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Before starting, I asked my interviewee if I could record the interview, which he stated was fine. I also asked him if he preferred a pseudonym or his real name for privacy; he informed me I could use his real name, Chris.

J: What is your position?

C: I am a lead learning designer at Leo and have been here for five years. I'm involved at the early stages: working with the clients to determine their needs and learner needs to come up with the high-level solution. After that, I work with the rest of the team at Leo as a reviewer to ensure project quality and remain a point of contact for the client.

J: What type of clients do you work with?

C: We have clients across every sector in the UK. Some we work with are healthcare, pharmaceuticals, automotive, and hospitality. We also worked on a huge master's project with the NHS when I first started here. Our largest client and who I've worked with most for the past year is Jaguar LandRover (JL), the car manufacturer. They're a really interesting client and recognized the value of L&D, which a lot of companies are still getting on board with. They've been willing to get better and find more innovative solutions.

J: What does it look like working with them?

C: There's a range of things we do, and I'll use JL as an example because they're a fantastic example of what we deliver. The main thing is e-learning for a skill need. Another skill need they have is yearly, they need their retailers to be as knowledgeable as can be about the new vehicles before selling them. So, we do a lot of product knowledge e-learning for them, which is a huge course across their twelve vehicles, and it has a knowledge check at the beginning to find out what they know beforehand. One of the interesting things about JL is they've pushed us into the product direction rather than just e-learning. They wanted a product, capable of being updated on the cloud, to put next to a vehicle in their retailers to show the customer all the information about it rather than a flyer. It was a real challenge for us because that's not something we normally do, but we've been moving more into that area. Also, we don't deliver face-to-face training, but we design it.

J: I know you said you analyze learner needs, but what are your major responsibilities? What does your day-to-day look like?

C: My time is split mostly between client meetings (kick-off and content). Kick-off involves starting a project, and content meetings consist of learning everything we can about the subject. I also spend my time making a design solution from the meeting information, which is like a blue-print for the entire project. It tells the client what they're going to get, the suggested design, our analysis of learner needs, and learner objectives along with the content scope breakdown. That's about 75% of my time. Then, the other 25% is review of scripts, working with project managers, and reviewing the project with the client. One of the hardest parts as a lead is to manage my time because you can't spend too much on one aspect or things don't get done.

J: You told me you didn't take the education route to get in the field. You just jumped in. How did that happen?

C: For our recruitment staff, you don't need to specialize (but would be a positive); you just need to have a degree. However, it's not a huge thing in UK's universities, and people come in various ways. There's less of a traditionalist approach and more openness to taking different creative solutions. But there's a gap of learning theory with some team members, so we've been giving trainings to teach them theory. I've found knowing the theory has been helpful. Anyway, Leo was doing the NHS master's program for leadership, which is hundreds of hours of e-learning but only had two designers on the entire project. So, I came in as a production assistant. In the three months in that position, I was heavily involved with creating and then maintaining the virtual learning campus. It was a great view to come in with because it gave me an idea of everything we did.

J: That seems like a great opportunity especially when just starting out.

C: I think that's one of the biggest problems when starting new in the industry. They get siloed. Like Level 1 designers, you mostly work on scripts, though the managers try to get them new experiences. I think I really benefitted from getting to see all of the moving parts and how it came together in the end. It has really helped 5 years down the line because I can have conversations about the details even though I'm not a developer. As time passes, you take on more of the writing side rather than the build aspect, which helps you pick up on design because you're reviewing with the lead designer. So, there's a lot of peer-to-peer feedback to try and develop people. The most beneficial thing is getting client experience, which we're big advocates of. As a lead learning designer, I want to take a learning designer with me because it helps them develop and get experience on different kinds of projects. For example, we'll put someone on a video project who's never worked on one, which is a risk, yet it will allow them to be a resource for us in the future for that type of work. Plus, we never allow a product to go to the client without a quality check from a lead learning designer, so there's plenty of opportunities for feedback.

J: What advice would you give someone going into this field?

One of the most important things I'd say is always be willing to challenge and willing to question things because no one is infallible. Quite often, we value it when someone asks about doing it another way because it helps you consider something and is a learning moment for the person asking. I don't think it's a skill everyone has. Also, take pride and ownership in your work because it will improve the quality even if it's a project you don't want to work on.

J: Has there been any big surprises in the field?

C: Yes. First is how much the clients care about L&D and their learners. When clients share about the transformative impact of L&D, I never expected them to, but I have a huge enthusiasm for it. Second is how much I've learned from what I've made, both knowledge-wise and about the companies.

J: Most satisfying part of your job.

C: It doesn't happen often but to hear from the companies or the learners about how much it helped them and can even change lives.

Reflection

Insights on the Field

The interview was instrumental in providing me what it looks like to be in the field. Chris gave a plethora of information about all the different aspects in designing a project for a client. I also had no idea some of the types of projects would be considered instructional design like providing training to the retailers about vehicles. It was eye-opening to learn how much IDT is involved in everyday things and how it's constantly growing based on the consumers pushing designers for what they need. This shows the field is constantly growing and developing (Reiser, 2018). Additionally, Larson and Lockee (2014) discuss how IDT is applicable across fields due to the hard and soft skills required in IDT, and it was great to hear about how they are applied in these different ways. Another positive takeaway was how important they see filling in the gaps are (for example, with learning theory) because it will make individuals better designers and help those they design for.

Insights on Role in the Field

I didn't realize how many hands touch on a project and the amount of collaboration involved for IDT. However, this reassured my decision to go into the field because I was originally concerned I would be stuck behind a computer and have limited human interaction. Chris's experiences with collaboration, working with junior designers, and peer feedback fully aligned with AECT's standards (AECT, 2012). I also appreciated how the clients and designers recognize the designer as the expert on design, and the client the expert on the subject. I believe that provides the foundation for providing the best product for the learner.

Impact of Interview on My Plan

The experience of this interview completely changed my view of going into the field. Originally, I was concerned about the opportunities and whether I'd be happy pursuing a job when the identity of the profession is extremely flexible (Reiser, 2018). However, learning about the different opportunities especially the ability to design but also constantly learn new information from what you're designing is exciting.

References

- Association for Educational Communication and Technology. (2012). AECT Standards, 2012 version.
- Larson, M., & Lockee, B. (2014). *Streamlined ID: A Practical Guide to Instructional Design*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Reiser, R., & Dempsey, J. V. (2018). *Trends and Issues in Instructional Design and Technology (4th ed.)*. Pearson.