ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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The role of empathy in eLearning to create effective learning

To make learning in eLearning effective, the use of empathy also plays a fundamental role in planning. Let's find out why.

In a constantly evolving world, technology has invaded every area of daily life and training and education has been no exception. **eLearning** has thus become a highly sought after and used learning method, not only by schools, but also by companies and workers, because it allows you to keep up with training, without having to submit to time and place limitations.

The **advantages brought by eLearning** are many, but there is one aspect that can still make those who intend to approach online learning doubtful, both as learners and as creators and trainers. Technology and the physical distance that eLearning entails, in fact, could make it more difficult to create a relationship between student and teacher, an element of fundamental importance in the field of training, because it allows the creation of tailor-made paths. But, even in eLearning it is possible to use empathy, thus guaranteeing the effectiveness of the online course.

Empathy in eLearning

Empathy is defined as the ability to put yourself in another person's shoes. This allows you to understand the other person's point of view and act accordingly. This is a very important skill in education and training. In fact, in a learning path, the main objective is the transmission of content or a skill. For this to happen more effectively, empathy plays an important role, because it allows the creation of a more **engaging and positive climate**, which makes the student feel at ease, making him more inclined to actively attend the course and lessons.

This principle applies, in general, to any type of training course, but in eLearning it takes on an even more important meaning, given the **physical distance between students and teachers created by new technologies**, which could make it more difficult to create a positive environment. and effective for learning. For this reason, an online course must be designed and conceived by putting yourself in the user's shoes, to ensure that the proposed service lives up to the student's expectations and encourages him to actively attend lessons.

Using empathy in designing an online course can lead to effective results in the learning process. We have already talked about **personalizing the eLearning experience** through the use of empathy. In particular, we underlined how the strategy of putting yourself in the users' shoes can lead to a **personalization of the learning path** and simpler navigation. In fact, if in designing digital lessons the author of the course makes use of empathy towards future students, he can empathize with them. This would allow him to provide a tailor-made path for each user, creating a unique experience, thanks to the possibility of using a wide range of tools depending on everyone's needs.

Furthermore, the possibility of putting the **user first allows** the navigation methods on the platform to be adapted to the abilities of the users, depending on the pool of students to which the eLearning course refers. Even the contents conveyed and the tools made available can be evaluated and modified during the design phase, based on the knowledge of their users, which passes through empathy.

The role of empathy in planning

To help the creators of an eLearning course in **designing** the training project, it is possible to build representations of the user using empathy. It is a sort of sheet or map, which collects the students' thoughts, expectations and objectives. To simplify, you can take into consideration four broad areas to refer to while building your course:

1. **Words**. Understanding which language is closest to your users is essential to ensure that you build a tailor-made online course, capable of transmitting the contents of the lessons effectively. For this to happen it is necessary to use words

similar to the language usually used by your users.
2. **Thoughts**. Empathizing with students' doubts, concerns and aspirations allows the eLearning designer to create a path that addresses and resolves the barriers that frighten users the most, so as to be able to build a positive environment in which they can find themselves at ease.
3. **Feelings**. We have already talked about the **importance of emotions in eLearning**. Recognizing those who guide students is a fundamental step, because it allows you to create the empathy necessary to make each user feel at ease in a digital environment capable of understanding and managing the feelings and fears of those who are part of it.
4. **Actions**. Students will behave in a certain way based on the learning outcome. Observing their actions, therefore, can be useful for receiving feedback on your online course and understanding the effectiveness or otherwise of individual lessons.

When designing an eLearning experience, therefore, it is important to use empathy towards your users to get to know them better and reveal what their interests may be, but also which learning methods could be most advantageous for them. A student who feels understood is a student who feels more involved in the learning process: this will result in greater effectiveness in transmitting the concepts of the eLearning course.

The advantages brought by empathy

Using empathy to build and carry out a digital learning experience guarantees the effectiveness of the training path, because it leverages the needs and feelings of the user, who feels understood and involved in the training. The use of empathy in eLearning, therefore, leads to a series of advantages:

1. **Understand the real needs of students**. Through empathy, eLearning professionals can put themselves in their users' shoes to understand their true needs, aspirations and requirements. This is not a simple analysis of the preferences of the people who attend the course or of the general preferences of the target audience. Empathy allows us to reconstruct emotions, objectives and specific needs of the audience to whom the online course is aimed, so as to be able to provide a set of lessons tailored to the user, who is placed at the center of the training.
2. **Personalize the learning path**. Knowing their users allows the organizers of online courses to plan various more specific activities, which can satisfy the needs of different students, adapting the contents, learning methods and assessment tools to each one. This will increase user involvement in the learning process and also improve teaching understanding. The resulting training program will be effective and sought after by all types of students.
3. **Identify obstacles**. During the training course, users may encounter learning, understanding or navigation difficulties. Putting yourself in their shoes could help eLearning professionals to anticipate these obstacles and provide the right support to each user, to prevent these difficulties from compromising the success of the individual's learning path. In this way, each participant in the eLearning course can feel more accompanied and followed.
4. **Develop effective learning**. When the trainer is able to feel empathy for his students, the communication that passes between the two poles also benefits. In fact, users will feel completely at the center of the learning path, they will understand that they are understood and will be encouraged in the right direction. This will lead them to attend the course with greater enthusiasm and the teaching results will also be better. Empathizing with your audience also guarantees the trainer detailed feedback and allows him to correct his aim in case of dissatisfaction on the part of his students.
5. **Create dynamic learning**. Using empathy to connect with your users makes training constantly evolving and allows the creators of online courses to monitor the improvements of the participants in the lessons step by step, correcting the aim if necessary. This means that it is possible to modify the training course along the way, based on the needs of the students, their results and the new objectives they set themselves. What derives from this is dynamic learning, in continuous evolution, which leads the student to improve, because he perceives himself as the main actor of the training path, he feels understood and finds in the eLearning course the methods and tools most congenial to him to deal with all lessons.

These advantages demonstrate the importance of the role that empathy plays both in the planning phase of an eLearning course and in the actual transmission of the contents of the lessons of the online training course. Putting yourself in your users' shoes guarantees their greater involvement in the course, because they will feel at the center of the learning and will find a tailor-made path for each of them. The positive climate of understanding, help and possibility of customization that is created contributes to improving the results of the training and making the eLearning course more effective.