Free
eBook

24
Top Instructional
Designers

How to become an
Instructional
Designer

eLearning
INDUSTRY

The Free eBook: How to become an Instructional Designer

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Introduction

BY CHRISTOPHER PAPPAS

You want to pursue a career in Instructional Design but you don't know how to start? Are you already in charge of eLearning projects in your company but you lack theoretical background to ensure that what you are developing is effective in terms of learning? No matter if you hold a degree in Instructional Design or you have just practical knowledge after many years of experience in the field, read this **Free eBook** on **How To Become an Instructional Designer.**

24 Highly-skilled Instructional Designers share their success stories as well as their personal views on the ideal traits good Instructional Designers should possess. They also give valuable tips and tricks to follow that will help you reach your dream Instructional Design career on a single condition: that you have **a true passion for Instructional Design.**

Is there a single path to become an Instructional Designer? What kind of previous experience do you need? Is Instructional Design an art or a science? How much in depth you need to know with respect to eLearning authoring tools and Learning Management Systems? Is eLearning software more important than Instructional Design theories and models? How can a professional network of Instructional Designers help you to improve your skills? What is the purpose of an Instructional Design portfolio? These are just some of the concerns you might have with respect to this exciting job. In this **Free eBook** on **How To Become an Instructional Designer** you will have the chance to read the viewpoints of 24 Instructional Design Experts who share their stories and personal experiences about all these and much more. Read them and decide for yourself about how much in depth you need to go.

Do not hesitate to post any comments, concerns, success and failure stories, or even ask **"How To" questions** that may arise from your reading. Our team of Instructional Design experts will answer back giving you more tips that will help you to start an amazing career.

Enjoy your reading!!!

Christopher Pappas

Founder of The eLearning Industry's Network. Currently, *the eLearning Industry* has a network of more than 287,000 professionals involved in the eLearning Industry.

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

Publish an eLearning Article - Become a Top eLearning Author!

Would you like to share your eLearning expertise with more than 287,000 unique viewers? - source: Google Analytics 02/2015. Do you want to have your name out there? Then write for eLearning Industry!

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY ANTONELLA VECCIA

My background is in higher education where I worked as a language tutor for about fifteen years. Besides teaching face to face, I actively contributed to integrate digital citizenship in the curriculum. Whilst designing for online and blended learning, I came to realize the complexity that each delivery mode can present, so I took courses that would consolidate my understanding of Virtual Learning Environment's theoretical framework, graphic design, as well as experiencing online learning as a student.

My decision to become an Instructional Designer was a natural evolution of my interests for learning rather than a career change. Working in production didn't come without challenges, but my commitment to succeed allowed me to overcome these initial difficulties.

I think that teaching, particularly languages, provides an invaluable experience to anyone wanting to become an Instructional Designer. This is because it provides a set of transferable skills that allows you to approach course design in a creative yet pedagogically rigorous way. As a learning expert it gives you the confidence and the credibility to advise the client to find solutions to their learning requirements.

A piece of advice I can give to fresh graduates wanting to work in this field, is to apply for an apprenticeship in a highly reputed eLearning company. To anyone wanting to become an Instructional Designer, I would recommend taking a post-graduate qualification in Instructional Design or eLearning. A strong understanding of user experience will also give you a competitive advantage, so play games and visit websites, as they can be a great source of inspiration for intuitive interactivity and visually engaging solutions.

Antonella Veccia

Position: Senior ID

Company: Thomson Reuters

Short Bio

Antonella is a multi-award winning Instructional Designer and has successfully designed courses for a wide range of clients, topics, and audiences. She believes that Instructional Design is essentially about helping people learn and change behavior as a result of it. That is why Antonella's design is bullet point free and rich with solutions that makes the learning pleasant and memorable. She likes working with clients and influencing them, and she firmly believes that good results are always down to constructive teamwork and an environment that allows for innovation, creativity, and a bit of fun.

Antonella likes MOOCs, visual arts, good food, and wine.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY ASHA PANDEY

I discovered Instructional Design by accident in 2000. I was intrigued by the possibilities it offered and how it could be used to create effective online learning.

In my journey over last 15 years (first as an Instructional Designer and now as Learning Strategist for EI Design) I have used the following guiding principles:

1. **Define and align solutions to organizational focus areas:** Remember this; it is the reason why the training budget was approved, and the proposed solution must establish a clear gain for the organization.

2. **Use "Creative Instructional Design":** I have extensively used techniques of Gamification, Storytelling, Simple to complex Branching scenarios and simulations, Guided exploration, etc, to name a few.

3. **Follow a learner centric design approach**

4. **Understand learner expectations and mental models**

5. **Use innovative approaches to convert user experience to "learnability"**

6. **Leverage on creativity backed by strong technology**

There are a couple of tips I would like to share:

- **Go beyond formal learning:** Look at options to "knowledge acquisition" to "knowledge application". I have used Performance Support Tools intervention very effectively to support formal learning.

- **Work with a "bigger picture":** Craft the learning solution by looking at "Learning and Performance Ecosystem" level. Plan learning as continuum rather than just isolated training programs. Look at other anchors to leverage on, notably Social learning.

- **Constantly invest on innovation and exploration of new ideas** and you will succeed in your journey as Instructional Designer.

Asha Pandey

Position: Learning Strategist

Company: EI Design

Short Bio

Antonella is a multi-award winning Instructional Designer and has successfully designed courses for a wide range of clients, topics, and audiences. She believes that Instructional Design is essentially about helping people learn and change behavior as a result of it. That is why Antonella's design is bullet point free and rich with solutions that makes the learning pleasant and memorable. She likes working with clients and influencing them, and she firmly believes that good results are always down to constructive teamwork and an environment that allows for innovation, creativity, and a bit of fun.

Antonella likes MOOCs, visual arts, good food, and wine.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY BRONYA BENVIN

If you're a writer, teacher, multimedia designer, or IT guru – you could be a brilliant Instructional Designer waiting to happen. If that sounds like a vast background spectrum, you'd be right. I'm yet to meet a "purist Instructional Designer" who studied the craft, as usually someone will enter the field via an associated side step. Take me for example; I studied architectural design, then proceeded to teach graphic design and multimedia in Universities... and here I am.

