The 30 Golden Rules Of eLearning Design

The ''never forget'' rules to design by

eLearning Made Inspirational

Too often today you will find organizations hastily slap-together a bunch of PowerPoint slides, upload them into a program like Articulate, click "publish" and call it "eLearning".

The reality is that this type of eLearning development is just flat-out ineffective. Any Instructional Designer will tell you that in order to create effective training, there are certain design principles and models that should be leveraged. The art of Instructional Design is often a complex and highly psychological art to master, with so many layers to keep top of mind, it's no wonder Instructional Designers forget the most critical aspects of eLearning course design. With this in mind, New Leaf Technologies have developed this mini eGuide for eLearning professionals as a means to sharpen your Instructional Design know – how.

#1 Only Include The Bare Necessities

You should only include the bare essentials and cut out the rest. Analyse all of your eLearning content, both text and visuals, to determine what's important and what is unnecessary. **Every sentence, image, and graphic must earn a spot in your responsive eLearning course design.**

#2 Customize Your eLearning Content

Consider designing a master layout for mobile devices and another for PCs and laptops, it's important to customize your eLearning content based on the device type.

#3 Mobile Design Should NEVER Be An Afterthought

This goes hand-in-hand with the last golden rule. Start thinking about mobile design BEFORE you begin the eLearning course development process in order to avoid lengthy revisions. Address all of these concerns from day one so that you can determine how many versions you'll have to create.

Print this mini guide out and give it to your design team as part of a flash card style reminder exercise

#4 ALWAYS Do A Test Run

Never hit publish without testing, testing, testing. Do your own user testing and view the eLearning course on a variety of different devices. Get your eLearning team and colleagues to test out the buttons. Make sure that everything is clearly legible and intact. You might also consider asking a group of learners to try out the eLearning course so that you can get their feedback. *Refer to #23 for another important testing rule of thumb.*

#5 Start SMART

Set SMART Objectives: The objectives of your eLearning should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.
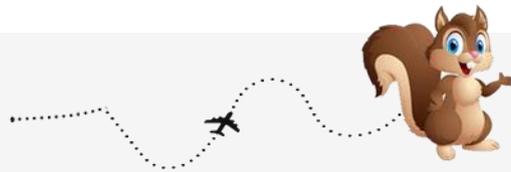
#6 Remember Learning Styles

Present information in a variety of ways to appeal to the various learning styles.

#7 Include Instructions

Navigating an eLearning course shouldn't be a mystery, always include instructions so users don't get stuck.

#8 Use First-Person

Write the content so that it uses a first-person voice.

#9 Assessments Matter

Always include some form of assessment, but not just on memorizing. Also include questions to assess business context.

#10 Avoid Distraction

Don't overdue the graphics, sometimes simple text is enough to drive home a point. Stick with a standard colour-scheme.

#11 Include Exercises

Engage your learners by including exercises to split-up the content.

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#12 The right tools

Ensure you have implemented a Learner Management System (LMS) that allows you to easily create interactive and inspiring learning journeys. Effective learning programs need to be accommodated by an LMS that offers design capabilities suited to your learning goals. aNewSpring Learning Platform is a good example of this.

#13 Pay Attention to Course Flow

Your courses should follow a logical progression and navigational pattern so as to avoid confusion.

#14 Break-up Content

Don't overload a screen with too much text or too many graphics. Breaking-up content into smaller chunks will allow for better learning retention.

#15 Grab their attention

Interactivity is what makes an Instructional Design page different from the usual webpage design. Creativity is unlimited and one can easily develop interactive content using resources such as questions, simulations, audio, and video tools, to name a few.

#16 User Interface and User Experience

The user interface is among the most important aspects of an eLearning course, considering this is the main function that guides the entire eLearning process flow. Remember to keep a smooth flow across menus, buttons, images, colour scheme and overall look and feel.

#17

APPEAL TO EMOTION

It is absolute fact that emotions and how we feel about any given subject, greatly impacts and influences our decision making. The art of accessing this basic human instinct is imperative when designing eLearning.

How does your content and learning journey make your learners feel? Interested, excited, inspired or fearful, bored or overwhelmed?

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#18 Create Levels of Difficulty

When building e-learning, increase challenges as skills develop. You should have a sense of levels. Each level increases based on new functionality and new degrees of challenge. One way you could do this is turn off the help during the assessment and provide help during training.

#19 Increase Learner Control

You should allow the learner to control the pace, sequence, learning strategy, and completion.

#20 Add personalization.

The future of eLearning lies in personalization. New technologies and platforms enable learning to be personalized to meet user needs and accessed anywhere and whenever desired. New Leaf Technologies provide the aNewSpring Learning Platform, which is a great example of this.

#21 Link to supporting information and/or resources.

Use the end of a module as an opportunity to share additional learning opportunities and to get the learner to apply what they have learned. Consider the final screen an opportunity to launch learners into something else.

#22 A memorable experience

This has to be one of the most important elements in any eLearning journey. It is imperative to ensure your course design opens the door for ultimate learner retention. With a use of mixed media, audio, video, animation and smart layout styles, your learning needs to be made memorable and these elements can help you accomplish this goal.

23 Evaluate your eLearning journey... consistently.

As with all products, evaluating your course for improvements on a regular basis is a must. Perform post published quality checks and rectify issues that may hinder your course and make testing a rule, especially after the public release of your course. Test your eLearning course effectiveness with peer reviews, pilot tests and usability tests.

#24 Use cues

Bold vocabulary terms, red circles, underlining, and highlighting are all excellent cues that direct a user's attention to essential content

#25

Provide job aids

Try to include job aids in your eLearning courses. They are an excellent opportunity to include important content in an easy to digest format. Checklists, reference guides, lesson summaries, FAQS, and searchable definitions of key terms are just a few examples of useful job aids.

#26

Use effective writing.

To use writing effectively in eLearning design:

- Stick with a narrative tone of voice, one that tells a story;
- Avoid "corporate speak," a tone that will make learners skip over the text;
- Write in short text blocks as long text blocks are difficult to read online;
- And use subheadings and titles regularly and often because online readers skim and scan text.

#27

Don't try the user's patience

In eLearning, make sure your content is optimized for quick loading. And check all your processes. How many steps do learners need to take to access the content? Can you reduce the number of steps? If less is required from the learner to use the course, the more time they have to learn the content.

#28

Explore the psychology behind learning behaviours

If you want to provide your audience with the most meaningful and memorable eLearning experiences, you need to understand them. You must be aware of their motivations, potential distractions, and emotional factors that come into play. This requires you to explore the psychology that's involved in the learning process and examine the most basic human traits.

#29

Bite sized Learning

Micro training delivers short bursts of content for learners to study at their convenience. Content can take many forms, from text to full-blown interactive multimedia, but should always be short.

Using learning technologies to develop and deploy effective online training resources is part of the job description. As such, you need to stay current with tools and trends that can benefit your online learners and streamline your work process.

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Stay up to date with learning technologies and trends

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THANKS FOR READING

We hope you enjoyed reading our mini eGuide. We enjoy teaching as much as learning, so stay tuned for more bite-sized eLearning focused mini eGuides.

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