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Digital Solutions in India 2018: Instructional Design in Digital Publishing

By Sriram Subramanya, founder and CEO of Integra Software Services | Jun 29, 2018

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Education has finally started moving. And like events at the edge of a black hole, where the laws of physics stop working, this transformation of education from its traditional methodology is taking place so quickly that it is already happening before we are even aware of it.

While digital content delivery has been recognized by many to be quickly replacing print books, publishers are facing tremendous pressure and demand for digital versions of textbooks and educational materials from everyone—administrators, educators, and students. With the added pressure of piracy, Open Education Resources (OER), and rental book market, it is absolutely imperative that publishers be several steps ahead to stay relevant and in the race. As a result, there is a tremendous move to digitize and come up with new digital solutions to stay abreast.

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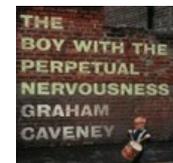
In the rush to digitize, it is important to understand that content digitization is not just a simple print-to-digital conversion. It requires a transformation of the content, utilization of vast and seemingly limitless capabilities of the digital platform, protection against the risks of digital delivery, and limitations of the technology itself.

One of the important tools that publishers and educators can rely on in meeting these challenges is Instructional Design (ID). ID has become an essential tool that can be applied to structuring content, not only from the content perspective, but also from the perspective of the delivery median and the learner. It can be used to structure the content and tailor it to the learner's need. With a paradigm shift in the social and behavioral characteristics of the digital learner, ID has to be adapted to meet the learning behavior, and the cognitive dimensions of present-day learning.

While the original ID principles still hold strong and true in this transformed learning landscape, the application of these principles need to be adapted, not just to the existing trends, but also to be predictive of future directions that learning may take. For example, one of the learner characteristics that distinguished "pedagogy" from "andragogy" is "experience", and this may not hold true today. While experience brought in by adult learners to the learning experience still contributed in the design of the adult learning experience, the massive resources that are available at the click of a button (or a single tap on a smartphone), the ability of digital natives to source and access information has made experience as understood in the context of the age of the learner, obsolete, or at best, redundant. The ID exercise must therefore build upon this change in the learner's capability and capacity.

So e-learning and digital conversion service providers need to redesign and transform existing content to ensure that essential and didactic content is primarily at the forefront, and that content is designed to be non-intrusive yet easily accessible. ID for digital content also needs to ensure that the learning characteristics of the digital learner are incorporated into the design. Shorter attention span, differences in group dynamics vs. individual behavior as well as the need to be able to voice

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an opinion has to be incorporated into ID of content. Even the use of scenarios and analogies has to be designed based on current trends, which are always changing. For example, Facebook is now considered to be an outdated social media that is used by the middle aged and older people.

However, with all these changes in the learner's and learning characteristics, we have an abundance of opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed. An example of the limitless enablers of the digital medium is its ability to be an active resource instead of a passive one. Digital content has to be interactive and when we say "interactive", we are not just talking about a couple of clicks or screen swipes. We mean the interaction where the content is designed to break the learner's train of thought, and to make the learner question, imagine, analyze, and evaluate.

In this evolutionary progress of education and digital transformation, Integra Software Services has been able to stand apart in innovating its processes and services to meet the digital challenge, and among them in the ID medium. We have provided conversion services for existing content to transform them from traditional e-learning and print formats. Our approach has been a researched and redesigned process that does not holistically apply instruction systems design to content, or treat content at the macro level. Instead, we analyze the content at a micro level, identifying specific learning key points that serve as a basis for each learning object, whether it is a standalone learning object or an integrated part of a larger learning object. We apply ID to the specific key point, using a variety of motivational strategies such as visual mnemonics, analogies, scenarios, and storylines.

We have provided redesign of content for a top financial services provider, for instance, to convert its existing training program into micro-modules that are small, yet engaging and can be used as a quick reference by its salespeople. We have used analogies of a cellphone and its battery to explain the importance of the quality of work life, and an analogy of the strength of an eggshell to show the importance of ergonomics to the human spine. This approach provides a quick and engaging takeaway with the required enforcement to enable the learner achieve the level of learning based on the learning objective in the cognitive domain.

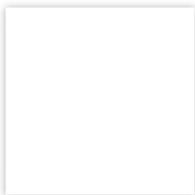
While Integra has a team of Instructional Designers that is able to meet the challenge, innovate, and invent to adapt to the changing ID requirements, it has always been a collaborative effort. With the challenges of time and space in collaboration, Integra has identified the way forward in developing its own inhouse storyboard authoring and collaboration tool iAuthor. Our processes also include visual storyboards that provide the non-expert client with a quick view of how our storyboards are converted into animations and videos.

Integra's ID team believes in the equation, $E = M^2C$, where E stands for Education or edification, M for Motivation, and C for Content. Accordingly, education equals content multiplied by motivation squared. In other words, you need a spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down. And ID or Motivation is what makes content easy to swallow (and to understand and digest). To this end, Integra has also been developing its e-c learning, which is the acronym for e-comic learning. While comic-based learning has always been around, it has been a force-feeding of content into a comic-like format. Integra has instead taken edutainment into comics, providing the learner with the engagement and motivation of a comic-style storyline along with comic-style visual depictions.

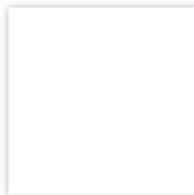
Without constant innovation and invention, it will be impossible to meet the challenges from the competition and the needs of the market. And Integra's ID team is doing what it needs to deliver to its publishing clients.

A version of this article appeared in the 07/02/2018 issue of *Publishers Weekly* under the headline:

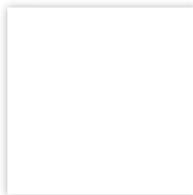
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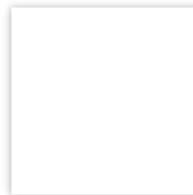
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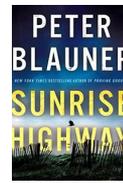
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