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Business Content Development

White Paper

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## 5 Steps to Developing eLearning Standards

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## Summary: 5 Easy Steps to eLearning Standards

The importance, relevancy, and quick turnover of elearning and training development deliverables and schedules loom over every manager. How can you make each elearning deliverable effective and professional, no matter how tight your deadline and no matter what development tools you use? This short white paper lists 5 easy but necessary steps that should form the baseline of every elearning program you develop or outsource to an instructional design firm.

**Who benefits from reading this short paper?** Training managers, documentation developers, HR, or project managers charged with training the workforce or the customer can get useful tips.

## Key Concepts and Keywords

Style guides, learning programs, elearning curriculum development, aligning learning to business objectives, converting existing learning assets, elearning standards, page types, interaction models, instructional design standards.



## Take the Time to Develop eLearning Standards

Elearning, or online learning, is gaining in importance in corporate environments for several very good reasons:

- Geographically dispersed business units make travel for short courses impractical.
- Opportunity costs for telecommuting employees are too high.
- Product training and corporate change management learning programs are increasing in frequency.
- Skyrocketing transportation costs are making their impact felt across the spectrum.

Every moment devoted to training, therefore, should merit the ever increasing time-value costs of attending the training. Training programs must be high-impact, rich with learning retention opportunities, and well-executed in form and delivery.

Even if you are developing only a 30-minute eLearning lesson, it is important to prepare and work to a set of standards in order to create consistent and compelling eLearning. Without consistency, learners get frustrated, confused, and become less able to retain the concepts and data you labor to put forth. Follow these 5 steps to begin defining eLearning standard that fit your corporate goals and the needs of your audiences and trainers.

Could this be you?

From *Coming Clean about E-Learning Misconceptions*:

“. . . although we have spent a lot time talking about interactive courseware and engaging e-learning, the result has typically been glorified page turners that include some interesting animations and true/false or multiple-choice questions.”

(Tozman, 2008)

### 1. Page Types

Minimally, define a set of page types and the placement of objects for each. Typical page types include:

- Lesson Title page
- Lesson Introduction page
- Lesson Content page
- Question page
- Lesson Summary page



Without predefined page types, authors (the individuals who "program" eLearning content in an authoring tool) won't have guidelines for where to place objects on the page. You may find that even with only one author, the pages are inconsistent. If you have multiple authors, you can guarantee it.

## 2. Style Guide

A style guide is an absolute baseline requirement. This section of the eLearning standard defines everything from the proper voice to use to the correct way to format a bulleted list. Do you address the learner in the first person voice? Is there a list of terms and acronyms? What about a glossary? Is the language and diction consistent across all materials? These are a few of the issues that a style guide must resolve. Don't let your style get in the way of creating a seamless learning experience.

## 3. Interaction Models

Ideally, you should develop a set of interaction models for the instructional designer to consider when developing storyboards and for the author to use when authoring the lesson. For example, you may create a model for hot-spot graphics that bring up pop-up windows. Interaction models speed up the development time and ensure that instructional designers plan interactions that are possible within the selected authoring tool.

## 4. Instructional Design Standards

Instructional design standards provide guidelines and recommendations for various interactions. For example, they define the number of tries that a learner can make in answering questions, as well as the type of feedback that is provided for questions.

## 5. Methodology Standards

If you are embarking on a large eLearning development effort, it is also important to clearly define the methodology that will be used. Methodology standards answer questions such as,

- What development steps will we follow?
- How is feedback from the subject-matter experts incorporated?
- Will we pilot our eLearning modules?
- And, who is responsible for what?

For your next eLearning project, make the wise time investment of preparing a standards document up front.

For more reading on elearning standards, see [E-Learning Standards Update](#) in the ASTD's [Learning Circuits](#) online resource. For more on content development best practices, visit [LR.com](#) or [get in touch!](#)



## Works Cited

Tozman, R. (2008, April). *Coming Clean About E-Learning Misconceptions*. Retrieved July 7, 2008, from Learning Circuits: ASTD's Source for E-Learning: [http://www.learningcircuits.org/0408\\_tozman.html](http://www.learningcircuits.org/0408_tozman.html)

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