23
Top eLearning Professionals

The Free eLearning Professionals' Book

How to become an eLearning Professional

eLearning INDUSTRY

The Free eBook: How to become an eLearning Professional

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Introduction

BY CHRISTOPHER PAPPAS

This is not your average looking, cliché reproducing, metaphysical, theory-loving **free eLearning eBook.** Do not expect to read any speculations, rhetorical questions, and abstractions related to **eLearning.** This is merely a powerful weapon in the hands of those who are truly interested in becoming the field's **Top eLearning Professionals.** Make no mistake however. It's addressed only to those with a passion for eLearning, eagerness to evolve, desperate to reach their potential, hungry for uniqueness, and ambitious enough people that want to make a difference in someone else's life.

The **free How to Become an eLearning Professional eBook** is filled with the knowledge, wisdom, experience and inspiration of carefully selected **eLearning professionals**, with long-standing, **successful eLearning careers**, innovative projects up their sleeves, impressive **eLearning portfolios** and even more impressive CVs. All of them create a highly influential **eLearning team of experts**, but each one has his or her own distinctive path, skills and know-how, leading to the creation of a multidimensional, and highly helpful for those who want to advance their **eLearning careers**, professional mosaic. This can only mean one thing. What you are about to read is not some generic **eLearning advice** you could easily find in any "eLearning for Dummies" manual. This free **eLearning eBook** contains hot eLearning tips, secret concepts, specific steps and insider information that will help you become a **top-notch eLearning professional.**

Enjoy reading this and our subsequent **free eLearning eBook series** and feel free to contact our team of professionals.

Christopher Pappas

Founder of The eLearning Industry's Network. Currently, the ***eLearning Industry*** has a network of more than 75,000 professionals involved in the **eLearning Industry.**

Christopher holds an MBA, and an M.Ed. (Learning Design) from BGSU.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY CAMMY BEAN

Let's assume you fell into the eLearning field completely by accident and that your primary skills and expertise lie elsewhere. Perhaps you're a subject matter expert in a critical business area. Or maybe you've got killer writing skills and someone figured, "hey, she/he could write good training materials". Whatever your path to this field -and most of us have similar stories- here you are. It's time to step up to the plate and get passionate about your work commit to making eLearning courses that don't bore people to tears, but instead inspire and motivate them to learn a new skill, change a certain behavior, or improve their performance. My top tip for becoming an eLearning Pro is really just that: commitment. Decide that you're going to do good work and then go out there and figure out how.

Here are some ideas, taken from my very own personal life story:

- Check out the Kineo website. Yeah, I work for Kineo, I know. But many years ago, I was just a fan and read all the rapid guides and top tips. It opened my eyes to better eLearning practice and, well, now here I am.
- Read blogs on eLearning and instructional design. While you're at it, start your own blog to document and share what you're learning. My blog got me connected to a whole world of eLearning professionals, who had made that commitment and were willing to share their knowledge.
- Go to eLearning conferences (the eLearning Guild's DevLearn and ASTD's TechKnowledge are two good ones). It really does make a difference to connect face-to-face with other people who are in the trenches, doing what you're doing.
- Read books on eLearning and general design. Some of my recent faves: **Change by Design** by Tim Brown, **100 Things Every Designer Needs to Know About People** by Susan Weinschenk, and **Design for How People Learn** by Julie Dirksen.
- Finally, try new approaches and see what works. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. This is exactly how we learn!

Cammy Bean

Position: VP of Learning Design

Company: Kineo

Short Bio

Cammy has been collaborating with various organizations to design online learning programs since 1996.

An active speaker and blogger, Cammy gets fired up about instructional design, avoiding the trap of clicky-clicky bling-bling, and finding ways to use technology to create real behavior change.

You can read her blog at:

http://cammybean.kineo.com.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY TIM BUFF

My route into eLearning followed a move to the UK's largest instructor led training (ILT) IT training company back in the early 90s. Before then I'd worked in a number of IT companies as a finance and also an HR specialist. But it was while I was working with ILT, that I developed a real interest in combining emerging technologies to reach people in new and more effective ways. That interest has since played a big part in my life; so much so that I set up a company to focus on it.

Most folks I come across in eLearning seem to have taken a similarly circuitous and indirect route. In our US operation, I see people who are academically qualified in a closely related field at College, but in the UK that is much rarer and the industry draws more upon media people and sometimes qualified teachers. But in both regions people cross over from widely unrelated fields with different academic specialties.

There are low barriers to entry in setting up a small eLearning company. But selling its services will usually be a lot harder, but with modern tools and right amount of time and effort, it is easy to get started. But to really learn the craft, then I would always advise starting with an established company who can locate you alongside experienced people, who will be able to mentor and guide your training and personal development. Experience counts for a lot, so get this while working alongside a good team. How to use a particular tool is less important, as modern tools are quick to learn. The key to success is to appreciate how people learn, understand the thought process that goes into instructional design, what works well, and a range of different ways of achieving goals.

Tim Buff

Position: Chief Learning Strategist and CEO at CM Group

Company: CM Group Ltd

Short Bio

Tim is the CEO and Chief Learning Strategist at CM Group.

The Company is a major supplier of eLearning and mobile learning solutions to large international organizations, such as Microsoft, RBS Bank, Orange/EE, CA, Intel, Royal Navy, BAE, Three Mobile, QNB, British Gas, Nat West Bank, etc.

Tim's role is to help people and companies design and implement online and mobile blended learning strategies.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY BRANDON CARSON

Instructional Designers should consider applying principles of design thinking to help them create more effective learning experiences. Design Thinking and Instructional Design can easily be seen as two sides of the same coin. To get started, focus on two key design thinking principles: empathy and prototyping.

