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Do We Need a New Instructional Design Methodology?

Instructional Design

Instructional design practice for developing online environments deserves its full attention. Many see an online environment simply as a delivery point or interface in which to deploy content. Learning occurs within an electronic learning community when learners interact with each other as well as the content. Learning within an online environment also can be a result of users interacting with content that has been delivered in an online format such as computer based training (CBT). In both views, the basic tenets for designing instruction need to employ the existing methodology in the most economical way. Do we need a new Instructional Design Methodology, revised methodology or can we rely on existing techniques without change? The argument by Nickols presented in Gordon and Zemkes', article, (2000) noting ISD takes too long, costs too much... (p 46) has some merit but it fails to offer solutions that can speed up the process without cutting corners.

One of the biggest problems instructional designers face is the delivery system is chosen before an adequate analysis has determined if it supports the appropriate method which will increase the probabilities that learning will occur. "*Develop training or xyz course that can be used on our intranet and make sure it has some streaming video and cool graphics... we need it online in 3 weeks.*" It cannot be argued that any given medium or attribute must be present in order for learning to occur (Clark, 1994). Efficiency outcome concerns over smart ID practice obfuscates... an inherent ideal that the medium should be evaluated as to its unique ability to bring about some type of alteration of intellectual behavior or thinking process (Kenny, 2001).

Online learning in many corporate camps is a trendy solution that on the surface appears to be the most cost effective means to deliver training, however as Sims, Dobbs & Hand (2002) point out, without a clear understanding of the purpose of the product and the stakeholders who have investment and /or interest in its outcomes, the chances of success are reduced (p.137). Current instructional design methodology isn't the problem but executive ignorance therefore the author argues a new methodology is not warranted. Fundamentally, different context require different treatments in terms of outlining not only what learners are expected to learn, but how they are supposed to go about it.

To the degree ID methods are used depends solely in the environment to which they are allowed to be used. In a corporate environment more often than not, in addition to budget constraints, the absence of highly trained instructional designers and poor teaming are duly noted. Budgetary and logistical bumblng leads to performance inefficiencies and poor training implementation, often blaming ISD process in general. The use of instructional design models are proven tools and should be the starting point for any instructional design effort. If we think about a model in its truest definition (A schematic description of a system, theory, or phenomenon that accounts for its known or inferred properties and may be used for further study of its characteristics), then we should be able to outline the appropriate methods to use in developing purposeful training.

ADDIE presents a broad starting point for applying instructional design methods as it outlines key steps that should occur. However, context must be considered to get the best value so the use of multiple models is recommended. Gustafson and Branches taxonomy (2002) is inclusive to all models that seek to design instruction. The purpose

behind the taxonomy is to outline characteristics that are conducive to the goals of a specific type of instructional development, which demonstrate the outputs can be adapted to various delivery systems including online learning.

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