Career Track: Instructional Designer

Summary

The instructional designer is responsible for analyzing, designing, developing, and evaluating learning programs within an organization. Instructional designers may also be responsible for implementing learning programs.

Job Description

A typical job description for an instructional designer includes tasks related to the steps of the ADDIE model:

- **Analyze** the learner's needs to design and develop learning solutions that yield business results. Identify the instructional goals, audience, delivery options, timeline, and constraints for the project.
- **Design** e-learning, instructor-led, and virtual instructor-led curriculums. Define learning, or performance objectives, and select the most effective instructional approach, including a blend of instructor-led and self-directed techniques. Design the program approach, structure, and tools.
- **Develop** classroom, online, or independent learning program content that transfers knowledge effectively and brings about desired behavior change. This step involves the creation of the program materials, or online course or tools.
- **Implement** learning programs throughout the organization. Provide train-the-trainer programs for instructor-led programs. Ensure that online learning programs function as desired and that learners have appropriate access and ability to use the materials and systems required.
- **Evaluate** the effectiveness of courses, learning products, and delivery methods to ensure that the desired learning objectives and goals are achieved

Depending upon the size of the organization and scope of the position, the job may not include responsibilities related to all five steps of the ADDIE process.

The skills that employers mention as being most important include:

Program Design and Development

- ability to select the most effective instructional approach including a blend of instructor-led and self-directed techniques including social, peer, work-based, informal, game-based, virtual, or performance-based learning
- ability to create classroom-based training including presentation materials, individual and group activities, job aids, and hands-on exercises or labs
- ability to develop course content including games, interactive e-learning, or other technology-driven programs.

Assessment and Evaluation

- understanding of and ability to conduct a needs assessment to determine learners' skills gaps
- understanding of effective methodologies to evaluate results of deployed learning programs

Communication

- excellent verbal, written, and presentation skills with the ability to communicate effectively with all levels within the organization on both technical and nontechnical topics
- ability to compile, organize, and present complex information clearly and concisely.

Collaboration

- negotiate, influence, and collaborate to build successful relationships with various external and internal technical or functional contacts
- works effectively in a team environment and across all organizational levels, where flexibility, collaboration, and adaptability are important.

Project Management

- ability to manage day-to-day activities of multiple assigned projects, communicate status updates, and proactively identify changes in scope of work to ensure that appropriate planning measures are taken to assess impacts of scope change.

Implementation Support and Customer Service

- supports internal teams and partner training teams with do-it-yourself templates, instructional guides, and standards
- provides support to internal customers of learning programs.

Consulting

- consults with business leaders and L&D professionals to develop learning solutions that meet business objectives
- clear understanding of business needs and sensitivity to differences across various groups.

Knowledge

- Instructional designers are expected to have knowledge of instructional design methodologies and adult learning concepts. The most commonly mentioned methodology is the ADDIE model.
- Instructional designers should be able to apply adult learning theory and principles to the design, development, and maintenance of performance-based instructional materials for a variety of delivery methods, including instructor-led training (in-person and virtual), e-learning, self-study, and blended learning.

Minimum Qualifications

Instructional designers must have three to five years of experience designing and developing learning programs, blending online and in-person content:

- intermediate Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook, and PowerPoint) skills
- skills in multiple instructional design tools and technology, such as Adobe Captivate, Articulate, Camtasia, or Storyline
- ability to use learning management systems such as Moodle or Blackboard.

Preferred Qualifications

- project management experience (2+ years)
- experience in multimedia training, online simulations, scenarios and interactions, video production, storyboards, and interactive videos.

Education

For less technically driven positions:

- bachelor's degree in business, communication, behavioral sciences, training development, or related field, or the equivalent combination of training, education, and experience.

For more technically driven positions:

- bachelor's degree or equivalent, BS or BA degree or higher in instructional design, computer science, graphic design, or interaction design, or equivalent practical experience.

For higher-level positions:

- master's degree preferred.

Other Valuable Technology Skills

- desktop publishing software such as Adobe InDesign or Microsoft Publisher
- graphics or photo imaging software such as Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Visio, or Snagit
- video creation and editing software such as Adobe AfterEffects, Apple Final Cut Pro, or TechSmith Camtasia
- webpage creation and editing software such as Adobe Dreamweaver or WordPress.

Salary and Demand

- median wages (2015): $70-79K
- projected growth (2014-2024): average of 5 to 8 percent.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015 wage data external site and 2014-2024 employment projections external site. "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period (2014-2024). "Projected job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.