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Ux design for e-learning: what it is and why it matters

User experience at the heart of e-learning course design. Here's what it is and what it's for

School, work and leisure now also come through the screen. And in this ever-changing landscape of computers, smartphones and connections, the field of online education has also successfully entered. For this reason, e-learning courses, which aim to combine learning and technology, are becoming increasingly popular, thus giving students the opportunity to participate in classes at any time and from anywhere, as long as they have a medium (computer, tablet or smartphone) and an Internet connection. Giving new impetus to this trend has been the Covid-19 pandemic, which has forced people all over the world indoors, reducing the opportunities to get out and travel to places of work and education. And e-learning first took the place of and then steadily joined traditional learning. But for teaching to be successful and for the user to be satisfied with their journey, it is not enough to ensure that lessons are updated and explained online. It is necessary for the user to take home a positive experience of the time spent while learning. In this way, the learner is likely to be prompted to participate in other courses or to recommend the course he or she just completed to others. Therefore, it is critical to design the course by putting the user's needs at the center, so that we can create an experience that is meaningful and repeatable for them.

What is Ux design?

In order for the user to gather a positive experience, design work is necessary. That is why **User Experience Design (UXD)** is one of the main steps to go over, when you want to create an e-learning course. Ux design refers to the study process, which aims to increase user satisfaction and loyalty by working on the usability of the platform, accessibility to the courses, and fulfillment in the interaction between the student and the site on which the lessons are uploaded. It is about putting the user at the center, with his or her goals, needs, and limitations, to improve his or her experience during the course, ensuring that he or she achieves the goals set and personal satisfaction at the end of the lessons.

As Smart Strategy explains, the term User Experience was introduced in the 1990s by Donald Norman, a researcher and design professor, who felt the terms "usability" and "user interface" were not explanatory enough because they could not best explain the complex relationship between humans and the platforms they interact with. "I wanted to cover all aspects of the person interfacing with the system, including industrial design, interface, physical and manual interaction. Since then, the term has spread so widely that it is in danger of losing its meaning," Norman said.
User experience design, therefore, deals with several characteristic elements of e-learning course design. Specifically, Ux design includes:

- **Interface** design, that is, the part of the product that interacts with the user and is composed of graphical elements and content;
- The organization of information and **content**, so that it is easily usable and intuitively usable;
- The structuring of the **navigation**, as a guide to make it easier for the user to find the content.

The user at the center of Ux design

At the center of Ux design is the person, the learner. He is the subject on whom programming should focus, aimed primarily at understanding what **goals** the user needs to achieve with the experience. This could be new skills, deepening of certain subjects, a review of old procedures or an update.
Not only that. User experience also includes the behaviors, attitudes, and emotions felt by the learner in the course of training, and, for this, the Ux designer must consider as a whole what moods the user wants to feel while learning and interacting with the platform. Ux design, therefore, takes into account all aspects revolving around the user and the user's overall experience. For good user experience design, one can start by analyzing the following aspects:

1. What are the needs and challenges of the student;
2. What is the study path the user wants to take;

3. How to adapt the course to the student's needs;
4. How to make the lessons enjoyable for the user.

By properly designing the user experience, it is possible to make learning more enjoyable and satisfying, prompting the student to take other courses or to recommend the one they have just completed to others.

The benefits of good Ux design

Good user experience design brings several **benefits** to both the student participating in the course and the company that developed it. The user, in particular can experience the following benefits:

- An increase in enjoyment while taking the course, which is more enjoyable to follow;
- An increase in loyalty, which will lead the user to feel more comfortable on the platform and will tend to prefer it to others;
- Improved usability of the platform, made easier to use through good design.

Even companies that design e-learning courses, however, can gain benefits from good user experience design. In fact, the user loyalty generated by increased user enjoyment and ease of use of the system can bring with it several benefits:

- Increased sales, because the user may decide to take other courses or recommend them to other people;
- Reduced development costs, which decrease due to new sales;
- Increased efficiency, due to proper design.

The honeycomb of Ux design

To explain all the implicit facets of User Experience, Peter Marville created a honeycomb diagram, which contains the basic principles of a good user experience. To ensure a positive experience, the product developed by the company must be:

- **Useful**: it is important that the proposed product is useful in achieving the required goals and meeting the user's needs;
- **Usable**: the platform must be easy to use and intuitive so that the user can easily access all the content;
- **Desirable**: it is not enough for the course and platform to be useful and usable, but it is necessary that it attracts the user, also appealing to their emotional side, so as to lead to a positive experience;
- **Findable**: navigation must be simple and immediate, so that a user can quickly find what they were looking for and needed;
- **Accessible**: everyone must be able to access it. "Just as our buildings have elevators and ramps, our websites should be accessible to people with disabilities," Marville explains;
- **Credible**: it is necessary to reassure the user so that he or she can trust navigating the site where e-learning courses are offered;
- **Valuable**: the site must provide value, profit, which can lead to investments to improve user satisfaction.

Why is it important for e-learning?

User experience design is useful in the field of e-learning because it makes navigation easier and allows users to access learning courses more immediately. In this way, users do not have to waste time trying to understand how the platform works and can focus on the content.
Therefore, in the design of an e-learning course, user experience design becomes important: it is helpful in creating a positive and pleasant environment in which the learner can move easily, intuitively and quickly through the different functions of the system, so as to emphasize the learning itself.

All the tips for effective Ux design

User experience design is therefore critical to the success of the course and the achievement of user satisfaction. But how to make this design process effective? Here are some useful tips:

- Don't take anything for **granted**: to do this, you need to assume that the user is unable to interact with the interface. This will make it quick and easy to use. Navigation should become something naturare for the user, who should not pause to think about how to proceed.
- Keep **consistent**: the interface should keep certain elements constant, so that it is recognizable to the user using the platform. Therefore, it is good to headline the page clearly, placing the logo in the upper left corner, providing for the presence of a general menu in the upper right corner. Including a function that shows the progression of lessons and the user's path, always visible in the same position, can be useful.
- Keep in mind the possibility of learning on **different devices**, considering how they work and adapting the interface to each type of media, from computer to smartphone through tablet.
- Make the **status of the system** visible, to allow users to stay informed about the actions that are taking place and ensuring a prompt response.
- Aim for **simple language**, avoiding technical or overly complicated jargon, but referring back to real life.
- Maintain **flexibility** in the use of the platform, to meet the needs of both beginners and users with a more advanced level of knowledge, allowing each student to customize their experience on the platform. It would be useful to program a system that allows those who are not experts to be guided step by step on the platform, while those who are able to move on their own to continue independently.
- Prefer **clarity**, adopting a simple design without overloading users with unnecessary information.
- Offer **help** if needed, making a contact between the user and the platform visible and easily accessible so that any errors can be resolved.

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