Even after a decade, "What do you do for a living?" is still the party question that has me on my toes, because a successful Instructional Designer is a jack of all related trades and a master of many, who also possesses a little bit of magic. You'll need to conjure your inner writing wizardry to create content for varied audiences, maintain a consistent trickle of creative juices, be all over effective chunking and organization of content, AND keep your finger on the pulse of technology trends. Yes, it's a juxtaposition of many skills.

Here are my tips for initiating your Instructional Design journey:

Never stop learning. Become a learner yourself and you'll have the edge when connecting with your audience. Develop a passion for knowledge and always pay attention to how content is structured and presented.

Wield your words. Get writing, it's one of the key skills that set a great Instructional Designer apart from the good. Start a blog or write articles and remember to practice many styles.

Cultivate creativity. Whether it's writing, information structure problem solving, or devising multimedia elements, you need to access your creative flair to bring new perspective and breathe life into your work.
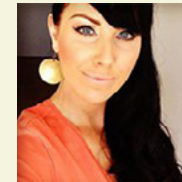
Bronya Benvin

Position: Senior Learning Specialis

Company: PulseLearning

Short Bio

Bronya is a Senior Learning Specialist at PulseLearning, with a decade of Instructional Design experience across Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. Her forte is bespoke digital solutions where she aims to delight her audience by using anecdotal narrative, pop-culture references, and engaging interactivity. Also experienced in UX design and visual design, Bronya loves to create user-friendly, learner-centric design.

Bronya keeps her finger on the pulse of eLearning trends and strives to create memorable, immersive, and fun online learning experiences. She draws on her background in multimedia, graphic design, and writing, putting her knowledge of all three together to generate unique content.

Read PulseLearning blog at

http://www.pulselearning.com/category/blog/.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY CHERI LOCKETT ZUBAK

Like many Instructional Designers, I came to this profession by accident. Once upon a time, I thought I might become a teacher. Or maybe a writer. A graphic designer. Perhaps a business consultant. It wasn't until I was practicing all of these things at once that I discovered I was an Instructional Designer.

So, for me, becoming an Instructional Designer was more a matter of how I chose to approach my practice (no matter what I was doing) than making a decision to shift to instructional design. By doing work in a particular way, instructional design just became my work. Make sense?

Here are some of the guidelines I chose to follow:

- **Do work that contributes to the business.** As you design learning, keep a line of sight to the real problems and mission of the business. What matters to the organization? To the people who work there? And to their customers?

- **Know and communicate the learner.** Understanding and building empathy for learners makes good business sense. Develop personas and journey maps to help your team and stakeholders to understand the learner. Be accountable to the learner.

- **Focus on performance improvement.** Design instruction that closes the gap between what people are doing now and what they need to do. Drive for impactful behavior change.

- **Be an investigator.** Tie your designs to real data around the performance situation. This means understanding what is fact and what is fiction. Sorting this out can take some digging and sometimes some political dancing (people like their fiction).

- **Be a thoughtful creative. Experiment.** Try new ideas. Do bring interactivity, storytelling, and game-based learning mechanics into your work. But make sure you understand the learning science first. For example, stories and game mechanics aren't always appropriate.

- **Don't be an order taker.** People will say, "We need training". Nod, smile, and respond "Let's take a look". Build the business case for what you really should be doing. Sometimes that's training or eLearning. Often it's something else (like a job aid).

- **Involve SMEs in the design process.** Not just the SME who knows everything, but the one who is still learning. Together, you will design instruction that results in learning that matters.

Cheri Lockett Zubak

Position: Workplace Learning & Performance Improvement | Customer Experience | Instructional Design | Scenario-Based eLearning

Company: Vertex, Inc. | Work Write, Inc.

Short Bio

Cheri has been a writer, teacher, and storyteller of one sort or another for as long as she can remember. It seems only natural that her professional life should evolve into instructional design, eLearning, and customer experience. Her goal is to apply creative, data-driven, evidence-based practice to workplace learning and performance improvement initiatives. Now she creates realistic stories that teach.

Her recent educational background includes graduate work in Organizational Performance & Workplace Learning (Boise State University) and game-based learning (Drexel University).

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY CHRISTOS ANTHIS

I won't go into the academic qualifications you should pursue; you can google that. Here are 8 suggestions. They stem from an imagined "good Instructional Designer" persona that I have on my mind.

Do an awful lot of digital learning of your own. Then, think: what kind of learning experience do you find rewarding? That's the one you should aim to create.

2. **Train people face-to-face.** It'll expose you to situations you don't learn about at university, and it'll keep you focused on learners. Speaking of which,

3. **Focus on the learner (and educate your clients to do so, too).** Project stakeholders (i.e. your clients) will often drift towards Instructional Design that makes things easy for the course manager and the trainer or teacher, forgetting that the intended beneficiary of any eLearning project must be the trainee. You must alert them to this error, and gain their sponsorship for a more learner-centered approach.

4. **Be extremely tech-savvy**. Goes without saying that deep familiarity with learning technology is a must; but go beyond this, and be well-informed about technology overall.

5. **Play video games.** You'll learn a lot about things like guided onboarding and habit-building. What makes you intrinsically motivated to keep at it? If you don't find it interesting, what would you change to make it interesting? Write your answers down. How do your conclusions relate to motivating trainees?

6. **Don't forget about business goals.** It's wonderful when learning happens for its own sake, but training initiatives have one or more business goals behind them. First of all, make sure you know these (amazing how many of us don't ask), then make sure your design is geared towards them. (No, this doesn't mean you have to compromise your learner focus.)

7. **Be budget-conscious.** Be aware of project resources and timelines, and design learning experiences that can actually happen within your budget. (However, always tell your client what could happen if resources and time were more plentiful.)

8. **Motivate, motivate, motivate!** If you were to go away remembering one of these points only, this one should be it. Design learning experiences that users love and want to keep coming back to. Watch Dan Pink on motivation and Dan Ariely on what makes us feel good about our work.
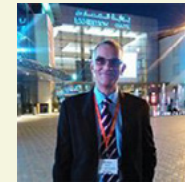
Christos Anthis

Position: Chief Operations Officer / Head of ID

Company: ccseducation.com, lyk.io

Short Bio

After large parts of his life spent teaching children and adults, as well as running key digital projects on behalf of educational publishers, Christos is now Chief Operations Officer at CCS. At the same time, he heads the company's Instructional Design team.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY CLARE DYGERT

Several times a year, I receive an email from a complete stranger who asks how to get a start as an Instructional Designer. Some work in a field like technical writing or teaching. Some are new graduates. What they all have in common, though, is they can't show me examples of designing and creating instruction.

So, what can they do? Are they caught in the perpetual loop of not being able to get a job because they don't have the experience and they can't get the experience because they can't get a job?

No!

Even if you haven't worked as an Instructional Designer, you can create a portfolio. It should include at least one finished piece of work, and all the documents leading to that work. Choose a topic you already know something about. The topic of the training isn't as important as the way it is constructed. But show the "bones": the curriculum plan, the content outline, the storyboard, and the finished product. Show how you made your instructional decisions. You can use a school assignment, but don't just stick it in your portfolio and call it a day. Write an analysis of the project; share your instructional philosophy and what you learned.

Your portfolio should include a variety of products: a design for and a section of an instructor-led training, a smidgen of eLearning, a recording of a podcast, or a video. It needs to be clean, easy to navigate, and thoroughly edited.

Becoming an Instructional Designer takes effort and some time. But if you are passionate about learning, and if you want to make a material difference in the lives of people by providing them with the lamp of knowledge, there isn't a more rewarding or interesting profession!
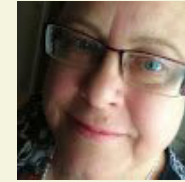
Clare Dygert

Position: Senior Instructional Designer

Company: SweetRush Inc

Short Bio

Clare Dygert has enjoyed a 20-year career designing instruction in advanced technology, programming, office productivity, compliance, business skills, and higher education domains. She is passionate about cognitive science and developing instruction that leverages the latest research. At SweetRush, she serves as Senior Instructional Designer where she supports the efforts of instructional designers as they develop cutting edge e-learning for some of the world's most forward thinking organizations.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY DEBORAH DECKER HALVORSON

There are many paths people take to become Instructional Designers; mine happened to be intentional. After working in the field of education for over a decade (both in the classroom and online), I realized I wanted to focus more on the design and development of learning rather than the actual delivery. I decided to pursue a Master's Degree in Instructional Technology, and the program I was in had a strong emphasis on Instructional Design and Adult Learning Theory. One of the best pieces of advice I received came from one of my professors, who told us to go online and search Instructional Designer job postings, look at the skills employers required, and then to use that information to tailor our thesis and capstone project according to the type of job we wanted. It was immensely helpful to know exactly what skills I would need in the workplace as I was learning them in the classroom.

I believe the requirements for becoming an Instructional Designer include:

Prerequisite: A Passion for Learning

In order to design courses that keep learners engaged, it is essential to understand how people learn and what motivates them to learn, and then design accordingly.

Education: Whether Formal or Informal

If time and resources are available, get a degree; if time and resources are limited, get a certificate (such as the ones offered through ATD); if time and resources are non-existent, find a mentor and/or read some of the great Instructional Design books out there, such as Instructional Design (by Patricia L. Smith and Tillman J. Ragan) or The Accidental Instructional Designer (by Cammy Bean).

Continuing Education: Never Stop Learning!

Today's learners are very different from those of 20 years ago, and the technology available (as well as learners' technology skills) is growing quickly; it is important to keep up with trends in the field of training and education through professional memberships (ATD, the eLearning Guild), conferences, Blogs (e.g., Allison Rossett), and online communities.

Deborah Decker Halvorson

Position: Vice President, Senior eLearning Designer

Company: MUFG Union Bank

Short Bio

Deborah Decker Halvorson is an Instructional Designer in corporate eLearning. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Education and a Master's Degree in Educational and Instructional Technology, and over 25 years of experience in education and training (public, private, and corporate). She combines her passion for learning and her fascination with the latest technology to design, develop, and deliver interactive eLearning courses. She is a member of the eLearning Guild, the Association for Talent Development (ATD), and the OC Hiking Club.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY DIANNE REES

I definitely did not have a linear path to instructional design, having been at different times, a molecular biologist, intellectual property attorney, and writer. But all of these experiences, including my instructional design work, have taught me a few things...

Chance favors the connected mind

Surround yourself with eclectic friends and online connections who keep you aware of how wide the world is. Keep up with blogs and posts on social media, not just in your field, but in other fields as well. I draw inspiration for learning designs from game designers, transmedia storytellers, and interaction designers. It's a source of wonder and a useful way to solve design challenges.

**See the system and see the people in the system**

I've been lucky enough to work in a field where my colleagues include human factors engineers and people who apply design thinking to innovation in health care. It's made me realize the importance of systems thinking when designing learning programs and the need to empathize with your learners. Bottom line: When you focus on what you want people to do, don't lose sight of how they feel.

The tools of your trade

To a large extent, good design is platform and tool agnostic. That being said, a nimble designer is aware of many tools and their affordances. And, from a competitive standpoint, it does help to be really good at using at least some of these tools. Even more important than embracing your geek side? Developing a sense of visual design and an understanding how that connects to learning.

Saving the world through eLearning

You may not be able to save the world, but if you keep your compass pointed at people's hearts and minds, stay connected as a partner to your teams and organizational leaders, you can have an impact. Along the way, remember not to take yourself too seriously. You'll always be able to ground yourself by looking at all of the great talent of your colleagues in this field!
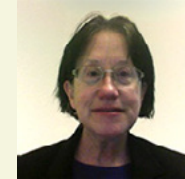
Dianne Rees

Position: Senior Instructional Designer

Company: Johns Hopkins Medicine, Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality

Short Bio

Dianne is an Instructional Designer and eLearning developer who currently designs and develops learning experiences relating to patient safety. Her online Patient Safety Certificate Program has been recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and can be used by physicians to meet ABMS Maintenance of Certification requirements. The board game she designed for Johns Hopkins' Comprehensive Unit-Based Safety Program (CUSP) is now being used In Johns Hopkins' CUSP workshops throughout the country.
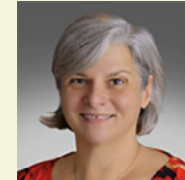
What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY FRANCES M WEBER

The best way to become an instructional designer is to continually learn about what's happening in the industry. I joined ATD, ISPI, the eLearning Guild, went to chapter meetings and 1-2 annual conferences a year. I read books and/or blogs from Cathy Moore (action mapping), Tom Kuhlmann, Clive Shepherd, Sharon Shrock, Ruth Colvin Clark (science of eLearning), and Karl Kapp. I found tons of free resources, such as those found on Articulate's eLearning Heroes community. My employer didn't have a big budget; I had to figure out a lot of stuff on my own. Ask your peers and go to Lynda.com. I became a super user of Storyline and PowerPoint. I know more than the basics about graphic design; I firmly believe no one wants to sit through training (either live, virtual, or eLearning) that is unattractive and poorly laid out. I looked at examples of other people's work and became hypercritical of what looks good and delivers a great learning experience. I keep on top of what a good website looks for inspiration. You have to continually learn and push yourself to improve.

