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"How to Create a Course or Tutorial"

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Jim,

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Ian Panton
Cornwall, United Kingdom



In today's issue...

How to Create a Course or Tutorial
By Jim Daniels

Have you ever considered creating a course or tutorial on a topic that you feel passionately about? If so, you might be confused or even overwhelmed at the idea of getting started. Fortunately, there is a proven process available to help you complete the task.

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To create a course, one proven model to use is the ADDIE approach. (You can actually find that term at wikipedia.org.) The ADDIE model is not a template or a document; it is rather a process to assist you in creating your course most efficiently. This process is used by many instructional designers and training developers.

The five steps of the ADDIE process are: (A)nalysis, (D)esign, (D)evelopment, (I)mplementation and (E)valuation.

Analysis

During this step you take time to think about your intended audience. Your goal in this step is to identify the gaps that you hope to fill with the course you are creating. You do not want to create a course that is too easy which could become boring to your students. You do not want to create a course that is too difficult which could become frustrating to your students.

Start your analysis by asking these types of questions: Who are the people in my intended audience? What are their needs concerning this topic? Do they have any prior knowledge of this topic? Do they know and understand the jargon or technical terms for this topic?

Once you have answered these and additional questions you may have concerning your audience, you can then begin to formulate your objectives. Your objectives will indicate exactly what your learners will know after taking your course. If you have analyzed your audience deeply enough you will be able to identify any objectives that will be unnecessary or that need to be included for this particular audience.

You can have one or more objectives and each should be stated as follows:

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to [indicate what they will be able to do here].

For example, for a web design course one objective would be "At the completion of this course, the student will be able to add an image to a web page."

Design

This is the main part of the process. This is the step where you begin to write your content for your course. Using the objectives you defined in the Analysis stage, you focus your content around meeting those objectives. As you write content, always ask yourself, "What objective does this block of content fulfill?"

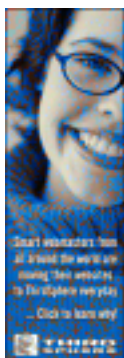
Start your design process by asking these questions: Considering my objectives, what is the best way to organize my content? Should I include activities and exercises? How should the content be presented to the learner? How will I know if the student has learned what I have taught? What is the best delivery format for my course?

Your answer to these questions will help you select how your instructional pages will look, the layout of text and pictures, navigation through your content, what types of activities you will have and how you will evaluate or test learners' grasp of the content.

One big issue to resolve is the delivery format. Consider what format would work best for your course. The best choices include an instructional ebook with text and pictures, a private member-only website with web based tutorials, or an audio or video based presentation. Whatever option you choose will have some effect on your design - and your design may have an effect on course delivery. You will need to closely examine the relationship between design and delivery for your particular topic.

For example, a course on beginning web design might be presented in self-paced online format. Examples of HTML code and samples can be provided in a text format. Learners can review their results by checking their webpage to see if their page was created properly. However, a course in sales copywriting might be delivered better via a video presentation, with students following along as the expert crafts some actual copy.

(Continued after this important message.)



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Development

Ideally, if you spend most of your time in the Analysis and Design steps, the amount of time needed in Development is drastically reduced. At this point, most of your content should have been written, however some content may be created in this step. In Development you begin to create your course, be it an ebook, video presentation, etc. You may or may not personally take a part in developing the course depending on your delivery format.

If you are not personally creating the course, you will receive a prototype from the developer. At this time, you would review the prototype to make sure that your design has merit and make any necessary adjustments.

Implementation

This is the step you have waited for. Finally delivering your course to the learners! Depending on your delivery format, this step is your product launch or course roll-out.

While I could spend hours writing about how to successfully launch a product on the Internet, I'll reserve that for another issue of this newsletter. In fact, there are product launch formula courses available online that teach some of the finer techniques of launching a new course. I suggest you find a good one and implement the strategies suggested within.

Evaluation

Once your course has been delivered, regardless of the medium, you must evaluate, evaluate, evaluate! This is not the evaluation of student progress in your course, but rather an evaluation of your content, design and delivery.

Ask these questions during your evaluation: Are the students enjoying taking my course? Did the students reach the learning objectives? Where can I make improvements to content, activities and delivery of my course?

The goal here is to understand whether you are meeting your objectives with your content and providing a course that is not boring and not frustrating to the learners. Once your evaluation is complete, take the information you have learned and revamp your course to fulfill any deficiencies you may have uncovered. When the new course is ready, you can re-launch it as version 2.0!

There is great satisfaction that comes with writing and delivering a course or tutorial. You may choose to create a course to sell for profit, or simply because you love a particular topic. Regardless of topic or your motivation to create a course, the best advice for course creation without frustration is to use an instructional design model, such as ADDIE, spend considerable time in Analysis and Design and Evaluate and update your course.

That's it for today's gazette. See you in a couple weeks.

To your success,
Jim Daniels
JDD Publishing Co.

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