

## Using Storyboards

*In my current role storyboards are used when planning classroom training. They are word documents that breakdown the training session into ten to fifteen minute intervals and outline what will be taught, the materials required etc. At the planning stage they are sent to the appropriate managers to review the content. In our experience storyboards have helped managers review and provide feedback on the content as they clearly outline the objectives for the session and the degree to which the content will be covered. Managers are in a position to provide feedback on whether or not the session is meeting with the priorities of the department. After signoff storyboards are used by trainers to ensure that all content is created and that the materials required to run the session are available.*

*That has been my experience with classroom training storyboards. When it comes to creating e-learning modules we haven't used them to the same degree. Reflecting on why this should be I've come to realise that there are a number of reasons why storyboards have not been used. Firstly in the early days of developing content Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) provided the content to us in PowerPoint format. The courses when published were in a similar format – PowerPoint slides with some graphics added and in some cases audio as well. In essence the SMEs provided the instructional designer with a storyboard of sorts and who converted it to a course. In more recent times with the benefit of learning theory and ever increasing instructional design skills our courses whilst they contain the content provided by SMEs in no way resemble the PowerPoint presentation that was originally submitted. For the instructional designer who has spent significant time in producing an effective and engaging resource the initial response from the SME when reviewing the resource has been less than complimentary. Taking the SMEs side for a moment I think it must be a shock when they find that their traditional role of storyboard creators has been taken away from them. They expect to deliver and receive back content in a format that they are comfortable with. They also expect that the content be delivered in a format that suits their particular learning style. When they get something that doesn't fit with their expectations their reaction has been that content has been removed, changed or altered in a fashion that is not acceptable. This has led to discussion where the instructional designer has outlined the reasoning behind the format for the course and pointed out that the content is present albeit in a more structured format. My feeling now is that the solution to this situation is the introduction of the storyboard. The storyboard will allow the instructional designer outline the format and the reasoning behind it. The instructional designer becomes the adviser regarding content rather than just the receiver of content. Gearoid's description of the subtle advisor comes to mind as the Instructional designer must keep in mind that the SME will never see anything in their content that should be altered. This is a skill that the ID needs to add to their repertoire. The agreement with ID and SME through storyboarding can only help to improve the content provided and avoid any shock or surprise when the course has been fully developed.*

*Currently I am working on the storyboard for our resource. What I have found is that the need to be precise is key. Creating aspects of the storyboard has helped me identify that ideas that are very clear to me may not be so clear to the other members of the group. It has helped me to stand back and question what I have included. I have tried to view it as though I was looking at it for the first time. This can be quite difficult when you are working on something constantly. However even looking at work I completed the previous*

*day I have started to refine or clarify what I have previously written. In their essay on Designing Digital Resources for e-learning the authors talk about reusable learning objects as being items that are micro contexts for learning where tutors are forced to omit any unnecessary content and focus only on what is required to achieve the learning required. This could be applied to the art of storyboarding. The story board should be a micro context that concentrates on the job at hand and focuses the mind of the ID and SME on what is needed removing ambiguity from design and structuring content to what is needed.*