

Interview: E-Learning Practitioner Profile

IT 5650: Policies & Planning for E-Learning Programs

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By: Paul Anthony Silli



Name: Janet Lowe
Company: University of Colorado Denver
Job Position: Director of Employee Learning and Development

START Q & A

- - What is your background within eLearning: your role, credentials and job experience?

I have a Masters Degree in Education from New York State University and a MBA Certificate in Business – earned at the University of Colorado. I also worked at .dotcom creating course work and eLearning programs. Additionally, I worked for eight-years at Sun Micro Systems creating the infrastructure of online labs using Java, HTML and other programs to create a Virtual Tech Center to teach employees machinery, and implement remote-data bases using the Learning Management System [SkillSoft](#).

Wow! You have a lot of great experience Janet... What are you doing today?

Currently, I am working as the Director of Employee and Development at the University of Colorado where I work to create the online infrastructure for more than 30-employee training courses within all three campus at CU Boulder, CU Denver, and CU Colorado Springs.

What have you learned on-the-job to be successful in eLearning?

Lowe said: "I think it is important to network with colleagues in field by site, email or through phone calls. To be successful you should stay in touch with others and learn from their successes and failures."

How do you stay in touch with your friends and colleagues?

To communicate with colleagues I use [Skype](#) and [Facebook](#). Keep in mind Skype is free to use and you can call someone anywhere in the world to share ideas...

Anyone interesting you could share that you talk with about eLearning?

Yes, for example, she said... "Through Skype I talk with a colleague who lives in Italy who's creating an online Virtual Network Portal which will offer eLearning courses by use of video and movie clips. "

That is pretty cool, Janet. I am Italian, Florian, and want to visit Italy someday... Great program your friend is creating. I think media rich learning activities are best for learners. What else do you think is essential to be successful in the field?

I also think it is important to have an efficient "help desk" in an eLearning program. Tech support can help reduce many issues and assist students with technical problems by use of email or phone calls. Additionally, it is vital to make your online course universal for browser systems, and to keep the flash, media and other pieces of the coursework accessible so everyone can use them.

"The online course needs to be accessible for all users, especially for those using Windows and Mac Operating Systems. This can be a challenge, but it is very important, Lowe said."

What type of program tools do you often use?

I often use [NotePad ++](#) as a quick, course editor. It is free to download and easy to use to make fast course edits and updates. I use [Dreamweaver](#) for the "Big Stuff" projects. I also like to use Microsoft Office and Open Office for day-to-day work.

Interesting. I did not know about NotePad++ and Open Office; I will download them and give them a try... and they are free as well. Do you have any special Mac tools that you use to recommend?

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As for Mac or Apple, I do not use any special programs. Most applications and open source tools are free to download and can be installed to either a Mac or Windows system. I really like finding [open source](#) programs to use. There are many on the Internet and they are usually easy to work with.

[What do you think are some important trends in eLearning and why?](#)

I have to keep track of finding efficient tools to use for my job. I think most software applications are still developing and tend to be similar in use. Another thing is you have to keep track of your cost factors when creating an eLearning program. Especially for the cost of video and other budget constraints.

[Do you use Twitter or other programs like it?](#)

Yes. I find [Twitter](#) popular and has demand; but I do not see it as an efficient instructional tool. The remarks are too short for users. I do like that you can use it to share information though. It has a great collaboration appeal.

[What issues do you see as a concern within the field?](#)

I do not see things as either black and white in this field. Some programs are obviously better than others, but each has a use. I would be careful about social networks such as Facebook and [Plaxo](#) though. It is not the applications that are the concern, but the individual who can access them.

[How about an example of this concern...](#)

For example, there are some sites that can get information and extract your data banks without your permission -- and then use your email which can create spam issues... so "privacy" is a real concern.

[Excellent advice, Janet. Is there anything I did not ask that you would like to share?](#)

I think something to mention, again, is to create an eLearning program that is affordable. You could use the [American Society of Training and Development](#) (ASTD) as a standard to help you learn formulas, and examine if your eLearning course is worth spending the money on. "I use the ASTD a lot," she said.

It is important to learn the [Optimized Learning](#) approach when thinking about creating an eLearning program.

[Thanks Janet. I will look-up Optimized Learning as a resource. What else can you share about evaluation tools?](#)

Lowe said you should get interested in staying up on [Learning Analytics](#). According to Alex Blyth, on [personneltoday.com](#) (2008), Learning Analytics uses a non-scientific measure to evaluate how successful a learning program has been.

Lowe said it is important to use measurable tools to evaluate if your program is worth the cost and produces effective learning outcomes.

[What are some core things an instructional designer should look for to be successful with a new program?](#)

She said: "An effective eLearning course must answer: How long it will take to teach learners, how many students will participate, what the cost for updates and quality assurance are, and what will be the measure of "learning impact" for the course. "These questions should be answered," Lowe said. She mentioned that a return on investment (ROI) should make sense and support the course efforts."

-- END Q & A

My Reflective Summary

I learned a lot from the interview with Janet. The eLearning field is growing and changing rapidly. That is what makes it an interesting market. I did not know about NotePad ++, the ASTD, Optimized Learning or Learning Analytics evaluation tools.

Janet's *success tips* and cost evaluation comments were very interesting and important to consider when creating a new eLearning program. Additionally, I did not think of the essential need of having a "help desk" for my proposal of an eLearning program -- so it gave me something strong to consider.

She made the comment of learning by collaborating with others who are in the field. Networking is a vital part of success whether you are a student, business professional or looking for social input... we all learn from interacting with each other.

I thought the interview went very well. Learning more about the eLearning field is key for my professional development as a teacher and instructional designer. This was a fun, interactive class activity to participate in.

3 Interview Transcripts

References

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