Empathy. First, observe and interview high-performing, typical, and low-performing members of your target audience separately. You will discover meaningful insights that may not be exposed when investigating them as a whole. Second, interview people that use the product or service your audience creates in their typical performance context. The goal is to gain empathy from two perspectives: creators and users. Understanding both perspectives will help you design for actual needs.

Prototyping. Smart companies focus on learning about their users. Like smart companies, you want to invest your time designing, building, testing and iterating learning experiences to bring value to your users, which is why I always recommend prototyping. A process I've used in the past includes:

- Compare and contrast more than one design with users. Feedback will have more meaning when users compare different examples against each other.
- Ask your users "why". Prototype to uncover what works and what doesn't. Constantly ask your users what parts of the experience resonate more than others.
- Observe and discuss. You may create several prototypes, but the goal from each is to discover key learnings, and then iterate to avoid missing the mark on creating a great experience.
- It's important to prototype quickly, and not worry about each iteration being perfect. Rapid prototyping will enable you to explore new ideas, build faster, and will have a huge impact on your end result.

Just by adding these two design thinking principles to your process, you will be able to gain richer insight into the challenge presented by the learning initiative, and quickly become an eLearning Pro!

Brandon Carson

Position: Strategic Lead, Digital Learning

Company: Entirenet

Short Bio

Brandon Carson is an instructional designer, learning consultant and eLearning analyst.

He is the recipient of ASTD's BEST award, eLearning Guild's People's Choice Award, eLearning Guild Gold award for Best Online Learning and was nominated for Sun Microsystem's Innovations in Learning Award.

Brandon holds a Master's Degree in Education with a focus on Learning Technology. Brandon currently works for Entirenet, a Seattle-based eLearning Development agency. He lives in San Francisco.

You can read his blog at: blog.totallearner.com

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY DAVID B. DEMYAN

I believe the field of eLearning has never been more open to new practitioners looking to transition from similar careers. The majority of my own career was as a technical communicator and occasional eLearning developer. That all changed about eight years ago when I was asked to manage a department that included the learning function in a high tech company. Suddenly, it was my full time job to be not only an expert developer, but also mentor to others in the department.

As a professional eLearning consultant today, I see evidence this will be the decade of the eLearning revolution. Currently, every educational endeavor -commercial, academic, and governmental- focuses on how learning can be streamlined and made accessible online.

I think it is important to bring new talent into the field, to help keep innovation alive and help us all grow professionally. I advise people interested in joining the profession to start by tuning in to professional groups, such as those available on LinkedIn. Once you join the group, you get advice about tools and techniques, best practices, methodologies, and adult learning.

The question of which tool is the best will occur. Be aware of trends. Ever notice how learning tool development mirrors the industry? A few years ago, the term Rapid eLearning did not exist. Today, through aggressive tool development, it is a reality and in demand by organizations eager to capitalize on its simplicity. Rapid eLearning means much more than presentation software with “add-ins”. Savvy pros are incorporating interactivity, games, assessments, polished graphics and video. This type of professional output appeals not only to clients, but also to learners who recognize they can gain knowledge quickly and easily.

Look for ways to “mentor a new eLearning pro”. Imagine the positive influence we can have on others’ careers if we show them how to get started in the business!

David B. Demyan

Position: Instructional Designer/Developer

Company: Spectorial Corporation

Short Bio

David Demyan is a rapid eLearning specialist with broad expertise in knowledge transfer of technical subject matter.

He specializes in instructional design and development, with a keen interest in Articulate Storyline, Camtasia Studio, and Adobe Creative Suite, while he provides customized training in Articulate Storyline and Camtasia Studio. This training mainly focuses on accomplishing training goals, using rapid development tools and methodologies.

His goal is to help companies and individuals create cutting-edge eLearning materials and information deliverables that meet or exceed expectations.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY JOEL GARDNER, PHD

In my experience, there are three main strategies for becoming an eLearning professional – Learn, Apply, and Change. But you must be willing to pay the price and use these strategies:

1. **Learn** – Make it a priority to learn new technologies, theories and processes for creating effective eLearning. When I became an instructional designer at a large university, I immediately became responsible for creating and managing literally dozens of online courses. I made it a point to constantly learn relevant, new eLearning technologies so that I was better prepared to design and develop effective materials for my courses.
2. **Apply** – Be sure to use the technologies, processes, and theories you have learned. Learning is only effective if you apply it, so be sure to apply what you have learned. In many of the eLearning courses I have developed, I have found it necessary to apply unique technologies and theories to unique design problems. By forcing myself to use these new technologies and approaches, I have gained more flexibility and strength in what I can do as an eLearning developer.
3. **Improve** – To remain creative and competitive, it is crucial that you change, adapt and grow as an eLearning professional. Hold yourself to high standards! Learn from your mistakes! Improve on your success! In my career, I have always sought ways that I can make myself more valuable to the organization and people I serve. I am far from perfect, but by constantly working to make myself better, I am moving closer and closer to the ideal.

The most effective, successful professionals are constantly learning, they take the time to apply what they have learned, and they continually work to improve themselves. Do everything you can to use these strategies, and you will find great success as an eLearning professional!

Joel Gardner, PhD

Position: Program Chair, Master's of Instructional Design and Performance Technology

Company: Franklin University

Short Bio

Dr. Joel Gardner is a scholar and educator in the field of instructional technology and design. He is currently serving as the Program Chair of the Instructional Design and Performance Technology Master's Degree at Franklin University.

He began his career as a corporate trainer for a large financial services organization, and realizing his interest in effective training and instructional design, he pursued an MS and PhD in Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences at Utah State University. As a scholar, Dr. Gardner has published several peer-reviewed articles on the effective use of instructional strategies and educational technology.

He has worked as an Instructional Designer in a variety of settings and has taught both online and face-to-face at the graduate level at several institutions of higher education.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY PARKER A. GRANT

There are many ways to become an eLearning Pro and there is no one right way. **Every professional has a different "mental model"** of how eLearning should be designed, developed, and delivered. If you want to become an eLearning Pro, my biggest "tip" is this – **decide if you want to design or develop eLearning.** Make this decision after you have experienced both. If you focus on one discipline, you will become a much better designer or a much better developer.

