

In order to impart knowledge proficiently, software companies are hiring instructional designers to come up with learning environment plans for better understanding. This makes a career in this field a lucrative option, says NANDINI BAJAJ

# For effective communication

Education and training sector has recognised the power of Internet and this has helped break the traditional barriers of time and place associated with delivery channels of learning. Software development companies which have noted the trend have developed advanced learning environments that combine powerful Internet collaboration tools like e-mail, synchronous and asynchronous discussion, shared work spaces and video conferencing.

Instructional design is the practice of arranging media to help learners and teachers to transfer knowledge most effectively. The process consists of determining the present state of learner understanding, defining the end goal of instruction and creating some media-based intervention to assist the process.

The process is informed by a style of teaching tested theories of learning and may take place in student-only, teacher-led or community-based settings. The outcome of this instruction may be directly observed and scientifically measured or completely hidden and assumed.

Instructional design can start at any point. Often a glimmer of an idea is developed into the core of an instruction situation. By the time the entire process is completed, the designer looks back

and checks to see that all parts of science have been taken into account. Then the entire process is written up in a systematic process of developing instructional systems. Instructional development is the process of implementing the system or plan.

## SKILLS REQUIRED

The designers need prepare a series of self-instructional tutorials and provide interactive modules that guide students through some topics. Tests and assessments are tracked and reports generated online. In a complete module of distance education, along with the presentation of the course through media graphics and animation, collaborative tools like e-mail, discussion lists, live chats and shared work spaces are used for better learning.

Instructional theories play an important role in the design of instructional materials. Theories such as behaviourism, constructivism, social learning and cognitive help shape and define the outcome of instructional materials.

## ELIGIBILITY

One should be a graduate in any field. Being multi-disciplinary in nature, instructional design calls for the acquisition of knowledge in several domains, partic-

ularly education, technology, project management, written communication and business sensitivity.

The students should also have good communication skills, writing that are concise and engaging, creativity and a basic understanding of technology.

## JOB PROSPECTS

Instructional designers work in the educational sector, in computer companies specialising in education software, in the private sector, with the armed forces or with health services organisations. Some work for consulting companies or as freelancers.

The opportunities for professionals in this field are booming, but there are very few people who are formally trained in instructional design. You could begin by assuming the main responsibility of implementing design specifications. You could later take up the role of an instructional designer.

After a few years of experience in this field, you can attain the position of senior instructional designer, in which you would be involved in developing the overall course



design strategy and managing projects from the content perspective. This calls for leadership skills in co-coordinating with the team members and the client.

Higher leadership positions could be: Content manager in an e-learning firm, e-learning project manager in the training department of a company, the head of education services or director of course development in distance education institutions, the chief learning officer or vice-president of education or the director of training and development in a company.

The above mentioned positions depend on the type of organisation you are working for — corporate training departments, distance education institutions, corporate universities, e-learning firms or consulting firms specialising in training and development.

## REMUNERATION

For a person who is just starting his career in this field, the salary may be around ₹2 lakh per annum. However, with experience, a candidate can earn up to ₹8 lakh to ₹10 lakh per annum.

(The writer is professor, Asia-Pacific Institute of Management, New Delhi)

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