

## Make Experience the Focus of Your Learning Design



### Share



Written By



Bill Brandon

June 08, 2020

### Topics

LEARNER EXPERIENCE

LEARNER-CENTERED  
DESIGN

Research into how we learn, along with desire for more effective performance and less intrusion by training activity in the workflow, are leading the evolution of instructional design. [Learning Experience Design \(LXD\)](#) is an interdisciplinary approach that merges best practices from ID, learning technology, educational research, design thinking, and UX (user experience). I recently spoke to Marty Rosenheck about this new perspective on design.

**Bill Brandon:** Marty, can you give a snapshot of the concepts behind Learning Experience Design?

**Marty Rosenheck:** I think the critical aspect of learning experience design is, of course, experience. And when I say experience, I mean doing something. To me, learning experience design is focused on two things. One, just as design thinking and user experience design is user-centered, learning experience design is learner-centered. Two, it's about providing experiences for that learner. Guiding that person to have experiences that will develop their skills and their knowledge. All learning is based on the experiential learning loop. We learn by doing, either physically or mentally, getting feedback from experience in some form, [reflecting](#) on that feedback, then adjusting and incorporating that into our understanding. Learning experience

People have said that "content is king," what I would say is, if content is king, experience is the emperor! We tend to spend too much time on content and not enough on designing effective learning experiences. We know from research that expertise is primarily developed by deliberate practice, doing, experience. Content is important, but it is only through experience that people learn how to put that content to use.

**BB:** Why do we need to change our approach? Why learning experience design?

**MR:** There are two extremes that we see often. I remember consulting with a government organization that would put people in intensive training for weeks at a time. But when they got out in the field, they couldn't really do the job because they didn't practice doing the real thing. So there's one extreme where you focus too much on that formal side and then when they get out there they can't do the work because they didn't really practice the real world stuff.

Then there's the other extreme, maybe it's the "sink or swim" approach. Just throw them in and good luck, hopefully they'll find somebody who can help them. That's haphazard. Some people don't make it, some do. But it's also not an efficient way.

What we need is a balance between the formal and informal learning, having those real experiences but having them in a guided and systematic way to develop proficiency. If you were thrown into a situation but it was designed so that you started with a simple experience, got some feedback and guidance, and then moved on to more complex and challenging situations, then the time to proficiency is reduced. Learning experience design is about designing that optimal set of experiences or challenges, and providing the right feedback, guidance, and content at the teachable moments along the way.

**BB:** Classic instructional design starts with job task analysis. If I understand correctly, learning experience design starts with developing learner personas and understanding the learner's needs, perhaps in the moment of performing. The difference seems to be in the shift in focus from course and content and instruction, to the learner, experience, and learning itself.

**MR:** That's right. The person is critical to learning experience design. Instructional design is generally related to formal training, whether it's an eLearning course or instructor-led. It tends to be content-centric. Whereas learning experience design is focused not only on instruction but on facilitating a person's experiential learning loops—doing, getting feedback, reflecting, and adjusting—supported by content and enabled by technology. It's the whole enchilada.

Source: [Learning Solutions](#), June 2020