For me, personally, I chose to be a designer. Although I have developed eLearning programs in the past, my passion is in **learning design**. Early in my career, I was a mechanical designer for a Fortune 50 company, where I needed to solve engineering problems for gas turbine engines on a daily basis. Later in my career, this design experience transferred to my experience as a technical trainer, instructional designer, and eLearning developer.

After leaving the corporate world in 2008, I started a consulting business and chose to focus on learning design. This decision helped us better serve and partner with eLearning development businesses. So **if you choose to focus on one discipline, you will advance your skills** to the point of being recognized as a "pro" in that discipline.

If you choose to be a designer, here is another helpful tip – **do some solid research on adult and experiential learning.** This research will help you apply best principles of learning in any program you design. For example, analogies are an important part of the learning process, as you will discover from research. By **applying analogies** in eLearning, you will increase the likelihood of helping learners grasp the material being taught and transfer this back to their workplace.

Good luck with your quest to be an eLearning Pro!

Parker A. Grant

Position: Learning Designer

Company: Learning Connects, LLC

Short Bio

Parker Grant is a Learning Designer and Founder of Learning Connects, LLC.

Parker is an award-winning and visionary learning specialist with 21 years of creating adult learning solutions for corporate and business environments. He leverages extensive knowledge in global training management, instructional design, and numerous cutting-edge adult learning strategies.

As a PhD Candidate in Adult & Experiential Learning, Parker has a passion for bridging research-based adult learning principles with educational technologies and classroom training to help create more effective learning environments. He has delivered adult learning presentations at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning conference, World Aviation Training conference, and the National Safety Council conference in the US.

Author of 'How to Use Analogies in eLearning' article in eLearning Industry blog.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY MATTHEW GUYAN

When I think about my career to date, I realize that I've been fortunate to work in different learning environments –classroom, online and within the workplace. The one thing they all have in common is that you always need to think from a learner's perspective in the design and delivery of the learning experience. This is especially important for eLearning because unlike the other two environments, you are not there interacting with the learners and receiving feedback. Something that prevents you from making adjustments as you go. So my first tip is to ask yourself: Could you honestly sit through your own eLearning course and find it a worthwhile learning experience?

I've also realized there are many other things you can do to become an eLearning pro:

- Don't think of an eLearning course as an information dump. Think about what your learners need to do with that information after the course is finished and design around that.
- Motivate your learners. Incorporate elements that give them some autonomy and develop their competence as they complete their eLearning course.
- Be a learner yourself and keep learning. There's always something new to discover that will not only help you think from a learner's perspective, but will also boost your skills. Look for new books, blogs, websites, magazines and journals.
- Spend time reflecting – take a step back and think about your projects. What went well? What did you learn? and what can be improved next time?
- Develop a Personal Learning Network (PLN) – connect with others in this field via social media, conferences and associations.
- Get involved with your PLN – don't lurk forever and share your experiences, ideas and information with others.

Matthew Guyan

Position: Learning and Development Officer

Company: Lake Macquarie City Council (NSW, Australia)

Short Bio

Matt has been working in L&D since 2007 and has experience as a classroom facilitator, workplace assessor and Instructional Designer. As an ID, he has designed courses for online, instructor led and on-the-job learning environments.

He's also completing a Master of Education in Educational Psychology at the University of NSW.

He blogs at www.learningsnippets.wordpress.com

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY LIZ HARDY, PHD

Strategic communication is the surest route to becoming an e-learning pro.

Good communication is at the heart of online teaching.

Everything depends on it.

When you're strategic about how you communicate, both you, and your students benefit. I use this approach every day as an eLearning pro.

Here's how I do it.

Meet my new online learner, Debbie. She works part-time and has two small children – she's busy, stressed and eLearning is new to her.

I use communication strategically to:

- **Establish rapport** – I welcome her to the course, using friendly but professional language and tone. If she trusts me, she's more likely to ask for help than drop out.
- **Build her confidence** – I give her timely and constructive comments on her work. She's making good progress, and will likely complete the course.
- **Keep her focused** – Debbie's busy, so my instructions are clear and brief. She won't waste time wondering what to do next.
- **Ask her for feedback** – Debbie appreciates my help, and says so in writing. This is evidence I can use to advance my career.

So strategic communication achieves two key outcomes.

1 It supports your students, helping them have a positive experience and complete the course successfully.

2 Higher course completions and glowing feedback demonstrate that you're doing a good job.

This is a clever approach to communication. It proves to your students and colleagues that you're an eLearning pro.

Liz Hardy, PhD

Position: eLearning Expert & Communications Specialist

Company: DrLizHardy.com & ElearningTrainer.com

Short Bio

Dr. Liz Hardy runs two websites, which make life easier for online teachers and online learners.

At DrLizHardy.com, she helps online teachers apply smart communication strategies to their students and their careers. At ElearningTrainer.com she shows new and nervous online students why eLearning is not as scary as it looks.

Liz holds degrees and diplomas in several disciplines, including English, Adult Education, Business, and Journalism.

She has worked with over 3,000 online learners in 23 papers, from beginners to graduates.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY ANITA S. HORSLEY, M.ED.

Becoming an eLearning Pro takes passion, knowledge, and dedication. Then you have to have these four essential ingredients: education, skills, experience, and the ability to market.

