that everyone would like to have on their side. An eLearning project, however, is neither mythological nor immutable. In order to use Learning Objects successfully, then, it is good to keep in mind what they really are, whether they are worth building and in what cases they can be used.

What is a Learning Object?

A Learning Object is a digital object, with content and interface, structured to perform a teaching function. The content can be of different types: text, video or audio. The interfaceis the part of the Learning Object displayed by the students and consists of navigation elements and any other command that allows you to use the course. A Learning Object can be in the form of interactive exercises, simulations, quizzes, video tutorials, etc.. The important thing is that it is short-lived, compatible with eLearning standards, such as SCORM, and uses metadata, i.e. technical and descriptive information that allows the Learning Object to be stored correctly and used when needed ("The most basic metadata are the format and file name, the technical specifications on the software version and hardware, the dates of creation, access and last modification, the author; the most complex ones are the description, the object, the terms of release, access and use, etc.").

When is it useful to create learning objects?

The most difficult challenge for an instructional designer is how to create a learning object that can be reused in different courses without having to modify it. To do this, you first need to figure out if it is worth creating learning objects, depending on the educational objectives to be achieved. If this is a general and potentially transversal goal, it is clear that for the instructional designer it makes sense to create different learning objects that could be reused in many online courses. If, on the other hand, the didactic objective concerns rules that change over time, a learning object will have a short life. In this case, it is worth thinking about an ad hoc course.

Some examples of how to use Learning Objects

Learning Objects can be used essentially in two ways: a priori and a posteriori to the creation of online courses.

1. For example, for a company that traditionally entrusts the training of employees to manuals, it might be useful to review the manuals themselves and identify topics that can be transformed into learning objects. These topics are not too specific and do not require too many changes over time. Once the **training modules** or Learning Objects have been created, simply combine the desired Learning Objects to create **online courses**.
2. The second case concerns companies that already have a wide range of online courses. Creating Learning Objects would allow you to reuse some parts of these courses to create totally new courses or let the beneficiaries of the courses select the objects they want to use, combining them with each other in order to customize the learning path.

Learning Objects are digital objects that are created to speed up the process of creating online courses. By creating short objects, compatible with all LMS and including metadata, you can create reusable modules for multiple online courses, provided that the content is transversal and always up-to-date.

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