Frances M Weber

Position: Instructional Designer

Company: Oracle

Short Bio

Frances aka Fran Weber is a passionate Instructional Designer with years of experience developing customer service training for the hospitality industry and systems training for the IT industry, and currently she is supporting the development of sales training for Oracle.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY HADIYA NURIDDIN

What we do is powerful and don't ever forget that. We step into the worlds of others, explore them, and then help the people who live there tell their stories – stories that can help lead to the success of entire organizations. Doing this well requires much more than memorizing the theories and methodologies that shape our field.

Here's my advice:

- Develop your own philosophy

  There is no one way to design instruction. There are several theories to draw from, but, ultimately, the course design will rely on your interpretation of those theories and the context in which you are applying them. It's important to develop your own approach to design, one that is influenced by the past, grounded in the present, and open to what is yet to come. So while this profession requires that you serve many masters, all with opinions on how people learn, you can stand firmly on what you know is true and what you believe is right.

- Sharpen your communication skills

  This goes beyond mastering communication tools – writing and speaking. Communication begins before you pick up your pen and open your mouth. The excellent designer listens for what is said and what is not, focuses more on making connections than taking dictation, and knows how to use both words and silence to meet an objective.

- Draw on other disciplines Investing time in studying other disciplines and applying them to your design methodology can possibly distinguish your work. Reading about documentary filmmaking may improve your interviewing skills. Dabbling in photography can enhance your understanding of visual storytelling. Exploring improvisation can help you conduct better strategy sessions. The key is to actively connect what you've learned to Instructional Design and find the best way to apply the most applicable lessons.

There is no one perfect way to become or be an Instructional Designer. My education and experiences make me a different designer than someone else. So, yes, learn all you can about this discipline, but the most powerful contribution to your career will be who you are. Don't ever forget that.

Hadiya Nuriddin

Position: Learning Strategist and Instructional Designer

Company: Focus Learning Solutions

Short Bio

Hadiya Nuriddin is the owner of Focus Learning Solutions. She has nearly 20 years' experience in all levels of learning and development.She specializes in instructional design and development for both corporate and academic environments. She has extensive experience in designing, developing, and delivering both technical and professional development courses. She also designs and develops eLearning courses using Articulate Studio, Articulate Storyline, and Captivate. Hadiya has an MEd in Curriculum Design, an MA in Writing, and a BA in English. She holds the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP), the Professional in Human Resources (PHR), and is MBTI certified. She's also earned several technical certifications throughout her career, including Microsoft Certified Professional and Microsoft Office Master Instructor.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY JAMES R. ANDERSEN (JIM)

I was turned down for a job organizing a local community college's paper curriculum into a MOOC because I didn't have an Instructional Design Certificate. Told "no", despite years of secondary education and tech industry experience. My point: if you are just starting out as an Instructional Designer or are changing careers, obtaining a certificate may be useful just to get in the door.

To become really good at Instructional Design, you need a passion for understanding how people learn and how learning styles differ from generation to generation. Never undersell the design part of Instructional Design; both the learning experience and the visual and auditory experience. Often I develop for people I never see, so it's really important to understand their generational learning style and tailor the learning design, including the visual element, to meet their expectations. How I want them to learn is as important as what they learn.

Continually learn about your design technology. App updates are made all of the time; assess whether they add to your skills or not. Reach out to colleagues when you run into a development/design problem, and crowd source your questions on online forums. If it's a technical issue, more than likely somebody else has had the problem before and found the solution.

Make what you create useful, easy to consume, and developed with the needs of your audience and your employer always in mind. Balance how cool your solution is with how much it costs; how much time it takes to consume; how much value it adds to the organization; and how much money, time, and effort are required to maintain it.

In my current organization, an L&D PM developed really good, but really technically complex Storyline training. While it's pretty cool, it's also difficult and expensive to maintain.

James R. Andersen (Jim)

Position: Instructional Designer/Functional Lead – currently on contract to Microsoft/Devices & Entertainment Services/Touch & Tablet Support

Company: Cadence Preferred LLC

Short Bio

Jim Andersen graduated from Gonzaga University with a multi-disciplinary degree in History, Philosophy and Political Science, and went on to earn a Masters Degree in European Intellectual History from the University of Washington. His career course seemed to be heading towards a career in academia, but veered off into the sometimes chaotic and hormonally charged atmosphere of Catholic secondary education. Jim spent twenty-two years in secondary education: nine as a founding faculty member of Eastside Catholic (then in Bellevue, Washington), and thirteen as a senior Social Studies Instructor at Bellarmine Preparatory in Tacoma, Washington. Jim's abilities as an innovative educator and early tech adopter inspired him to introduce Macs into the Social Studies Department at Bellarmine Prep in 1992. When the school opted to convert to PCs in 1995, Jim began converting many of his paper driven classroom processes over to digital. When the school adopted Apache mail server, Jim developed a paperless assignment system through email, Word editing/review and comment and plagiarism analysis software. In 2003 Jim was recruited to Microsoft where he spent the next nine years as a technical trainer (MSN), Learning and Development Program Manager (MSIT) and Senior Readiness Program Manager (MSIT). After leaving Microsoft in 2012, Jim Joined Cadence Preferred LLc in 2013 and continues to work as an Instructional Designer developing LMS driven support training for Windows and Surface support agents world-wide. Jim and his family love to travel (having traveled around the world), hike, and bicycle, and otherwise enjoy the outdoors in the great Northwest. Jim also is a founding board member of Washington Engage, a state-wide anti-human trafficking organization seeking to eradicate human trafficking in Washington State.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY DR. KELLY EDMONDS

I've been delving into the online entrepreneurial world the last year and have noticed that everyone and their mother have an e-course. This is good in a way, as it increases the opportunity for informal learning and personal growth. However, many courses are a "hot mess" in that they do not consider the sequence of learning. That is, they don't consider how to lay out learning segments or experiences that support how the brain works, how people learn or how adults develop naturally. Their content is just sort of pushed together and delivered. As a result, students are less than satisfied and feel they haven't learned well enough for their money.