1. **Education:** Having formal education and/or eLearning certifications is extremely important in becoming an eLearning Professional. If you're looking for an eLearning job you'll notice that most agencies are requiring a Masters degree in addition to some form of credible eLearning certification.
2. **Skills:** Becoming an eLearning professional doesn't happen over night! You have to learn multiple types of software. Additionally, troubleshooting software issues is also an important skill to have. Other skills to becoming an eLearning Pro, to name just a few, are: being creative, ability to generate a storyboard, and good script writing skills. Not to mention being organized and disciplined.
3. **Experience:** Having education and skills allows you to start building your experience. Understand the content and, if you haven't already, organize meetings with subject matter experts. You should always consider the outcome of your course to determine what behavior you want to change. Becoming an eLearning Pro also means that you analyze course completions, so that you can understand how behavior has or has not changed and to continually improve your courses. Experience means you spend hours and hours developing, editing, reviewing, and troubleshooting to get it right.
4. **Marketing:** Once you have the education, skills, and experience, then you also need to know how to market yourself. What is your niche? How are you branding yourself? Social media provides an avenue to be an eLearning professional on an international level. As an eLearning professional, it is imperative for you to be able to communicate effectively the benefits and qualities of your courses and programs. Describing the significance of your program and your development expertise will ensure that you gain the recognition and support of your colleagues and intended audience. Think about the importance of your course and communicate the value to your team, your network, and the world!

Anita S. Horsley, M.Ed.

Position: Owner & President

Company: CALEX Learning Consultants, LLC

Short Bio

Anita Horsley has been teaching instructor-led and train-the-trainer courses since 1998. As a firefighter, she implemented the Health and Safety Program. She received National Instructor certifications and national Train-the-Trainer Fitness Certifications.

As the Training and Development Specialist for the Oregon State Fire Marshal, she implemented from inception the eLearning track. She has been designing and developing eLearning courses for adult learners since 2009.

She has a Masters degree in Education and is an Adobe Certified Expert in Captivate. Currently, she is the Founder and President of CALEX Learning Consultants, LLC, contracting with Engage Systems LLC and Ledet and Associates, teaching Adobe Captivate and other software. She also provides eLearning design, development and one-on-one online instruction.

Anita is a professional speaker at eLearning conferences nationwide. She is also an author for Packt Publishing - published Fast Track to Adobe Captivate 6, a tutorial course with videos about the fundamentals of using Adobe Captivate. Anita volunteers as an Adobe Community Expert on several forums, and provides webinars and articles for ASTD, Adobe, and the eLearning Industry. She is a technical reviewer for Adobe and Packt Publishing and has a blog "Crazy About Captivate" that provides written and video tutorials about Adobe Captivate.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY KEN HUBBELL

Several years ago I found myself in a bit of a jam. I made the "mistake" of opening my mouth and declaring that the courseware we were developing at company-not-to-be-mentioned was not fit for delivery. To be more specific, the writing was abysmal. The content was a proofreader's worst nightmare: passive voice, spelling errors, improper use of punctuation, poor grammar, and little or no continuity from one page to the next. The saddest part was that each of the "writers" had college degrees, many with Masters or Doctorates in instructional design. My "reward" for pointing out the flaws in our course content was for me to quickly assemble a proofreading team to address the faulty content and develop a process to keep the situation from ever happening again.

So, my number one tip for anyone wanting to become an eLearning Pro is to "learn how to write." While there are any number of online resources to help you become a better writer, let me highlight a few of the methods we employed for our eLearning programs.

1. Turn on spelling and grammar checking (you should never have a spelling error with today's technologies)
2. Use punctuation (yes, it really is that simple)
3. Create the story first (do not use a storyboard template)
4. Write in Active Voice (this helps keep the reader engaged)
5. Read your draft out loud (if it sounds strange, edit it)
6. Read your draft to another person (preferably the subject matter expert) to make sure it does not sound strange to them
7. After writing, create a storyboard and add visuals to compliment your narrative (you may even be able to reduce your word count)
8. Give the storyboard draft to a proofreader (the very best writers do)

The most engaging eLearning relies on the message it contains. Even the best learning technology cannot mask poor grammar. As the Greek sage, Epictetus once said, "If you wish to be a writer, write." I charge each of you that as learning professionals it is vital that we write well.

Ken Hubbell

Position: Sr. Manager, Learning Technology

Company: Ingersoll Rand

Short Bio

Ken Hubbell is the Senior Manager of Learning Technology for Ingersoll Rand.

An award winning 27-year veteran in animation, educational videos, business games, and simulations, he has worked with a wide range of companies including Caterpillar, NASA, the EPA, Raytheon Missile Systems, and the FAA.

Ken holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Design from North Carolina State University and an M.S. in Instructional Technology from East Carolina University. He is a regular conference speaker on the topics of immersive learning, narrative storytelling and modular design. He currently researches advanced learning techniques for business and education, leveraging games and technology to promote innovation.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY RUTH KUSTOFF

Becoming an eLearning Pro requires identification of the area of focus within elearning that will become your area of expertise.

For example, are you an elearning instructional designer, or are you an elearning project manager? What about serving in a client facing analyst role, explaining the elearning development process and setting course delivery expectations for the client? In any case, the elearning pro must understand what elearning is, and isn't, and the basic theories of designing elearning with instructional integrity which includes setting context for the learner.

If context isn't created at the start of an elearning course, learners may not become engaged in the content because they won't relate to the material or situation. They don't see how or why it's important to them. Creating context answers the old adage of: What's in it for me? But it takes it a bit further. It shows why the content matters to the learner and how it affects their ability to perform a task, meet a goal, or have on-the-job success.

To be an eLearning pro, you need to expose yourself to all aspects of the planning, development and delivery process. This way, you will understand the challenges associated with each phase and you'll learn how to support a team of developers who each have a different area of expertise to create engaging elearning courses that deliver on their learning objectives. Finally, you'll want to expose yourself to as many elearning courses as you can. Explore different designs and creative approaches used in various authoring environments.

Ruth Kustoff

Position: Principal

Company: Knowledge Advantage – It's What Works, LLC

Short Bio

Ruth Kustoff has over 20 years experience in learning and development. Her expertise is in learning needs analysis, elearning, strategic planning and implementation, and program and curriculum design.

