How to Analyze Your Learners Guide

Instructional designers often assume that they already know how learners learn, what motivates them to learn, what their attitudes are toward learning. The first step in creating effective learning experiences in any learning environment is to analyze the learners.

What to Include in Your Analysis

Entry Behaviors
- Specific skills and knowledge that learners must possess prior to instruction to accomplish the specified goal.   - These prerequisite skills and knowledge may be related directly to the content or may be associated with the learning management system.   - During your learner analysis, you are determining if learners possess the entry behaviors and noting implications for instructional design, delivery and/or evaluation.   - Concentrate on those skills and knowledge learners must have prior to instruction to accomplish the goal that may or may not be directly related to the primary instructional topic.
Notes:

Prior Knowledge of Topic

- Knowledge that your learners already possess on which they can continue to build new skills.
- This is important so that:
    - Instruction can build and relate to prior knowledge
    - Time spent instructing students is based on learning new material as opposed to teaching an area with which they are already familiar.
    - Also provides an opportunity to see if learners possess discrepancies or misconceptions about the topic so that they can be clarified during instruction.
- Focuses on the instructional topic.
- Describes skills and knowledge relative to the topic in general.

Notes:

Attitudes and Motivational Factors

- Learners' attitudes toward content address learners' feelings about the subject matter and skills to be learned.
- Included in this area should be learners' perceived levels of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction toward the content information to be covered by the course (The ARCS Model of Motivational Design)
- The ARCS Model helps instructors systematically analyze the motivation of their students. Following these four steps in this model enables instructors to effectively support the motivation level of their learners.

- In general, are students motivated to learn? What motivates them to study and obtain good grades across settings? What de-motivates them in general?

Notes:

Education and Ability Levels

- Can be gathered through:
    - Interviews and observations
    - Records
    - Test data
- Questions that designers want to answer may include information about the capability of learners to master the material that will be presented
- How able are students to learn the new material?
- What educational experiences have they had?

Notes:

Learning Styles

- Refers to how individuals learn best
- The three basic learning styles and learning strategies for learners are:
    - auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners

- We all differ in the degree to which we prefer one type of learning over the other.
- Data can be gathered through:
  - Interviews
  - Observations
  - Attitude
- Questions that can be asked about learners would include:
  - What kind of learning mode do the learners prefer?
  - Do they prefer traditional lecture/discussion format?
  - Are learners willing to explore other formats?

Notes: