

My Philosophy

My philosophy of instructional technology centers on the processes of instructional design, performance improvement, project and change management, multimedia development, and evaluation. By assuming the roles of designer, developer, implementer and evaluator, an instructional technologist helps an organization to analyze needs, determine causes, design solutions, implement interventions and evaluate success. As an instructional technologist, I believe that considerations and decisions accompany these processes in order to appropriately design, develop and implement solutions.

As an instructional designer, I utilize the ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate) model of instructional design to frame my work. In my opinion, front-end analysis is the cornerstone of instructional solution design and development. By utilizing performance, context and learner analysis techniques, an instructional designer is able to answer basic questions about an organization and its individuals that will inform both the instructional design and change processes (Dick, Carey & Carey, 2005).

To me, instructional design must be based on the needs of the system and that a model for delivery is best determined based on the capabilities of the system and its learners. I prefer to utilize theories of instructional design that focus on the collaborative and social nature of learning, but understand that more cognitive and behavioral approaches are sometimes necessary.

I believe in the development of flawless instructional materials. I understand that “people learn better from words and pictures than from words alone” (Mayer, 2001, p. 63). Mayer’s principles of multimedia learning (2001) drive my development work. Graphic and audiovisual design principles also influence also serve as guidelines for the development of print, audiovisual, computer-based and integrated instructional media (Skaalid, 1999, Smith, 2005).

As a performance analyst, I realize that training is not the only solution to performance problems. Through a careful gap analysis, interventions may not always include instructional design. Performance problems can also be due to a lack of motivation, incentives, information, or a flawed working environment (Pershing, 2006). If, as a performance technologist, I analyze the effect of potential risks and plan with constraints in mind, I realize that I may be able to convert some threats into opportunities or resources.

As an implementation specialist, the instructional technologist assumes two roles – project manager and change agent. In each of these roles, decisions must be made to determine management strategies and implementation approaches.

As an instructional project manager, I understand that great care must be taken when identifying resources, constraints, opportunities and risks to a project during the scoping process to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Establishing a system for controlling project communication and progress must also be established to provide structure for project work. As structuring and supervising project resources is important; the management of knowledge, information and delivery systems has become increasingly important to the instructional technologist. These systems can help define both how learning and support will occur as an intervention is implemented.

As a change agent, I understand that one of the greatest pains to human nature is the pain of a new idea (Bagehot, 1872). Effective implementation that is sensitive to the principles of change management and

systemic needs is critical to the success of an intervention. I utilize models of adoption that align with Roger's Theory of Innovation Diffusion (1962): awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption. I also realize that understanding the characteristics of adopters will assist in planning for change (Rogers 1962). As an instructional technologist, it is my mission to reach the early and late majority, without allowing the laggards to frustrate me. I am aware that, because of this, I may only reach 84% of my target population. As an advocate for change, I must be patient with the process of diffusion, as innovation acceptance may not happen quickly and will require substantial support. I believe in continuous innovation and systemic change. I understand that change is difficult and building system capacity to change is necessary for continued success.

Evaluation, in my opinion, must occur at all levels of the processes of instructional design and performance improvement. I believe in consistent and continuous evaluation before, during and after the process of instructional design. In all models of instructional design, formative evaluation is repetitive and critical. Both processes and products must be evaluated in order to approach interventions in the most effective manner possible. I have come to realize that there is a fine line between summative evaluation and needs assessment. The summative evaluation of one project may signify the end of one project and the beginning of another. Within the design of instruction, assessment is a critical part of the learning process, not only for the instructor to gauge whether learning occurred, but for the learner to ensure that they are learning. Assessment helps learners adjust their process of learning and instructors modify their instructional methods.

I believe that learning is an ongoing and necessary process in all areas of the field. I understand that I have entered a changing profession where my vitality is dependent on my ability to embrace it. I realize that I am in control of my own professional development. I also realize that, should I lose sight of my own improvement, I will fall behind.