As Principal of Knowledge Advantage – It's What Works, LLC Ruth works with clients in various capacities around learning, training and knowledge issues.

Ruth is an experienced elearning analyst, supporting clients in the planning phase to identify how to create and build the most applicable elearning program for learners. She helps companies identify the most appropriate learning delivery method – classroom, elearning, virtual classroom, web-based, or blended – to meet the needs of the learner and required content areas.

Ruth has managed large custom e-learning development projects. She has worked with many large organizations overseeing global projects that reach over $1 million dollars, while managing independent contractors, 3rd party vendors and overseeing the translation and localization process of elearning courses.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY CONNIE MALAMED

I never think of myself as an expert. Gaining expertise is an ongoing journey of continuous learning where there is no end in sight.

Our field is particularly broad and deep. It encompasses aspects of cognitive science, learning theory, user experience, design thinking, human communication, user interface design, visual design, writing and scripting, marketing, business, information technology and probably many other domains.

No one person can retain all of this information and no one person can be competent in all of the related skills. One of the most important areas we can develop as professionals, therefore, is competence in accessing and sharing knowledge. We can achieve this through networking, social media and collaboration.

If you think of all the people in this domain as one giant mind, you can see how we gain expertise together. When we share what we've learned in a meaningful way, then we all become smarter.

To become a "pro" in this career then, involves getting involved with people in our field and outside of it. Participate in relevant online discussion groups. Look for ones related to eLearning and instructional design but also look for other groups. There is a lot to learn from outside of our field. For starters, you can find excellent groups through LinkedIn.

Becoming a pro also means staying up-to-date and this is easily done through social media platforms. Build a personal learning network by engaging on Twitter, joining relevant Facebook groups and reading blog and magazine articles that interest you.

Becoming a pro also involves helping others learn by sharing your excellent finds and documenting your experiences in the public sphere. But don't fully rely on the virtual world. Get out there and meet people in person. Network at local meetups, get involved with a professional association, and attend a conference if you have the funds. Perhaps you can volunteer in exchange for the cost of attendance.

Even if you work alone, there's no excuse for remaining isolated. Today there is an endless stream of knowledge broadcast every moment. Jump in!

Connie Malamed

Position: Learning, information and visual design consultant

Company: Connie Malamed Consulting

Short Bio

Connie Malamed is the learning experience designer behind theelearningcoach.com, a website with over 200 articles related to instructional design. She consults, writes, and speaks in the fields of online learning, visual communication, and information design.

Connie is the author of the Instructional Design Guru iPhone and Android app and the book Visual Language for Designers, which presents visual-design principles based on cognitive science. With degrees in instructional design and art education, Connie is passionate about helping people create meaningful learning experiences.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY JESSICA MARTELLO

At an alumni event, the president of my alma mater approached me and asked what I did for a living. I explained I was in training and development. He nodded politely and moved on. Moments later he addressed the room, welcoming all the alums and updated us on the university's new projects. A major initiative was a long-term project to transition hundreds of undergraduate courses from face-to-face delivery to 100% self-paced online. As he spoke, I thought to myself "Shoot! That's something I do!" Had I better explained my skills, I might have opened the door to a great conversation with the president, or even some work.

A career in eLearning guarantees you will wear many hats. As you acquire skills and specialties, it's critical to clearly articulate what you do. Regardless of whether your customers are internal clients or external consumers, you must convince them that you can enhance their business. And because you do so much, it's crucial to sum up your specialties and skills in a few sentences to sell yourself. Therefore, practice your "elevator speech" -what you do and why it's important-, summed up in 2 minutes or less. Consider versions for different audiences (your learners, your boss, perspective clients, etc.) and tailor your pitches for each type. Practice your pitch on friends to check for understanding. No matter how amazing your portfolio is, you must be able to promote it to the person you're in front of. Becoming a "pro" at anything happens when you merge practice and experience; practice how to communicate your experience in order to open the door to new opportunities.

Jessica Martello

Position: Training Sustainment Specialist

Company: Accenture Federal Services

Short Bio

Jessica Martello is an eLearning design and development enthusiast.

She currently works in Washington D.C. for a government contractor, creating internal training documents by day.

By night, she blogs and researches eLearning trends in the soft glow of her laptop screen. She also moonlights as an eLearning quality assurance analyst.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY DON MCINTOSH

- Instructional design is even more important in eLearning than it is in classroom learning. eLearning can reach far more people and sticks around for a while. Do your analysis and evaluation. Don't just jump in with two feet.
- What qualifications do you need to become an eLearning Pro? Does a degree or certificate help? Probably, but experience is most important. My Ph.D. has helped get my foot in the door in numerous situations, but it is job performance that really matters.
- Learn from your audience, ask them what they need, get some of them to test it before you go live and get feedback afterwards. Be prepared to make changes. You may discover that you are completely off-track or that your audience just doesn't relate to the material you created.
- Be prepared for "failure". Sometimes, despite your best efforts, clients will want things done their way. Even though you know it isn't ideal, you may just have to do it. I have had the experience of working with people who wanted to do it themselves, rather than have it contracted out. I just had to swallow my pride and do it their way.
- eLearning is a team effort. Collaborate with your clients, learners, graphic designers, video and audio producers, etc.
- Don't forget quality. Learners will not be happy trying to read text that is too small or watching poor quality videos. Do everything you can to maximize the technical quality of your product. Do-it-yourself video (for example) is not usually a good idea. Consult with the professionals.

Don McIntosh

Position: President

Company: Trimeritus eLearning Solutions Inc.

Short Bio

Don has a Ph.D. in Instructional Design, 25 years of experience in technology-based instruction in both academic and corporate settings and a thorough knowledge of the eLearning industry.

He worked at the University of Guelph for 20 years culminating as Director of Teaching Support Services, leading a team of 30 people who provided audio-visual services, teaching improvement programs, and instructional media design services. He also taught courses in technology in adult education.

With TELUS Learning Services he began the implementation of online training. Since 2001, he has had his own consulting business Trimeritus eLearning Solutions Inc. that emphasizes on eLearning and learning management.

He recently wrote a chapter on learning management and contributed to others for a collaboratively written text called "Education for a Digital World".

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY DALE E. OLSEN

I once asked a large company training manager about the value of the programs he purchased. He said that nothing changed as the result of the training. The only value was in bringing people together from across the company. Why did nothing change?

The acquisition of a skill, such as learning to manage, using Excel, or playing the violin, requires much more than knowledge acquisition. If students are given 100 hours of eLearning to read on how to play the violin, they may be able to pass tests, but none of them would be successful violinists. If they were then to watch videos of people play the violin for 100 hours, little would change. If they were given a violin and a chance to practice, but had their ears plugged so they could not hear, none of them would be able to play the violin well. To acquire a skill, learners must (1) acquire the knowledge so they know what to do, (2) practice applying the knowledge, and (3) receive feedback. We can't expect someone to learn Excel, if they hear a lecture and see others apply the concepts, but don't get a chance to practice. Skills are difficult to master by reading eLearning materials alone.

Often, organizations want to provide training "on-the-cheap". This allows them to check the box showing that employees have successfully completed the training, but this is mostly a waste. No wonder training is always the first thing cut. When developing e-learning materials, we must provide a chance for learners to practice applying the required skills and get feedback. Simulation is often used to provide this opportunity, but it is much more expensive. Our community needs to do everything possible to make sure practice applying the concepts is provided as part of eLearning.

Dale E. Olsen

Position: President & CEO

Company: SIMmersion

Short Bio

Dr. Dale E. Olsen is the founder, president, and chief executive officer of SIMmersion LLC, a Columbia, MD based training company. He leads the business development team as well as his team of training system developers. He oversees increasing the capabilities of SIMmersion simulations and has personally authored eight training systems.

Over his career, Dr. Olsen has been awarded six U.S. and international patents, has served as the principal investigator for ten research projects, has published over seventeen peer reviewed papers, has been a reviewer for Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) grant proposals, and has presented numerous papers at statistical, polygraph, and training conferences.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY WILLIAM J. RYAN

Listen to the problem and ask questions that focus on what success looks like (and how is it measured!). It is very easy to listen to your customer explain what they think the problem is and produce the solution requested. While this might be a good responsive image the results may disappoint because the real problem has not addressed. Focus on what the business defines and measures as success and connect with the people involved in the process whether it be a formal audience/needs analysis or an informal meeting over coffee. Here is where the experts are and where you may find root problems, solutions, and how to measure results to know you have implemented an effective solution.

I once had an internal customer come to me with a big "training" problem. They had a new machine replacing a 25+ year old unit. This new one had keypads and color monitors and "definitely" needed a computer-based training solution to train "those guys" because early operational runs had been low in quality. I visited "the guys" and discovered the input process had changed. It wasn't the analog to digital change that was confusing, but the layout changed from horizontal to vertical. Colored numbers with some key written job aids created success inexpensively and quickly and quality levels quickly exceeded prior levels. Success increased trust so when I suggested a more complex web-based simulation to a problem the same customer brought to me later he was very open and supportive to the idea.

Listen and build trust by solving the real problem regardless of the delivery method. Measure what matters to the business and report the results. Becoming a learning pro begins with creating a solid partnership based on open communications and trust with your clients. Keep up with the business, understand what success looks like to them and focus on providing solutions that meet their needs and you will find opportunities that are fun to develop, and effective to deliver too!

William J. Ryan, PhD

Position: Executive Director: Learn on Demand

Company: Kentucky Community & Technical College System

Short Bio

Dr. William J. Ryan is the Executive Director of the Learn on Demand program at the Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS), a unique online education program featuring a rolling start, designed in a modular format, and competency-based.

Prior to joining KCTCS, he was the Vice President of Education for a regional home health company and has held positions as National Leader for Curriculum and Technology Solutions with Humana Inc., serving a global learning community focused on improving performance in the business ecosystem. He has been a VP for Technology/CIO at Lakeland Community College and worked for Westinghouse and IBM in learning technology roles.

Ryan holds a M.S. from Ithaca College, focused on Instructional Design, and a Ph.D. in Computing Technology in Education from Nova Southeastern University.

He can be reached at (859) 256-3126.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY ARTURO SCHWARTZBERG

The yin, the yang, and the third essential leg. Or, how to be an eLearning instructional design superstar.

What a great field. I stand in awe of IDs; they've always been the smart ones. Technology is a wave—it's unending and fast-moving, and along the path, and not that long ago, eLearning emerged. Highly fueled, this is a field of change. So, how to be awesome, an eLearning pro, of great value?

- Put on your technology hat and understand the digital shebang (the yin): Learn about social media, games, authoring tools, big data, and new stuff as it emerges. (Caveat: This is all about balance, so reach no conclusions until you've read through to the end.)
- Take off your technology hat and learn ID theory (the yang): It's an academic field with a long history and lots of applied brain cells, and there is great stuff to learn. Don't skip this step and don't be seduced by authoring technologies and focus on development alone.
- The big "duh" (the essential leg): Become business savvy. Business objectives drive the need for change and performance improvement, and you'll get the big bucks if you can analyze real-world problems and craft solutions.

There you have it, simple enough—the three components to greatness. Now you only have to do two things: 1) Figure out where you are now, and how you are going to get the stuff above, and 2) Think about who you are, and what things ring the bell for you. You are you, and you can be an awesome pro, a superstar, but you have to follow your passions and explore your own unique path. Have a great time.