To be a good Instructional Designer, study how to create sequential, progressive learning that supports the students. Draw on popular and sound learning theories (i.e. adult learning theory, brain-based learning, experiential learning theory, etc.) to help you understand how to design effective education. I went away from following theoretical frameworks and got lost in my course development work. Now I can't design without them. Simply put, they inform my designs, which are effective and consider the impact on learners.

Start with designing for offline learning then transfer it to online. Use the affordances of technology to (somewhat) replicate the in-person experience, such as capturing lectures in video, using audio for storytelling, facilitating group work in discussion forums, etc. And also recognize that web-based technology can offer more than an in-person course, such as providing more interactive content, personalized scaffolding, self-paced learning and active learning community. Envision what learners can do and build it.
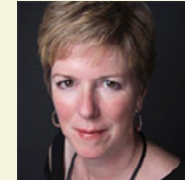
Dr. Kelly Edmonds

Position: CEO and Lead Instructional Designer

Company: Wired Learning Designs

Short Bio

Want to make the best e-course so that your learners exhale when they "get it"? Dr. Kelly Edmonds dreams about this every time she creates an e-course. She wonders, "What will they think? How will they interact with the course? Gawd, will they learn what I hope?" This has driven her to complete 3 degrees in education, research how to create effective online learning, and become sought after by companies and academic institutions worldwide (even India!) to create e-courses.

Website: http://drkellyedmonds.com

Blog: http://drkellyedmonds.com/blog/

Contact: kelly[at]drkellyedmonds[dot]com

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY KENNEY REYNOLDS

Instructional Design is much like composing a painting. It starts with a need to create… in art that need may be generated from within. In instructional design, that need comes at the request of your client.

Once you have the need (the request), you begin to visualize the composition and select the medium for expressing your composition. Before you make that selection, you must consider the audience and the manner in which your composition will be displayed. More importantly, you explore the question, "will it make a difference?" In instructional design, this involves analysis. Analysis frames the composition. It allows you to explore how to compose to ensure that there is a return on the investment of time and effort.

However, unlike the painter, the instructional designer's work is not complete when the paint dries and the painting is hung on the wall. As you present the composition, you must evaluate the audience's reaction… did they see what you were attempting to communicate… did they learn… did their performance improve? You must continue to observe your audience and be able to provide your client with a measurable result. And finally, you must be willing to make changes to your composition to better engage your audience, to improve the results, and to create the masterpiece that fulfills the client's request.

Kenney Reynolds

Position: Senior Instructional Designer

Company: Piedmont Natural Gas, Charlotte, NC

Short Bio

Kenney Reynolds has been in the training and instructional design field for over twenty years. He has experience in the retail industry and in public utilities. His current position at Piedmont Natural Gas in Charlotte, NC involves the design of learning solutions to support a variety of internal clients. He is currently focused on a leadership development curriculum for management that incorporates both computer based training and instructor led courses. He has an extensive background in design and photography and uses these skills to create engaging learning. He earned his "Certified ROI Professional" credentials from the ROI Institute in June of 2014.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?
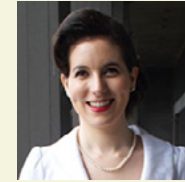
BY LILA AZOUZ

What do you need to do to become an Instructional Designer? In my opinion there is no one-way of approaching it, every situation is different. What I can tell you is how I became an Instructional Designer.

I originally graduated with a bachelor's of fine arts with a specialization in design for the theatre and film production. Though I worked various contracts, I needed to supplement my income and did this by teaching English as a second language. I had developed a love for teaching and education and really wanted to find a way of combining my artistic and education skills together. In order to do this, I needed to go back to school to make a career change.

Getting my Master's in Educational Technology from Concordia University changed my life around and has opened so many doors. The program taught me the foundational theories and skills and provided me with qualifications to show my future employers. If you are looking to make a career change like I was, then I highly suggest getting a Master's or certificate in Instructional Design or Educational Technology.

Here are the things I learned from my experience that I would like to share with you:

- If you are looking for a Master's program, than I suggest you find one that offers internships, as this will give you the real life experience that you need. It also provides you with the first job on your resume.

- Find what your strengths are and expand on them. My strengths were my media and teaching experience, which has led to my current job where I run the Faculty of Medicine's media room and teach professors how to make videos for their teaching. For you it could be teaching, management or sales experience.

- Create an online portfolio that showcases your work, but make sure to provide the rational and context for your design and development decisions.

- Teach yourself new technologies and software. It is important to keep up to date with the advancement of technology. Lynda.com has been a great help in learning various authoring tools.

- And finally, never stop learning!

Lila Azouz

Position: Senior Blended Learning Developer

Company: Faculty of Medicine at UNSW Australia

Short Bio

Lila Azouz has four years of experience as an Instructional Designer where she has combined her artistic and eLearning skills to create dynamic and engaging learning opportunities. Currently, she is a Senior Blended Learning Developer in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. In this role, she develops professional development training for faculty and works with them to create blended learning activities. She has Instructional Design experience in both higher education and the corporate sector. She has a master's in Educational Technology and a Bachelor's of Fine Arts from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY LISA (PEKRUL) LANGE

I did not deliberately enter the world of Instructional Design and performance improvement. I fell into it. I have a B.S. in Scientific and Technical Communications. This degree provided a solid background in communicating information via print, audio, and audio/visual media. I learned the importance of understanding the audience and their needs, and then writing to that audience. Since becoming an Instructional Designer, this background has served me well. I've realized that the methodology I use for communicating information to an audience is not that much different from what I learned in college.

