

Written Narrative and Reflection

What was learned from completing the project?

I learned an incredible amount about using the competencies of an instructional designer in real life. My goal was to go beyond my comfort level and knowledge working with the sailing club, and use the process learned in the LDT program to solve a real-world problem. I became more adept at collaborating with SMEs, course design and development, applying theory to my teaching practice, project management, and asynchronous module design. As the project unfolded, I learned more about what was possible by incorporating AI into my workflow from analysis to development.

What were the key challenges and benefits from working on this project?

One main challenge for me was figuring out how to focus my efforts on the specific problem the organization was having. All they had to train volunteers was a 35-hour course, a 500-page user guide, and a constant back and forth with their supervisors. My goal was to find out what exactly they needed to improve the overall process of training, support after training, and what skills were lacking after the training they already provided. After several rounds of SME interviews, and an immense amount of time gathering information from various sources, I finally asked the right question to the SME to get the answer I needed to move the project forward. What I found was that the learners needed to foremost hone their interview skills above all else. This revelation was refreshing to finally understand so I could start designing and developing the instructional and non-instructional interventions. The SME asked for checklists primarily, but I wanted to take that one step further and have those checklists be able to be accessed through a query into a chatbot so they could get real-time feedback when needed.

The challenge was going beyond simply having the user-guide added as a document to the GPT, so I decided to create the checklists and upload them along with all the training scripts and materials I created. I also learned to write the questions that were most likely going to be asked by the volunteers and then have them tested for accuracy. I initially thought that the volunteers weren't going to be technical enough to use this, but a learner analysis determined that the technical abilities were higher than anticipated. Another challenge I had was chunking the lengthy user guide information into manageable portions for the eLearning modules. I didn't want the learning to be simple slides and found out about a new technology called digital

whiteboards. Napkin.AI was in beta and allowed me 2 weeks of free usage to extrapolate all the interview related information from the training document and web sources to easy-to-read visualizations, which I hand selected and stayed consistent with the styling and color scheme to increase the accessibility of the eLearning slides. This workflow of using AI for scripting and visualizations is a benefit in my current workflow as a Training Developer because my Training Manager who interviewed and hired me specifically commented after she hired me how she liked how I described my use of AI in this initiative and my ability to gamify content using AI as well.

A benefit of working on this project was that I became more confident about my abilities to take a subject I know nothing about and used heuristics to determine the best course of action throughout the ADDIE process in creating these materials. I harkened back to my first class learning the Dick and Carey model to really understand the learner and work backwards from the assessment to the learning objectives. I learned the value of Rapid Prototyping because once I had initial slides and audio from the fast-paced development, I was able to take time to infuse more structure using Gagne's Nine Events. I used the new NotebookLM feature of creating short videos and used my scripts to help create these videos to gain attention, then recalled knowledge by incorporating short quizzes and flashcards before the main content of the lesson. I know I am more comfortable creating eLearning now and was very confident in describing this process during my interview which landed me my first real job in the field, even though I didn't have years of experience using authoring tools like Articulate.

Now with hindsight, what could have been changed to improve the project in a significant manner?

I transitioned to a different role, so I was unable to visit the Clark County Child Advocates facility to build a driving coalition to implement the change. I was unable to get any evaluations on eLearning despite giving them a full month to go through, and in hindsight I would have set up a meeting to go through them with the supervisors live to get some kind of response. Instructional design is a team sport, and I felt like I was on my own island because the SME was always busy, and I didn't enlist an Early Adopter or change agent to help drive the initiative. Based on some of the feedback I read from the initial survey, I am not surprised as it appears that the volunteers feel like they are on "an island" like myself as well. The successful volunteers are diligently communicating with the main office and supervisors, where anyone else who doesn't do this is left to their own devices. Because of this, I wasn't motivated to take the eLearning to the next level and incorporate 360 Degree Learning or creating a custom

Chatbot or some other ideas I had. Not to mention the program I wanted to create; the 360 Degree Learning OrchestrateVR could only be downloaded and operated using Apple products, and I don't own any of those. So, I don't know how the learners would have responded to more technical interventions when they couldn't even take the time to use the easy ones I created. This was in part due to my lack of enlisting a change agent or someone who was interested in moving this initiative forward.

Which of your ID skills you feel were improved because of the project and which skills still need more work?

Some of the skills I learned will stick with me for the rest of my career, and I am grateful to have completed this project. My analysis skills were improved as I was able to use survey feedback to help make design decisions and this feels very empowering. My course design and development skills were improved, and my ability to apply theory to the artifacts was empowering as well. I especially improved on my skills of project management, as the process I learned from Project Plans to Design Documents, to Storyboards, to content creation and evaluation was used in a manner that not only helps me but a greater cause as well. This was the first job I have ever had that didn't feel so self-serving. I was grateful to be able to use my learned skills from the LDT program to do some good in the world and leave a more lasting imprint than typical sales training that I did in my previous career. I now feel more empowered because I have rounded out my ability to conduct informal training and am now able to showcase the ability to design and deliver more formalized training that can give measurable results when applied. I will forever be able to talk about this experience and am grateful for starting so soon before my first foray into the profession as a Training Developer.

I need more work in various areas of LDT. I could improve on my relationship management skills and faculty development. I need to up my game in technology expertise so that I can teach and create more sustainment after the training is completed either via an LMS or post-training documentation for staff and volunteers. I could also improve on my understanding of legal ramifications and accessibility standards as I don't really know the extent of the legality of advice given through a custom GPT chatbot (though I did set up a guardrail saying "Talk to your supervisor" if the questioning was in any kind of grey area). I also was unable to create any audio transcription or notes to go along with the audio in the eLearning due to the limitations of H5P compared to authoring tools like Articulate, so will have to improve on my choice of tools when conducting or authoring trainings in the future.

Overall, I learned problem-solving and solving an ill-structured problem that didn't fit into what I already knew, and this was empowering. I think instructional design work is a process where the training developers don't really need to be experts on the subject matter to create good materials, and I am happy to report that I will never forget this experience and am grateful for the opportunity.