

Instructional Design

As a Network Systems Analyst, I am part of a seven (7) member "thinktank" assigned with the task of addressing day-to-day and project-related technical issues. I am currently employed with a globally operated commercial real-estate corporation based out of Houston, TX. My company is in the business of providing services that are geared toward the acquisition and management of commercial properties. Our clients are typically wealthy investors or business conglomerates that require services specific to the management of their respective properties. A few of the primary services we provide include onsite property management, accounting, construction, engineering, leasing, real-estate investments, and information technology.

From a technical standpoint, my team and I support two sets of clients. The first set is our internal users. This would include company employees located at our corporate, regional, and satellite offices around the globe. The second set of clients is our business partners (property owners) with whom we service and represent. In addition to our corporate network infrastructure, my team and I are also occasionally outsourced to manage the network infrastructures at some of the larger properties owned by said business partners.

A few days ago, I was given the lead on an instructional project that would address the importance and need for our remote satellite offices to back up their local data to an offsite storage facility (currently referred to as "cloud computing", "cloud hosting", and "cloud services"). Anyone who has lost information data due to computer hardware failure, files that were permanently deleted, or damaged/stolen equipment understands the rationale behind the need for offsite backups. The goal for this task would be to develop and implement a strategic plan that would standardize the data backup process while minimizing the learning curve for property managers at the remote sites.

Utilizing the ADDIE method, the first phase of the project would involve brainstorming (Analysis) with fellow team members within my IT group. As the lead tech, I would schedule brief meetings that will aid in sequestering ideas, suggestions, and or opinions in an effort to streamline the development and implementation process. During this phase I am able to clearly

define the goal and procedural steps. Questions such as "What are the cost benefits?", "Why is an offsite data solution necessary?", and "What is the timeline for project completion?" are critical in establishing and building a project foundation that will foster collaboration and cooperation between all vested stakeholders involved.

The second phase of the project (Design) involves the need to understanding the logistics involved in rolling out a large scale project with an impending deadline to meet. It is important that the designer takes into consideration factors associated with time and money. Some questions that might be asked are "What instructional medium should be used?", "What will the procedural steps be?", and "Will the rollout necessitate an onsite or remote training course?" The point of the design phase is to piece together conceptual detail objectives into an organizational framework. From personal experience, the use of topic outlines and mind mapping diagrams have been key in maintaining order over chaos.

From these framework diagrams, I am now at the creative point in the project (Development) where I can physically create and assemble the content that was blueprinted during the design phase. The actual creation of the project tools (i.e. procedural documents, presentation slides, step-by-step instructional videos, et al.) brings shape to the project. With the information gathered during the analysis and design phases, I am now able to solidify the procedural steps into something tangible for the property managers. Through the use of my project tools, I remain confident that they are now able to follow my procedural guidelines with confidence and efficacy.

The most challenging part of the ADDIE process, in my opinion, would have to be the phase (Implementation) that really puts everything into motion. Sending out the first email to all vested interests (i.e. management, staff, ownership, et al.), informing them of the goals for this mandated project and the logistics needed to complete the processes within the proposed backup solution can be nerve-racking. The moment I hit the enter key, I better be ready for a deluge of questions, comments, and complaints. As long as I took the time during the analysis and design phase to critically examine and consider some, if not all, of the projected concerns from our stakeholders, I should be in good territory. In addition to creating a well-calculated plan for this

project, it would be in my best interest that I convey a level of openness and trust with everyone involved so that they get a feel of the intent, rationale, and experience behind the overall project goal.

This form of alignment and transparency has definitely benefited me in the past, particularly during the final phase (Evaluation) of my "instructional" projects. Shortly after the deadline, I like to send out a website link to my property managers in the form of 5-point Likert scale survey. This questionnaire helps me to evaluate different aspects of the implementation process in an objective way. The respondents are asked to specify their level of agreement or disagreement, which helps to establish a qualitative level of measurement used in addressing both positive and negative feedback. To date, the highest percentage rate of completed solicited surveys received is 92% out of an approximate 130 property managers. Not too shabby. ;)