I think one of the keys to success in this industry is to keep current on trends in all aspects of learning and performance improvement. I do that by reading books, attending conferences, being an active member of the International Society of Performance Improvement, and actively searching out thought leaders in a variety of fields through Twitter and LinkedIn. In the last year I've been very interested in what happens in the brain when we learn. I've used that knowledge in both classroom training and eLearning that I've designed, with great results. Keeping current is invigorating and results in engaging courses.
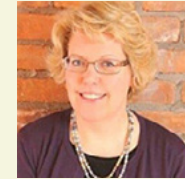
Lisa (Pekrul) Lange

Position: Senior Instructional Designer/Performance Consultant

Company: Technical Engineering Consultants, assigned to Fiat Chrysler Automobiles

Short Bio

Lisa Lange has over 30 years of experience as a writer, Instructional Designer, and performance consultant. A strong advocate for the target audience, she has proven skills in analyzing, designing, developing, and evaluating performance programs and learning curricula that provide performers with the performance skill building and behavior change required to achieve results, as well as aligning with organizational goals. You can find Lisa on LinkedIn and Twitter (@ConsultLearn).

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY LYNN LEASE

There are many paths into the field of Instructional Design, but there are specific strategies to truly excel in the field. Some will advise to pursue a formal degree or complete a certificate, to get involved in field-specific organizations, and to learn the technologies involved in the trade. All of these suggestions are valuable, and I concur with those sentiments. But, what can be done in a field outside of Instructional Design to prepare to enter the field?

Consider developing the transferrable skill-set.

Project Management Skills. Instructional Designers often juggle multiple projects and manage overlapping tasks and deadlines. There is also an iterative cycle to course design, including assessment and revision, and this cycle must be managed well. Look for opportunities in your current position to manage new projects from start to finish.

Communication Skills. There are many players in the Instructional Design process in addition to the Instructional Designer. A team might include subject-matter experts, teachers/trainers, and clients, as well as information technology specialists, visual designers, editors, and others. Work to improve your ability to communicate clearly, ask critical questions, and negotiate when needed.

Critical Thinking Skills. Instructional Design requires the ability to critically think within a framework of analysis and evaluation. Beyond that, we are called to establish creative and innovative training and learning solutions to identify and meet needs of specific learners. Look for opportunities in your current position to become involved with new projects that require creative and innovative solutions.

While these transferrable skills might be your foot-in-the-door of the Instructional Design field, don't dismiss the notion of a formal degree or training. Without the foundational knowledge of Instructional Design theories and strategies, these transferrable skills might only get you in the door. To excel, you must also be able to employ the foundational knowledge that drives the Instructional Design field.

Lynn Lease

Position: University of Northwestern Ohio

Company: Director of the Center for Educational Excellence; Senior Instructional Designer

Short Bio

Lynn Lease is the Founding Director of the Center for Educational Excellence and a Senior Instructional Designer at the University of Northwestern Ohio. In the past, she served as a full-time faculty member for UNOH and has worked for other institutions including Butler University, University of Tennessee, and Ball State University. She is currently in the dissertation phase of a PhD program studying Education with a specialization in Instructional Design for Online Learning. Her current research involves the processes Instructional Designers use to implement free, pre-designed interactive learning objects in online course designs to enhance learner to content and learner to interface interactivity. Beyond her position at UNOH, Lynn serves as the convener for the MOOC Assessment Task Force for the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio. She has been involved with Quality Matters since 2009 and currently serves as a Master Reviewer for the organization

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY MANON BOURGEOIS

Two essential skill for an Instructional Designer to acquire are listening and influencing skills. These skills are not always found in text books; they are acquired through practice and experience.

As Instructional Designers we know what's best for the learners, but our customers don't always have the same perspective. Getting the client to understand what we think is the best approach, but it isn't always easy. I've had many clients come up to me saying I need this content online in a format of a PowerPoint with narration by next week. Can you please do this for me? My first reaction is: "Mmm, and how we are going to wake up the learner from their deep sleep to go back to work?". Of course, I don't say that. I already know what the tutorial might look like, but I don't even hang on to that idea. I start with a clean slate and listen to the needs of my client. That's when I ask a ton of questions, until I get to the very root of the issue the client is trying to solve. These questions also help the client understand that their initial solution might not be ideal. Once I have gathered enough information, I am able to work collaboratively with the client towards a solution. Instructional Designers have to deal with clients all the time. You can be an excellent Instructional Designer. If your listening skills and influencing skills are poor, you might have a hard time getting the client's buy-in and this might make your work much more difficult. In all my years of dealing with clients, I learned one important thing: When they approach me with a request, I always tell myself "This isn't my project, this is my customer's project". My goal is to provide the client with the best possible solution while keeping him/her engaged and motivated in the whole process.

Manon Bourgeois

Position: Senior Learning Advisor

Company: Export Development Canada

Short Bio

Manon Bourgeois joined EDC in 2012 as a Senior Employee Development Advisor, with over 20 years of experience in training and education. She ran her own eLearning company for fourteen years providing eLearning strategy guidance and developing creative ideas for both private and public sector clients. Manon uses her creative ingenuity and analytical forward thinking when providing innovative training solutions to internal clients at EDC. She is known for her exceptional skills at understanding client's needs in delivering the best possible trainning solutions. In 2013 Manon presented with David Haskins at the Enterprise Learning Conference in Anaheim California which led to the organization making the top 100 eLearning Award. Manon is certified in Instructional Design, Social selling and Crucial Conversations training.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY MELISSA BASSETT

Like so many professions, technology has enhanced, transformed, and expanded the realm of knowledge and skills attributed to the "Instructional Designer" role. Being able to use rapid eLearning tools, produce and edit audio-video components, and leverage a gifted eye for graphic design are fantastic skills to have. However, the overarching knowledge and skills you must have to be an effective Instructional Designer are associated with educating others. Instructional Design is about facilitating learning and improving performance; the available tools make that facilitation better than ever.

As a special education teacher, I taught elementary, middle, and high school children with learning disabilities. I loved teaching the children, but I knew it was time for a change. While getting my MS, I became interested in corporate education merely by reading a magazine article. So, I started looking into what I needed to do to make the transition from teaching children to educating adults. I began reading about the principles of adult learning. Luckily, it turned out that adults are just taller kids with wrinkles and less hair, so I was able to adapt my current skills to adult training and development. Also, I took two Instructional Systems Design (ISD) courses based on the teachings of Robert Mager.