Arturo Schwartzberg

Position: Co-Founder, Chairman

Company: SweetRush Inc.

Short Bio

Arturo Schwartzberg is an entrepreneur with over 30 years of experience navigating the digital and human resource landscape. He mentors and provides strategy on a company-wide and individual level.

Since co-founding SweetRush 12 years ago, he has been a major protagonist in building a culture with a 'near-zero' turnover of employees and clients, and continues to explore how to effect positive change, both for his clients, company, and the individuals he encounters.

He intimately knows what it takes to be successful.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY DIANE SENFFNER, M.ED

Becoming an eLearning Pro involves allowing one's paradigm to shift from a pre-conceived, once-acceptable method of eLearning (the "PowerPoint on steroids") to an interactive, conversational, multi-media enhanced, story-based approach. Almost every eLearning professional today has access to those tools that will make learning a more rich and meaningful experience for learners, but breaking free of yesterday's model has proven daunting for many. Here are some ways to build what I call eLearning 2.0:

1. **Wrap the Content in a Story:** Using a typical example of how the learning plays out in the workplace, wrap a story around the content. Make sure you have a setting, characters, an event (a problem), development (actions and consequences), and a climax (lesson learned). Make sure the story is one that most employees can relate to and ensure your character reaches the desired state at the end. Learners will be able to relate to the situation, root for the character to succeed, and see that they may be able to reach the desired state as well.
2. **Use Conversational Dialogue:** I'm not sure anyone actually uses business lingo. If and when they do, it sounds trite, pretentious and confusing. Using a conversational tone in narration can ensure comprehension, while it also feels more real. Moreover, in a study discussed in eLearning and the Science of Instruction (Ruth Colvin Clark, Richard E. Mayer), conversational narration produced 20% to 46% more correct answers than formal narration.
3. **Create Story-Based Scenarios:** Once you've rolled out your characters and the story, immerse your learners into a new story or a continuation of the story in a real-life setting and give them a way to make mistakes and correct them.
4. **Integrate Relevant Multi-Media:** Today it's easier than ever to create your own photographs, video and other multimedia to insert into an e-learning module. Create characters, film scenarios, document steps to a process, etc. Clip art, frankly, should never be used again. Be creative!

Diane Senffner, M.Ed.

Position: CEO/President

Company: Cine Learning Productions

Short Bio

Diane Senffner is an acclaimed leader in the field of eLearning.

She has a Master's Degree in Adult Learning/Distance Education and over fourteen years of experience in creating award winning courses for both the public and the private sector all over the globe.

Her research and theories in story-based learning have been published and Cine Learning is now known worldwide for its method of eLearning design. Diane has been a professional speaker for years and was a featured speaker at the 2013 ASTD-ICE Conference.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY CHRISTOPHER J. STAPE

Being engaged or qualified in an occupation attains us the status of a "Pro". I suggest this is a journey, and not a destination; especially in an area as dynamic as eLearning.

To become a "Pro" you need to learn the fundamentals and then become engaged with the evolution of the field. How? Many paths lead to becoming a "Pro". I think you'll find no single outlet of information can possibly meet all your needs. Consider the following avenues:

- **Degree Programs:** Both on-campus and distance learning programs (MOOCS included) are available.
- **Joining:** This means becoming a member of a professional society (eLearning Guild) or online group like those available in LinkedIn.
- **Reading:** I find that books, journals, and blogs are my best sources.
- **Attending:** Face-to-Face conferences, seminars and webinars.
- **Networking:** Ease of communications has opened doors to amazing resources. When I was working on the design for an activity to teach the recognition of various alarms, I found myself with little experience and even less resources on how to proceed with auditory learning. I had recently attended a webinar given by one of the best in the eLearning field, which prompted me to contact her. I found a colleague very willing to help. I gained advice on the design and we collaborated in conducting research on the implementation to determine the effectiveness of the design (Thanks Ruth). Don't be anxious; I think you will find those with a passion for the field are eager to help.
- **Sharing:** Part of joining is contributing your time and expertise to individuals or groups to explore ideas, give help, provide service or act as an advisor. Even if you think you're a novice to someone new to the field you can have a lot to offer.

Being an engaged "Pro" increases your breadth and depth of understanding and ability to apply the principals involved in designing effective eLearning. Help in developing individual development plans is available. ASTD's "Career Navigator Skills Gap Assessment" is one example.

Only you can choose the best path for you. Make an action plan, implement and modify as the field continues to evolve.

Christopher J. Stape

Position: Training Activity Manager

Company: Mission Support Alliance

Short Bio

Chris Stape is a Training Activity Manager for the Mission Support Alliance, at the HAMMER Facility in South-Eastern WA.

Chris has over 20 years of experience in training and supports the web-based general employee training program as an instructional designer and programmer.

He has a Master's degree in Instructional and Performance Technology from Boise State University and seven professional journal publications; three in the eLearning Guild's Learning Solutions Magazine; including research on screen navigational design.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY RYAN TRACEY

A lot of eLearning pros I know "fell into" this field and I was no exception. I was working for a textbook publishing company when the eRevolution swept through the higher education sector. I think it caught everyone by surprise. Luckily (in hindsight) I was dabbling in web design and showed a keen interest in everything online, so I was handed the "new media" portfolio. Soon enough my title evolved into eLearning Product Manager.

My hot tip for becoming an eLearning pro is to get your hands dirty. Tinker with authoring tools, play with multimedia, and participate on social platforms. Experiment with all the software you can get your hands on, to find out what it can and cannot do. Familiarize yourself with its nuances, and critically reflect on how you might use it for learning purposes.

Plenty of people talk about using edtech, but relatively few ever do it. So create an online course. Record a podcast. Upload a video on YouTube. Build a game. Produce an infographic. Make an app. Write a blog. Publish an e-book. And show them off in your e-portfolio.

