

The Missing Link?

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Overview

- How/why design professionals became part of learning design and development teams
- What these professionals brought to learning design and development
- How these teams moved into the e-learning environment
- Reflect on the current situation and express concerns

History of media development

- Until about 10 years ago educational media usually meant film and video
- Academics had to work with media design professionals (video producers, animators, graphic designers)
- These are the design professionals we will refer to collectively as –
Communication Design Professionals

History of media development

- Prime model was the Open University
- Sheffield University Television followed the same model in the early 1970s
- This approach frequently produced substantially different project outcomes
- Communication designers contributed much more than skills to produce media
Design is not simply about aesthetics

Communication Design

- *Helps in clarifying the problem*
- *Divergent 'design thinking'*
- *Focuses the subject specialist*
- *Helps identify key information*
- *Visual communication design*
- *Narrative/storytelling skills*

Communication Design

- Design professionals were effectively doing the instructional/learning design
- Knowledge of instructional/learning design was experience-based (although still valid)
- Argued for the need to work with educationalists to provide sound pedagogic advice to development teams

The move into e-learning

- At Sheffield the move into e-learning started with the same development teams
- Natural progression for television unit to move into 'new' media/delivery methods
- Recognised new media had potential for solutions to some long-standing frustrations

The move into e-learning

- New learning environments needed new pedagogies – highlighted value of educationalist as a development team member

On the other hand...

- Advances in on-line delivery – in particular VLEs – led some to believe the only thing between the tutor and on-line courses was the tutor's ability to master the technology

Current situation

- Educationalists now accepted as team members (at Sheffield anyway)
- Technologies/authoring software have moved on -

graphics/animation packages, video recording and editing technologies are now relatively easy for non-professionals

Main concerns...

- Some institutions think e-learning development teams should consist of subject specialists, education professionals, and computing professionals (at best)
- Even worse, will there be a tendency to economise by 'missing out' design professionals – without realising their contribution to learning design?
- Design professionals are even more vital now to the e-learning development team

Design professionals and e-learning

- Institutions have so many learning technologies at their disposal – with new constantly being added
- Do not make the mistake of thinking design professionals are only relevant to complex projects with lots of media –

Communication Design is important to learning projects at all levels of complexity!

Design professionals and e-learning

- Communication design is essential to 'student centred', 'non-linear', 'on-line' environments in particular for navigation design –

Getting lost in a badly designed self-access environment is all too easy

- Do not underestimate the importance of visual 'identity and image' in creating a far more successful e-learning course

The Missing Link?

- Communication is crucial to any education programme
- Communication Design professionals are visual communication problem-solvers
- ‘Design thinking’ applied throughout the learning design and development process will usually enhance and enrich the learning and teaching

The Missing Link?

We must not let Communication Design professionals become the missing link in multi-professional learning technology development teams