Do you need to get a degree in education and become a teacher to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for educating others? Probably not, but that sure helped me! With the myriad of available resources, such as books, webinars, MOOCS, certificate programs, and more, as well as abundant determination on your part, you can learn the fundamentals of education and the Instructional Systems Design approach. Your credibility as an Instructional Designer will come from consistently applying the tenants of education and Instructional Systems Design first, and skillfully using electronic tools and gadgets second.

Melissa Bassett

Position: Senior Learning and Performance Consultant

Company: Bassett Learning Design

Short Bio

Melissa Bassett, Bassett Learning Design, provides all phases of a modified ADDIE approach to the creation of instructor-led, eLearning and blended learning courses for any company size and content material. Armed with an excellent SME, Melissa tackles the most complex topic and tames it into creative, interactive learning that the target audience can acquire readily and subsequently apply on the job. Following a nine-year career as a special education teacher, Melissa transitioned to the field of adult training and development as an Instructional Designer. She holds a BS in Education and a MS in Educational Psychology from The University of Tennessee. She has achieved the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) certification through the ATD Certification Institute.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY MICHAEL HOTRUM

This is the path I took to become an Instructional Designer. It could be your path too.

Step 1 - Learn and acquire credentials. I trained as a teacher, and was taught instructional design. I then took a Master's in eLearning. The college system and private companies now offer certificates in Instructional Design, adult learning or eLearning design. Get those credentials!

Step 2 - Connect and share. Make yourself known. Join social networks (e.g. LinkedIn) and professional associations (e.g. ATD in the U.S., CSTD in Canada) and volunteer your services. Take the ATD or CSTD professional accreditation program, as I did. Attend conferences and, as you grow professionally, apply to be a presenter. Create and maintain a blog and comment and link to other bloggers. Actively subscribe to newsletters and sites, like elearningindustry.com.

Step 3 – Question. Instructional Design is an art and a science. It is always reinventing itself. Opinions, especially those borne of experience, are the cash currency of our field. To read, discuss, and question is what the job requires. When you propose a learning design plan, be ready to defend your decisions. And that leads us to the final step – more learning.

Step 4 – Learn and Improve. Be a humble, continuous learner. Learn about new technologies and processes. And finally, accept constructive criticism and learn from your mistakes. A mistake is the beginning of new learning and an opportunity for professional growth.

Michael Hotrum

Position: Managing Director

Company: Hotrum Learning

Short Bio

Michael has worked to improve human and organizational performance in the academic and corporate sectors for over twenty years. He has worked as a learning technology advisor, performance consultant, instructional designer, learning manager, college professor and consultant on social learning. He has designed and developed instructor led, web based, eLearning and blended instructional experiences and social learning environments. He holds a Master's in Education and is a Certified Training and Development Professional (CTDP).

Come visit at http://hotrumlearning.wordpress.com

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY RHEA STEVENS

In the UK, there is still no typical route into Instructional Design, and this means there is a broad range of talent in the industry. In my team, we have ex-teachers, a former IT manager, and a copywriter, for example. I started out as a script-writer and moved into Instructional Design where I could use my transferable skills.

I would definitely recommend Instructional Design as a career and I've come up with a few tips to help you along the way:

- Develop Your Empathy

  The ability to get underneath the skin of your audience is a really important trait. One thing I found useful in helping to build my skill in this area was volunteer work for a children's advice charity. It was a hugely rewarding experience, and taught me a lot about empathy and being able to tune into the 'wave-length' of a particular audience.

- Top Up Your Inspiration

  Generating fresh ideas and applying them creatively to make great eLearning is a constant challenge; no-one wants to regurgitate the same old techniques. But sometimes it is hard to turn on your inspiration like a tap. One way we get around this at Sponge UK is by using an "Inspiration Jar". Everyone in the team adds in ideas as they come to mind, so there is always a bank of shared inspiration.

- Seek Out Great Examples

  Einstein famously said "example is the only way to teach", and examples of great Instructional Design have certainly helped me. The work of Cathy Moore and Julie Dirksen is particularly inspiring, and many of the best practitioners are incredibly generous in sharing examples and ideas.

Sometimes, it's helpful to talk to someone doing the job, so feel free to get in touch with the team at Sponge UK to find out more about becoming an Instructional Designer.

Rhea Stevens

Position: Instructional Designer

Company: Sponge UK

Short Bio

Rhea is a versatile and creative Instructional Designer with a broad range of experience in creating custom-made eLearning for a range of sectors including pharmaceuticals, retail, health, and finance. Her key strength is in developing sound Instructional Design methodologies that motivate learners through challenging and enjoyable eLearning tasks. She studied at the University of Exeter and joined Sponge UK in 2012.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY SHARONNE JOY JACOBS

The one tip that I can give someone is be multifaceted. You need to understand the psychology of learning, technology, gaming, eLearning, online instruction, curriculum design, classroom instruction, assessment design and evaluation, etc. You can learn from various fields and professions and transfer that knowledge to Instructional Design and vice versa. I had no military experience when I entered the Army's Civilian Intern Program for Training and Education back in 1997. I learned about the program from my graduate advisor, Dr. Tom Brush, during my comprehensive exam. His wife was just completing the program. The program was very intense, immersing you in everything Army specifically how they design training. My education allowed me to bring that aspect into the Army's ISD process known as ADDIE. At that time, the Army's primary focus was "training" Soldiers and not necessarily "educating" them. Helping the Army Leadership and training developers understand how people learn provided them with a new insight into why Soldiers "just weren't getting" the training. Today the Army's education system is a balance between training and education, which creates 21st century Soldiers who are ready for the challenges of contemporary operational environment.
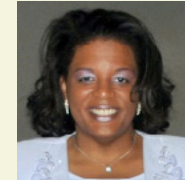
Sharonne Joy Jacobs

Position: Senior Instructional Systems Specialist

Company: United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Short Bio

Joy is currently the Senior Instructional Systems Specialist at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. She is responsible for the Sergeants Major Nonresident Course (SMNRC) curriculum. A federal government employee for 17 years, she has held many positions, such as Chief of Distance Learning, and Chief of Interactive Multimedia Instruction (IMI) Cell. She is originally from Hempstead, NY, but left in 1982. She grew up in Montgomery, AL. She earned her Master's of Education in Instructional Design from Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, in 1997. She also earned her Bachelor's degree in 1994 from Auburn in Management Information Systems (MIS). She is a member of several organizations, which include Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, National Association of Professional Women (NAPW), Society of Applied Learning Technology (SALT), Federal Government Distance Learning Association (FGDLA), United States Government Distance Learning Association (USDLA), MERLOT, and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). In her spare time she enjoys traveling, reading, graphic design, and volunteer work in the community.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY VALERIE A. SUNYAK

Want to become an Instructional Designer, not just a good Instructional Designer, but a great Instructional Designer? Then add my 3 top tips to your Instructional Design toolbox!