Prove you can do it because you have already done it. You will be light years ahead of everyone else!

Ryan Tracey

Position: eLearning Manager

Company: AMP

Short Bio

Ryan Tracey is an eLearning Manager in the Australian financial services industry, an Advisory Board Member for eLearn Magazine, and a Review Panelist for the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT).

His work focuses on adult learning in the workplace, with a particular interest in blended delivery, informal learning and social media. Ryan has worked in corporate eLearning for over a decade, following several years in the higher education market.

He holds a master's degree in Learning Sciences and Technology from the University of Sydney and blogs as the eLearning Provocateur

You can read his blog at:

http://ryan2point0.wordpress.com

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY ROSALIE LEDDA VALDEZ

When developing your project, it's important to pay attention in meeting the client needs. These needs are related to a business goal that has not been yet accomplished. As a professional in the eLearning field it's your job to ask the right questions, and offer the best solution. Sometimes it's a course, sometimes it isn't. There's nothing more negative than receiving a feedback like this: "How is this course going to help my sales team sell more products? I can't see it!" or "This is not what I really wanted". If this has ever happened to you, believe me, they'll never come back again.

Another thing to pay attention to are the learning objectives. A good practice before starting the development phase is to revise the provided content. Check if all the content covers the aim of the course and if it will be enough to drive the learners through achieving the learning outcomes.

In order to create the best learning experience you'll have to work closely with SMEs. They will help you create meaningful content, which means useful to the learners. Do you know what's their motivation? Is it to improve their performance in order to earn bonuses? Is it the opportunity to get promoted? No matter what the motivation is, the important thing is that they want to cover a specific gap. Does your solution cover this gap?

Go beyond a page-turner course; create self-assessments that involve evaluating the highest levels of Blooms' Taxonomy. Think out of the box and create a learning experience where the learner can interact with the content and their brains. Challenge them to face up real scenarios that require retrieving the information they have just learnt and put them into practice.

Providing a safe environment where users can learn through their mistakes and understand the consequences of their choices will help them recall the information in real environments. In other words, to improve their performance.

Rosalie Ledda Valdez

Position: Education Specialist

Company: Inlea

Short Bio

Rosalie is an Education Specialist for Inlea, a business group dedicated to global Human Resources Management and the development of local and international Educational Projects. Rosalie is responsible for designing training programmes whether face-to-face, online or blended learning.

She has been involved in different projects of different sectors, such as Health, Public Administration, Occupational Risk Prevention, Banking and Automotive industry giving her a wide experience in the eLearning field.

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY MAYRA AIXA VILLAR

Passion and perseverance. Sometimes, it is not easy to make a living out of what you love doing. You may often feel that your work, skills and efforts are undervalued. But, the key is to keep on trying and improving yourself every day. Throughout my career, my job applications were rejected hundreds, thousands of times, but I never gave up. In my heart, I felt this strong desire to create engaging learning environments in order to help people become more proficient. That has always been my dream. So, every time someone would tell me that I wouldn´t be able to do it, I learned a new skill, I read a new book, I taught myself how to use a new tool. Trust me; passion will help you see every failure as an opportunity for growth.

Perseverance will help you continue pushing yourself to the limit. Passion can allow you to come up with genuinely creative learning experiences. Perseverance will allow you to always offer a fresh solution to problems. Passion will help you stay focused on your goals. Perseverance is all you need to find your own voice. So, create eLearning with passion and persist until you find how you can contribute to this field in a unique way. You will be surprised by what you can accomplish.

Mayra Aixa Villar

Position: Instructional Designer
Company: Freelance Consultant
Short Bio
Mayra started her career as an English teacher in 2004. In 2009, as she was writing her M.A. thesis on Applied Linguistics, she focused her research on a field called Computer Assisted Language Learning. This project led her to complete an internship at the United Nations Headquarters in 2010, where she fell in love with eLearning and instructional design.

Now, she works as a freelance consultant helping companies design, implement and evaluate mLearning and eLearning solutions.

Mayra has authored articles for ASTD and Learning Solutions Magazine and writes a blog about the effective design of learning experiences at http://mayraixavillar.wordpress.com/

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What are the most effective uses/tips to become an eLearning Pro?

BY MARY E. VIVIT

To become a pro at anything, you need to be able to keep yourself engaged and excited, ready to tackle the next project as you finalize the current one. As project deadlines loom and the day-to-day tasks go on, it's easy to get jaded and lose focus. Here are three ways I've found to keep myself engaged, continuously learning, and prepared:

- **Engage.** Networking with fellow professionals helps keep me energized. While I do get ideas from other people, I'm glad to share my own experiences. This usually sparks new ideas, too. Professional organizations, and groups, such as those in LinkedIn and Twitter, are great for building relationships and staying passionate.
- **Learn.** I set aside an hour each week to take part in a webinar. We have lots of choices for keeping current skills sharp, learning something new, or finding a solution for an upcoming challenge. I don't let the webinar just run in the background, I take part in conversations and polls. Take opportunities to read and research, as well.
- **Prepare.** I keep a digital "scrapbook" of look-and-feel, activity, and story-telling ideas. I've always kept screen shots and written notes, but I've begun to use Pinterest as well. Building samples is also a great use of bits of down time. Being able to draw from these resources saves me a ton of time in designing and development.

These activities have made a big difference in my becoming and staying a pro!

Mary E. Vivit

Position: Training Specialist/Project Manager

Company: Fairchild Semiconductor

Short Bio

Mary Vivit has been designing and developing training and learning activities for over 20 years.

Her experience with online and computer-based training began about the same time. She has explored new methods and practices, as systems and tools have changed over the years, especially taking advantage of interactions, simulations, and gamification.

Mary is an advocate for the learner, working with stakeholders and subject matter experts to select the best delivery method for the situation.

Mary is a member of several professional groups, including The eLearning Guild and groups within LinkedIn.

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