



WHITE
PAPER

Developing Your Own Online Course: Counsel from FirstNet Learning

By Jane Martel
Instructional Designer/Course Developer
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Your company has seen the benefits of blended learning and your e-learning initiative is working. You are training more employees at a faster pace and at a lower cost. You are now dreaming about a custom online course that fits your company "perfectly!" This course would contain *your* photos, *your* policies, and *your* links to specific information. What's next?

A key decision you need to make is whether to develop the course with your company's resources or hire a professional course development company. This white paper will help you make that decision.

Just Do It...or Not

Think about this analogy. If you had to, you could prepare and serve a five course sit-down dinner for 400 guests at a special event (such as a wedding or company banquet), couldn't you? Maybe so but most people wouldn't; they'd hire caterers. Why is that?

1. You don't have the *tools and equipment* you need. Oh, you have some of the equipment that you need but not what will really expedite the job.
2. You haven't kept up with the latest news in quantity food preparation and serving, regulations related to serving food, etc. Why would you? You may be an accomplished cook for your family of four but catering for hundreds is not your field of *expertise*. Your job is something else entirely.
3. You'd rather spend your *time* in a more productive way or doing the things you do best. And it would take you so much longer to do it yourself than it would an expert.
4. What would you do if (or when) you ran into a *problem* or had a question in the middle of the job? Who would help you? No one could readily come to your assistance. An expert would know what to do if an unexpected problem occurred.

So it is with course development. *Could* you develop your own courses? Sure. But *should* you? Maybe not.

What is E-Learning?

A course is more than a collection of words published online. E-learning is not about putting a written manual or a PowerPoint presentation on the Web. You should consider many of the questions that professional course developers and instructional designers think about when they build an online course.

Learning Theory

- What are the eight key factors that influence learning?
- What are the principles of adult learning?
- How will you ensure that what is taught is "caught" by the learner?
- Training is about transferring what is learned to behavior on the job. What are the barriers to transfer and how will you overcome them? How do you enhance retention and transfer of learning to the job?
- Have you designed learning with the whole brain in mind?
- Have you catered to the four general styles of your learners and included instructional strategies for every style?

Process

- What will you do to enhance the learner's intrinsic motivation to learn?
- What techniques will you use to gain the learner's attention?
- What sequence of presentation works best? How will you accommodate a natural progression to capture all types of learners?
- In what ways will you stimulate recall of prior learning to provide a scaffold upon which to build new information?
- What opportunities will you offer for learners to check their understanding?
- What meaningful interaction will you build into your course? What options are available to ensure that learners have access to activities and applications that will reinforce the content?

Content

- What is the best sequence of instruction? How will you organize course content?
- What is the recipe for writing effective objectives?
- Have you written at a level that your audience can comprehend?
- What's the best way to display content so that learners will attend to it and notice the most important points?
- What are the keys to giving effective feedback?

Support

- What's the truth about use of graphics in courses? Do you have access to quality photography or to Flash™ designers on staff to support your course development?
- Do you know HTML well enough to edit and troubleshoot problems?
- What media would best support your course?
- How should secondary windows and printable materials be used?

This list was developed in minutes. It is but a fraction of what encompasses the field of online course development. Were you readily able to answer these questions?

How FirstNet Learning Can Help You

At FirstNet Learning, we have expert course developers and instructional designers that collaborate to produce the best results possible for you. Your Subject Matter Experts can work with our experts. The results are optimized to ensure that your employees get the most out of their training experience.

FirstNet Learning also offers instructional design consulting for companies who wish to develop their own custom courses. Custom courses are reviewed and edited by our Instructional Designers and loaded to the FirstNet Learning LMS (Learning Management System) for delivery over the Internet.

Whatever your choice, be sure to *invest* in — not spend on — employee training. For further information, please contact FirstNet Learning at (888) 948-4949 or e-mail us at info@firstnetlearning.com.

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