- Start with strong, concise objectives. Everything from the learning itself to evaluation starts with an excellent set of objectives. They are your guide.

- If you are not a good writer, hone your writing skills. Most excellent Instructional Designers are also excellent writers. They know how to develop crisp, clear materials.

- Know your audience! If you are developing eLearning scripts, use language and graphics that makes sense to the learner. I worked for a company where we hired an external vendor to develop an eLearning course, and the text read like a Shakespearean actor developed the script!

Valerie A. Sunyak

Position: Senior Learning and Development Analyst

Company: Mercer

Short Bio

Valerie is Senior Organizational Development professional with over 16 years of demonstrated ability in identifying organizational learning needs and aligning developmental and performance based solutions to corporate talent strategy. Areas of expertise include learning program/ project management, talent planning, coaching and mentoring, and the design, development, and delivery of corporate training.

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The Free eBook: How to become an Instructional Designer

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY WILLIAM ALLEN VAN BRUNT

Four tips for becoming an Instructional Designer.

1. **Get educational credentials.** There is a lot of research and science about how people learn and how to design effective learning or training products. Education credentials are needed by Instructional Designers to establish credibility with training stakeholders, subject matter experts (SMEs), and audiences.

2. **Become a "Microsoft PowerPoint" expert.** Most companies or organizations have PowerPoint based training programs that are still relevant and current. They want the presentations reengineered using new authoring tools. Tools, such as Articulate Presenter and Storyline, Captivate, and others, have the capability to import PowerPoint presentations as a starting point for developing new versions.

3. **Promote your ISD skills when working with SMEs and training stakeholders.** I facilitated many SME meetings as a subject matter expert in Instructional Design. Instructional Design skills is what I bring to the group when helping them determine training requirements, develop training content, and design training solutions for performance improvement.

4. **Know how to design "Blended Learning" training products.** Most organizations require some form of classroom training in their new training programs. Minimize lecture time and maximize hands-on training activities (20% lecture/80% activities) when designing blended training products. I ask the following questions when working with SMEs to develop blended learning/training products:

   a. What do you want learners to be able to do at the end of this training? Answers to this question will give you performance tasks. These tasks can be used as goals or objectives for developing hands-on training activities for the classroom.

   b. What do they need to know in order to be able to do those tasks? Answers to this question will give you information or content that learners need to know before being able to perform desired tasks that can be presented online prior to classroom attendance.

William Allen Van Brunt

Position: Senior Instructional Systems Designer

Company: Major, US Army Reserves, Retired

Short Bio

Allen Van Brunt retired on September 30th, 2014, after ten years of employment at Windwalker Corporation, as a senior instructional systems designer. Van Brunt went in to retirement after serving in the United States Army for twenty-two years and working over eighteen years in various Instructional Design companies.

Van Brunt worked for the United States Postal Inspection Service most of the ten years he was employed at Windwalker. During this period, Van Brunt designed many law enforcement web-based and blended learning/training products for Postal Inspectors and other Inspection Service employees.

Van Brunt holds a Bachelor's of Fine Art (Studio Art) and a Master's of Science (Instructional Systems Design) from Florida State University. Van Brunt is mentoring current ISD students at FSU.

What are the most effective uses/tips to become an Instructional Designer?

BY YVONNE WADE SANCHEZ

Like any journey, there are multiple paths to a destination. I'm going to describe three: the formal path, the informal path, and my path.

Formal Path (Recommended for the college-bound) If you don't already have a bachelor's degree, get one in Education or Instructional Design. If you already have a bachelor's degree, but it's in an unrelated field, consider obtaining a master's degree in Education or Instructional Design.

Informal Path (Recommended for those in midcareer) If you're looking to transition into Instructional Design from an existing career, then consider looking for opportunities in your current career that allow you to train or educate others. Ensure that, when these opportunities arise, you create deliverables that you can include in a portfolio. These deliverables should include the following:

- Needs assessment that identifies the knowledge gap of your target audience
- Learning objectives based on the findings from the needs assessment
- Instructional plan and/or Instructional sequence
- Storyboards

- Instructional materials
- Assessment plan
- Evaluation plan
- Project tracking document
- Feedback to be used for continuous improvement

In addition, after completion of a successful project, ask for references (e.g., LinkedIn recommendations) for classes, programs, or curriculum that you have created or helped to create.

My path (Not recommended)

After I graduated with a B.S. in economics, the company at which I worked as an intern hired me full-time. I worked hard and did my job well, and when the company centralized their offices, I was asked to help hire and train staff at the central office. One training assignment led to another, and before I even knew there was a name for it, I was an Instructional Designer. Therefore, Instructional Design found me; not the other way around. I eventually obtained a master's degree in adult education with an emphasis on distance learning. I'm still a student now. I'm currently working on my graduate certificate in teaching technical communication, and, you never know, I may someday obtain a PhD; but who knows what will find me next.
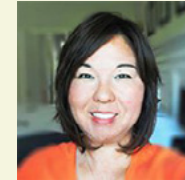
Yvonne Wade Sanchez

Position: Freelancer

Company: Self

Short Bio

Yvonne Wade Sanchez is an award-winning technical communicator and instructional designer with experience in digital media, content strategy, and elearning development.

Expertise

She has designed, developed, and delivered technical content and educational programs for Fortune 500 companies. She has managed large and small teams, and she has successfully created and grown online communities. She is a change agent with excellent online facilitation and collaboration skills, and she has worked with numerous technologies and development methodologies

Professional Visibility

Yvonne has presented at the University of Houston on the topic of online content design, and she is a highly regarded volunteer and supporter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). She has served on non-profit boards and committees and moderated online communities of practice.