

Goal of a designer

Profession



The ultimate goal of Instructional Design is to quickly and effectively teach people a new skill, or system of thinking. Elliot Masie, editor of TechLearn Trends, suggests " all training is about behavioral stimulation that changes human beings on some level." (Masie, 1998, p. 14) This is a tall order " to change human beings", and therefore, any professional instructor that accepts this challenge must ask plenty of fundamental questions first. These essential questions are part of a process known as Needs Assessment.

An instructor needs this information to choose tools for the program; the more you know your audience, both customer and learners, the more successful the program will be. There are several need assessment models to follow, but I will use " The Zemke-Kramlinger Model of the Major Human and Organizational Factors that Affect People Performance in an Organization". Their model asks hard questions in three different categories:

Without this information, the designer is only guessing.

Once a designer is confident the needs assessment has provided a solid foundation to start building a program, different tools, or media, should be considered. The variety of tools ranges from simple (print) to high tech (satellite dishcommunication). The American Society for Training and Development has published a book that outlines an eight-step process for assisting in selection of the proper tools. The steps are as follows:

1. Understand all the training tools available with the benefits and drawbacks of their use.

2. List the media delivery that will work for your audience at their capability level.
3. Evaluate your media list with the goals of training, and level of audience in mind.
5. Synthesize findings and establish "core media".
6. Consider auxiliary media that would augment your "core media".
7. Identify any implementation issues, organizational requirements, or technical limitations which could prevent successful use of your "core media".
8. Prepare your conclusion in a formal report for management.

With all the preparation out of the way, just what tools are we talking about?

Here is a list of possibilities:

With information on the objectives, learners, the company, budget, constraints etc., a program can be designed that is tailored for customer and learner.

In an article titled "Crank Up Your Coolness Quotient", designers are warned of the dangers in making a program too flashy, or cool, using multimedia and sacrificing the learning. The pull is understandable. Using a multimedia program, an instructor can challenge the student to read, watch, listen, guess, explore, try and fail. This much interaction gives the material more time to assimilate in the student's experience. For all the pluses, there are just as many negatives.

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The drawback that stops many programs from developing in multimedia is the cost. The bells and whistles are very expensive; yet, depending on the situation, the cost may be justified. On the other hand, is the technology over the student capability? What about losing the learning in the technology? Does the client have the equipment that will run advanced programming? The instructor that has performed all the necessary front-end research does not worry about these questions; the answers are in the report handed to management.