303
Starting with Empathy

Dawn Mahoney
Learning In The White Space
Lead with Empathy
Because: People

Time out!
Put people back into the learning!

Learner Personas Information
http://theelearningcoach.com/elearning_design/audience/learner-personas-for-elearning/
https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/bid/302513/The-Ultimate-Cheat-Sheet-for-Creating-Learner-Personas
https://uxmag.com/articles/how-to-use-persona-empathy-mapping

Resources Used During the Session
TIAA Link
Several TIAA vids on YouTube at this Link
AdAge Magazine on new Intel strategy Link
Mac vs PC Holiday
Mac vs PC Holiday Avatars
Intel Inside Ad

Responsive design Link Note: Do this with intention. And, for HUMANs.

KQED Why Empathy Holds the Key to Transforming 21st Century Learning Empathy and Learning
According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, empathy is “The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.”

Google puts it more simply: “The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.”

**Why empathy?**

I am a trainer. I do my best to help facilitate learning. I am a content designer and developer. You are, too. In all we do, we interact with at least one other person. People “consume” what we “produce.” While that fact should be “Captain Obvious,” it isn’t always, is it? And the further away our role is from end users or learners our role, the easier it is to forget this fact.

The intended outcomes for everything we do are to bring out the best through changes in behavior—in people. I don’t see any way to do that without intentionally employing empathy and threading it throughout every aspect of the learning content.

Empathy. I’ve been pondering this word, a lot. I think this is often what’s missing from the content that our learners often complain about. Do an online search for “bad e-learning,” and you’ll be rewarded with pages of examples, valid or not. Often, what makes e-learning bad also makes our classroom learning bad. (If we’re honest with ourselves, that is.)

So how do we add more empathy? Here are three ideas that we can start using right away and work on a little more each day.

**Choose to employ empathy every time.** It is an intentional practice to use from now on. How? Demonstrate that you’re empathetic with the learners whenever the learning content...
• is dry, robust, complex, difficult to grasp, overkill, repetitive—you get the idea. Like that annual compliance and regulatory blather so many organizations require.
• is within locked e-learning courses, meaning the learners are not allowed to click around and learn in the order they choose. Instead the course is filled with quizzes that must be answered correctly, in order to progress and complete.
• takes too long to complete. Let’s chunk this stuff up. There is a well-used quote in the training world, something to the effect of, “The brain can only absorb information in direct proportion to the amount of time the butt can remain seated.”

Do a needs analysis. Dig into what is really needed and by whom. Engage with as many people as possible. Especially those people most directly affected. Please don’t just build something because someone said so, even if that person is a leader. Resist the urge to “just do it.” (You can read more of my thoughts on needs analysis here.)

Put people back into the learning content. Today. Do it now. I know, I can almost hear you transmitting that your content is system training and very complex. Yes, even this content deserves an empathetic approach, and that begins with putting the people back in. After all, people are the consumers of the training content you’ve built, right? People are the ones having to do their work differently in some way, too.

A few ideas to get you started:

• Acknowledge that change is difficult.
• Have people in the images. Yes, even screen captures.
• Use friendly voices in any narration.
• For training not completed synchronously in the classroom, build the content with both images of screens and a person providing guidance along the way.

Whatever your specialization—machines, equipment, pumps, valves, operating room, hospital room, inside of a semi-trailer—everything also involves people. A focus on empathy requires behavior change from us in the training field. Change is hard, but we can do this. If we each choose to view the work we do from the learners’ perspective, the outcomes will be different, as well—for both them and us.

What do you think? Do you try to add empathy to your work? Leave your thoughts in the Comment section below.

This article was sourced by ATD Links Field Editor Halelly Azulay.
© 2018 ATD, Alexandria, VA. All rights reserved.

###
**ASK MORE – AND – BETTER QUESTIONS**

As strategic partners, we must be skilled at asking good questions, listening, and differentiating the needs of our “customers”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLOSED ENDED QUESTIONS</th>
<th>OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One word, yes, no, or short phrase is the only response required</td>
<td>Requires a response that is more than yes, no, or a few words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confirm facts</td>
<td>- Used to gather details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Used to open a conversation</td>
<td>- Requires pause, think, reflect before responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Easy to answer</td>
<td>- Invites dialog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Questioner keeps control of the conversation</td>
<td>- Sometimes provided in the form of a statement that requires a response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Questioner hands control of the conversation over to the Responder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOW GAIN QUESTIONS</th>
<th>HIGH GAIN QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surface information that is not necessarily new information or details that will move the dialogue forward</td>
<td>Actively seek information that furthers an inquiry, or dialogue, with additional insight and details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quick response</td>
<td>- Fosters collaboration for problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Straightforward responses that clarify</td>
<td>- Reduces the potential for defensiveness toward suggestions or new and different ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confirms or denies</td>
<td>- Reveals thoughts that help to clarify what is to happen next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Open-ended and provide opportunity for critical thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Closed Ended Questions
• Are we meeting today?
• Have you established a budget for this project?
• Will we know when the project has reached a successful conclusion?
• How many people will be involved with our work together?
• Did you like the preliminary draft we provided?
• Are you ready to get started?

Open Ended Questions
• Who will be meeting with us today?
• How will we know when the project has reached a successful conclusion?
• How might the work we did last time be improved upon this time?
• What are the most pressing needs of your team, right now?
• How do you define success?
• Tell me about the relationship you have with your supervisor.
• How did you choose that response?

Low Gain Questions
• We completed the first phase of the needs assessment with this work team a few months ago. Why are we going to work with this team again?
• How many people will be involved in the project this time?
• Does the team understand what is involved with working on this project?
• Is the team open to continuing our work together?

High Gain Questions
• How does the work of this team contribute to the overall goals of the project?
• Can you please describe in detail what is happening that is getting in the way of our achieving results?
• How will your team benefit from our completing this project on time?
• What is the impact of our not achieving the goals set before us?
• How will we measure success?
Sample Questions

Initial Impressions and Getting to Know (Wide open; Get beyond the facts; Tacit knowledge)
- If you had only one minute with someone, what three things would you tell them about this job?
- How did you learn about this topic? Where do you go to learn more?
- What do you wish someone would have told you when you were learning?
- What would it cost the organization if no one learns this material or learns it badly?
- Who is really good at this job? What makes them so good at it?
- If you had it to do it again, what would you do differently in this job to help you learn more effectively?
- What kind of things did you find difficult? How did you overcome them?
- What are the most common mistakes people make in this role? What is the impact of those mistakes?

Focus In
- What has been your best success to-date? How did it happen?
- What is the worst mistake you believe you’ve made? What do you think led to it and how did you recover?
- Once you knew how to do the job, how do you get better at it?
- Who did you learn the most from? Why is this the person you learned most from? How did you both manage to do this successfully?

The Details
- Please give me an example of… <some of the skills being covered>
- Tell me a story about….
- Describe a typical day in the life of someone….
- Talk me through a scenario when you….
- What key decisions do you make when you are doing the job well? Talk me through them and explain each step.
Learner Persona Worksheet

Name/Grou

Tasks

Feelings

Influences

Pain Point

Overall Goal