Interview with Rose Benedicks, Strategic Consulting Lead at LEO Learning
Interview conducted on September 30, 2020 by Keiko Eda
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IT521 – 002
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Introduction

LEO Learning, Ms. Benedicks working for now is part of a larger learning technologies group. It was established almost 40 years ago in London and about 6 years ago they expanded into the US. Ms. Benedicks helped start up the business in the US and bring the business over to the US. It was not a very successful company then but now it is truly global.
Ms. Benedicks' role there is the title is Strategic Consulting Lead. She works in the area where she consults with businesses where they have some big business need or strategic change. LEO has a team of instructional designers, artists, animators, videographers, animation specialists, and developers to create a program. When the idea and concept are come up, she leads learning designs. She applies her background such as writing a script in doing instructional design. Right now, she is on her maternity leave since July 2020 and she will be back to work sometime soon.

A narrative transcript of the interview

1. What made you interested in this field?

Her undergraduate degree was in technical writing. She started working a job with a lady who creates courses for a program at Image Technical Service, Inc and as a technical writer she was coding in HTML to CSS. The lady had instructional designer skills, and she knew that was what she wanted to do. However, she did not even know the name of an instructional designer. Then she designed instructional courses for the military and realized that her earning potential was higher with a master's degree there. Then she enrolled in the master's program in instructional systems technology at Indiana University.

2. Do you see any change in the graduate instructional design and technology (IDT) program at universities for the last ten years?

She thinks Dr. Craig Howard has done a really good job to make a connection between theory and actual practice. She thinks in the program critical is to be teaching a technology point of view of having empathy for the technology versus teaching to use a specific program. Teaching critical thinking skills is necessary. For example, when she hires someone as an instructional designer, she does not care what programs they know, but she cares how much they know about educational design models such as

ADDIE. In other words, she wants to know if candidates can take a model or a method of working.

3. Do you see any difference between an instructional designer in businesses and one in academics?

She thinks what is different is the corporate world does not care about the academic backstory for what you are doing. They care if you can explain the rationale. However, it is better for you to acquire the skills to handle business-friendly languages and to manipulate them well. Also, in business you have to be aware of time is money. Clients do not care about the academic explanation. They use them in the way they are spoken in the business world, so they do not have patience with very different voice tones. Business is all about results.

4. What is your philosophy as an instructional designer?

Critical thinking and innovation. She does not mean trying to find the next big crazy thing that ability to dig around and do some sleuthing a little bit of detective work. Also, listen to what someone is saying and figuring out what they are actual saying. You think what you are doing is staying the something that someone is already said but they just never heard it in the way you said it before.
Logical and results. You must be for a business-oriented, but you also must be a little playful. Forklift training elements of playfulness in any instructional design are needed but playfulness does not have to mean humor, something to make it seem less weighty.

5. I would like to lead the establishment of an online Japanese language course and interpreter program soon. Would you give me some advice from the position of an IT594 instructor?

Besides, to teach practitioners' class, in spring, she also runs internships and mentorship programs. She first presents the content to the intern and asks how they approach this as a scholar and how they provide as a practitioner. For example, with research in higher education, there is a very comprehensive expectation. In the corporate world, they want you to be a precision strike. They do not want you to waste their time.
Advice about creating for the program such as a foreign language program is to know that an instructional designer has two customers, customers to learn a foreign language and a university or school. She would make sure that you always remember to do your work with both points of view. Whatever your educational system, you need to remember that you are working for both learners and sponsors.

6. How / how much did you study when working with people in an unfamiliar field?

When she sells herself as an expert in learning she will sit alongside clients in this case. Clients must bring their expertise and she brings her expertise. It would cocreate in that way. A big one of the skills you need as an instructional designer is you must be able to pick up and understand things quickly. You also need to know how to figure out and absorb basic knowledge in the unfamiliar field by yourself.

7. Since the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, did you notice any change in the instructional design field? How do you predict the field after pandemic?

With their stuff to still work, they are training programs. What they were asked from clients was how do clients get their courses online quickly. Once every client settled down, then the question started becoming how they do this better.
She thinks clients are taking different paths after pandemic. Well-established companies recognized the role, and they are going to probably invest in having a distant e-learning strategy, but in the only strategy that it works. Smaller companies do not allocate as many resources to learning to be behind the curb and just throwing out what will be called traditionally learning that is page flipper. Measurements and results are always happening. Everyone was already going to digital that happened a lot faster than she predicted.

<u>**Analytical Reflection**</u>

The scope of the field

By meeting Ms. Benedicks, I learned about the existence of learning technology companies and their social role. Also, she has clients in well-known companies in various industries such as GP, McDonald's, Jaguar, and L'Oreal, and is involved in developing the corporate strategy course program. I was once again impressed by the wide range of fields in which educational designers can play an active role. It was an opportunity to realize that Reiser (2011, page 1) stated that a single definition could not capture educational technology professionals' thoughts and actions.

The role of instructional technologist being a collaborator and/or a leader in the field

Instructional technologists play a role in connecting the learning theory (Richey, 2011, page 51-67) that we learned in IT521 with actual practices for learners in various positions. Ms. Benedicks mentioned that her role would change from client to client even if she worked at a learning technology company for years. For the maintenance and development of a company, the strategies that can be established must be

profitable. Educational courses for implementing that strategy are also streamlined and efficient. Therefore, the instructional technologist who designs the program needs to be creative and ingenious. The knowledge and skills acquired by the learner can be immediately utilized in the work and profitable. Companies like LEO Learning have their teams to complete the programs they are requested. Instructional technologists propose their ideas and concepts to the team as collaborators, complete the program as leaders, and provide it to clients.

Impact on my professional development plan as an instructional technologist

Ms. Benedicks has repeatedly said that you should always be aware that you do not waste money and time when designing programs for businesses. That awareness and skills are necessary for those who aspire to the academic path, too, but it is not easy to acquire. I am currently a language lecturer, and my goal shortly is to start with the establishment of an online language course and an interpreter training course in higher education. Ms. Benedicks also encourages her interns to consider a two-column approach, both as a scalar and as a practitioner. From there, I have the prospect of becoming a professional between the two columns, bridging the gap between the two columns. And it was a great encouragement for me that she responded to the need for someone to play such a role.

How your interview contrasts with the interviews conducted by others in the class.

Students like us can imagine the instructional designer's voice, assigned the design work under a lead learning designer like Heather, whom Zoe interviewed by replacing it with ourselves after graduating. Heather said she enjoys the need to absorb information in a short amount of time to design a project. This comment was the same as Ms. Benedicks, and I realized that it is a prerequisite for being an instructional designer in a company. And I think that Heather enjoys speed learning because LEO Learning has enriched the in-house education system.
By reading Rachel's interview report, I was also reminded of the importance of portfolios in job hunting after the learning process. I am grateful again for the inclusion of portfolio creation in our IT online courses.

References

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