Turning Subject Matter Expertise into an Interactive Learning Experience

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A Demo: Continuing Legal Education

The “Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence” course

- **Audience**: Attorneys working with domestic violence victims.
- **Goals**: Equip attorneys with the skills to handle domestic violence cases from both legal and human perspectives.
The “Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence” course

You May Also Want To:

- Change what information other people can see about you in My Profile
- Start a new discussion

when Working with the Domestic Violence Survivor (53 minutes)

- Thursday: Capstone Activity (35 minutes)
- Friday: Self-Care and Wrap-Up (32 minutes)
Actor Scenes: Key Characteristics

**Relevance**
These were a specific, realistic situations of the type that the target audience might encounter with a real client.

**Drama**
The situations were dramatic, with compelling characters and actors.

**Realistic Details**
The drama didn’t come at the cost of reality, but rather was intensified by the realism.
SME Video: Key Characteristics

• She discussed rich, specific examples, telling stories of her own experiences.

• She generalized from the specific stories, making the key takeaway points clear.

• She demonstrated that she was clearly experienced in her field, so her stories carried some weight to the audience.

• Her style was friendly, open, and not didactic—she’s an experienced colleague, not a lecturer.
Working with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
“Once we know something, we find it hard to imagine what it’s like not to know it…. It becomes difficult for us to share our knowledge with others, because we can’t readily re-create our listeners’ state of mind.”

-- Chip and Dan Heath, “Made to Stick”
“Today I’m going to talk about…”

or

“Today we’re going to discuss…”
What’s different between showing and telling?
“...knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used.”

John Seeley Brown, Allan Collins, Paul Duguid – 1989
“...are most simply defined as the ordinary practices of the culture.”

(Brown, Collins, & Duguid)
Research in cognitive science tells us that knowledge is not separate from doing.

Therefore, effective teaching and learning methods incorporate context and actions on the part of the learner. “Authentic” activities are ideal.
Our goal is to start with subject matter expertise—which often comes in the form of high-level principles—and transform it into a learning experience that focuses on skill application and performance.
The Process
Content Collection
Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

- Experts in their content area and understand the target audience.

- Generally not experts in learning.

- Many SME-created courses are lectures, with significant time spent on high-level principles rather than practical application—people often want to be the “sage on a stage.”
Working with SMEs

- Establishing roles/plan from the start.
- Conducting conversations and interviews.
- Keeping the SME in the right role.
- Forming a team with complementary expertise.
Interviewing SMEs: Questions

- Ask questions about the job and what people need to be able to do (information is in service of goals).
- Ask lots of follow-up questions.
- Don’t be afraid to dig deep.
- Focus on performance goals.
- Look for specific examples and what theory/principle/lesson learned comes from the example.
- Ask about common mistakes/misconceptions people have.
- Avoid jumping to a discussion of the end product (this can be more difficult than it seems!)
The Process

Content Analysis and Design
Content Analysis and Design

- Identify key themes and goals based on the content that you’ve collected—this is a bottom-up approach.
- Consider what type of learner experience you want to design, based on content, goals, audience, and other relevant factors—budget, organizational/client needs, even practical matters such as whether the SME would come across well on-camera.
The learner experience could potentially be anything—simulation, watch/rate/compare, collaborative discussions, problems to solve, new models, combinations of models, etc.

Looking to create relevant, compelling experiences that learners connect to and that help them do something better—end goal is generally performance, not just “learning.”
The Learning Experience: Candidate Models
The Learning Experience: Candidate Models

What do you want to say?

"Could you come back in a few minutes, please?"
"Are you the new receptionist?"
"I'm on my way out, would you come back tomorrow, please?"
"How can I help you?"

How should I greet someone who stops by my office?
What’s the best way to make a sale to a drop-in?
What strategy can I use to have the best chance of making a sale?
The Learning Experience: Candidate Models

Let the guest know you understand his problem and ask to see the merchandise.
The Learning Experience: Candidate Models

 Darkness in the Den

Joe turns on the switch in the den. No light, just as Mrs. Babcock said.
What's the next thing Joe should do?

- Check the light fixture
- Check the light bulb
- Check the main service panel

Ask a Question
- How does an electrical switch work?
- What can cause an electrical switch to stop working?
- How do you figure out why an electrical switch doesn't work?
- How do you test a switch for continuity?
The Learning Experience: Candidate Models

Thursday: Capstone Activity (25 minutes)

How do you think the attorney did here?
- I think the attorney did something wrong.

What do you think the attorney did wrong?
The Process

Detailed Design and Content Development
The “Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence” course:

A “Watch/Rate/Compare” Activity
A Watch/Rate/Compare Activity

- The scene was based on stories from the SME, but both versions (original and “done well”) were specifically designed and written by the instructional designer for this activity. The SME then reviewed the scripts for accuracy and realism.
- The evaluation criteria came from interviews with the SME, but again weren’t generated by the SME directly, but by the instructional designer.
The “Representing Domestic Violence Survivors” course (a second DV course):

A Mini-Simulation
A Mini-Simulation

- The scene was based on stories from the SME, but both versions (original and “done well”) were specifically designed and written by the instructional designer for this activity. The SME then reviewed the scripts for accuracy and realism.
- The evaluation criteria came from interviews with the SME, but again weren’t generated by the SME directly, but by the instructional designer.
The “Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence” course:

A Video Commenting Activity
A Video-Commenting Activity

- The scene was based on stories from the SME, but both versions (original and “done well”) were specifically designed and written by the instructional designer for this activity. The SME then reviewed the scripts for accuracy and realism.
- The evaluation criteria came from interviews with the SME, but again weren’t generated by the SME directly, but by the instructional designer.
Final Thoughts

- The set of possible online learner experiences we can design is vast!
- There’s an art to working with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)—and often a number of difficult challenges to work through—to design an effective learner experience that takes advantage of the SME’s expertise.
Thank You!

We’re happy to discuss any questions and comments!

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