



THE GMarie GROUP
Performance Improvement Specialists

Developing Effective Instruction for Multiple Audiences

How to Effectively Tailor Similar Content for Different Recipients

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Introduction

Learning and development professionals are often faced with the challenge of developing instruction for multiple audiences, using the same content, but with a different “slant” for each audience. For instance, as a company rolls out a new product, the organization may need to train sales associates, call center customer service representatives, store personnel and even customers about that new product. While the information about the product may be the same—features, benefits, functionality, price, usage, repair, etc.—the way in which this information is presented to each audience is likely to be different.

In addition, just as the content will be conveyed differently to different learning audiences, so too may the learning methodology change for each particular learning group. For instance, while it may make sense to train a group of 25 centrally located sales personnel in an instructor-led session, it probably doesn’t make sense to use that same methodology for a widely dispersed, several hundred member audience of call center customer service representatives.

In response to these challenges, The GMarie Group has developed a process for streamlining the design and development of learning for multiple audiences. We have effectively used this process in many types of industries and for many types of audiences. The result has been threefold:

- 1) Faster, more efficient design and development
- 2) More effective instruction for each audience
- 3) Happier, less harried subject matter experts!

Our Process

The ten step process we’ve outlined here provides a guideline for development of instruction for multiple audiences. While it appears as a linear process, in fact some of these steps may occur simultaneously and may need to be revisited as new information is gained. However, by following these steps, learning and development professionals can streamline their work effort, more effectively manage subject matter experts and reviewers, and develop instruction that is, ultimately, more effective for each audience.

10 Steps to Effective Instructional Design/Development for Multiple Audiences

1) Identify all audiences

The first step is to identify all audiences, so that you know the entire population that will ultimately receive the training. This is done through an audience analysis, with the input of key stakeholders.

2) Establish content

The second step is to identify the primary content to be delivered to the multiple audiences. This is done through a content analysis process, which takes place through the use of subject matter expert interviews, focus groups, reviews of existing content/material, surveys and discussions with key stakeholders.

3) Determine content consistency

The next step is to determine what content topics are static and are similar for each audience, and which topics will vary by audience. For instance, you may create a table something like the one below:

Sample Content Consistency Tool

		Field Sales	Customer Service	Store Associates	Customers
Content Topic Areas	Features and Benefits	S	S	S	S
	Functionality	S	V	S	V
	Usage	S	S	S	V
	Pricing	S	S	S	V
	Repair	V	S	S	V

S = Static

V = Varies

- 4) Determine likely delivery methodologies
Now that you have an overview of the audiences, content and general idea of the consistency of content between audiences, you must conduct an analysis to determine which delivery methodologies will be appropriate for each audience.
- 5) Create a base High Level Design
At this point, you can create a template for a “base module” in a High Level Design (HLD) format. And HLD outlines flow and order of topics and high level objectives, as well as shows which content is similar and which is different for each audience. The HLD is the equivalent of a “curriculum” for the subject matter.
- 6) Get input to the HLD
It is extremely important to complete a feedback and review process of this base module HLD, getting input and feedback from subject matter experts from all audiences. This will allow you to check the findings from your audience, content and consistency analyses and identify/correct any issues before you move ahead.
- 7) Develop a Detailed Design for one audience
You are now ready to focus in on one audience. Our suggestion is that you create a detailed design for the audience that requires the most content topic areas. Keeping in mind that your criteria for where you start may depend on business need or other factors. Regardless, you should develop a DD for one audience. The DD includes a more granular level of detail for that one audience in the form of an outline that describes: order and flow of topics, performance objectives, content and learning methodologies.
- 8) Get feedback on the DD
Once this initial detailed design is approved, it is again vital to gain approval and get feedback from subject matter experts from this initial audience. It may also be advisable to have representatives from other audiences review this DD, although that will vary by project. By having other audience SME's review at this point, they may notice more consistency in content than expected and it may prepare them for what's-to-come later. Alternately, this review may confuse them and cause undue anxiety and complications to the process. You'll need to decide if this is advisable, based on your particular situation.

- 9) Develop a module for one audience
Regardless of the learning methodology you have chosen for this first audience, you are now ready to develop those materials—participant guide, facilitator guide, self-study module, job aids, e-learning, etc. These materials will be developed based on the blueprint of your detailed design, with the specifics for this particular audience.

- 10) Get feedback on the first module
Again, it is vital to gain approval and get feedback from subject matter experts from this initial audience. And, it may again be advisable to have representatives from other audiences review these materials. Once this review and feedback process is complete, you'll have the first audience's learning solution complete.

Once you have completed this ten step process, you then return to step 7 and develop materials for subsequent audiences. Of course, you can also develop materials for multiple audiences simultaneously.

When Your Audience is the Customer

Sometimes you may be tasked with developing training materials for customers. For instance, in the case of a new product rollout, you may be asked to create training collateral for how to use the product effectively. In our experience, customers can be treated as any other learning audience and can be integrated into the process described above, with the following caveats:

- Be careful about choosing appropriate SME's to represent the customer. This may include marketing, sales, customer service, product developers and even customers themselves.
- If you include customers, you can gather information about their particular learning needs through focus groups, 1:1 interviews, surveys and actual observation of their use of the product.
- When working directly with customers, keep in mind that they are not your internal learning audience. Your work with them reflects the company.
- If you cannot include customers, manufacture some. Ask company employees not familiar with the subject matter to participate as "mock" customers.

Summary

It can be challenging to develop “the same” instruction for multiple audiences. It is important to have a well designed process for analyzing audiences, content and learning methodologies, then a step-by-step approach for managing the design and development for each audience.

Following the process we have outlined here will lead to faster and more efficient instructional design and development and produce more effective instruction, regardless of audience. In addition, following a defined and logical process will create a more satisfying and understandable process for your subject matter experts.

The GMarie Group

For over 20 years, The GMarie Group has provided nationwide clients with custom learning and performance improvement solutions. To do so, we apply the ADDIE Model, a systematic process for:

Analyzing Performance and Training Needs

The GMarie Group recommends initiating a project through rigorous analysis, which is the key to obtaining valid results and ensuring that a significant cross-section of the organization has a stake in the process. We can conduct training needs and performance analysis to determine learning solutions to address identified performance gaps.

Designing and Developing Effective Solutions

We design and develop online (Web-based) training, virtual Webcasts, podcasts, instructor-led training, performance support tools, learning portals and much more! Our team can author your custom product using any industry-standard authoring tool (e.g. Flash, Lectora, Flypaper and Captivate).

Implementing Products and Programs

We provide training program planning and coordination, train-the-trainer, training delivery and facilitation for all types of subject matter. We can also help integrate Web-based solutions into your LMS or LCMS.

Evaluating Reactions, Learning, Skills Transfer and Returns

Using Kirkpatrick's "Four Levels of Evaluation," we develop tools and scoring mechanisms to measure participant reactions to learning, mastery of objectives, transfer of skills to the job and return-on-objectives.

How Can We Help YOU?

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