



On an Ongoing Learning Journey

Melissa Milloway got the instructional design bug in college and has been prospering ever since.

Melissa Milloway is an instructional designer for AMZL Learning, where she specializes in developing e-learning and virtual instructor-led training. As an accomplished learning leader who is always learning herself, she was selected for Elliot Masie's 30 Under 30 program in 2014.



WHAT LED YOU TO THIS CAREER?

I first learned about instructional design when I was a junior in college. I had a real passion for graphic design and web development. In an online journalism course, I helped other students with their website projects. My professor took notice of my efforts and introduced me to Bloomsburg University's Master of Instructional Technology program. The program was a perfect fit because it encompassed everything I was passionate about, including teaching, web development, and writing and graphic design.

WHAT INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN PROJECTS DO YOU GET MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

I jump at any projects that have the flexibility for me to try something new or enable me to be very creative. I'm a big thinker, so nothing is ever off of the table with me. I want to be able to meet our users' needs but also challenge traditional methods of delivery. Just because a dev project appears to be complex to develop does not mean it will be. Nor does it mean it cannot be sustainable or produce even better results than more traditional learning.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU NEED INSPIRATION OR A CREATIVE BOOST?

I typically get a lot of my ideas when I am running or even on my walks to work. Exercising gives me that time to think without any distraction. Many of my ideas derive from fields other than learning and development. I find inspiration in design from browsing well-designed websites, playing video games, and going to museums.

WHICH LEARNING TECHNOLOGY DO YOU THINK IS MOST CHALLENGING?

I don't necessarily think any one learning technology is challenging. The challenging part is needing the skill base, access to tutorials, and to a knowledgeable network. You have to have some sort of working knowledge foundation and the drive to continue learning/playing with technologies to really excel at using them. You can't be afraid to mess up.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THOSE JUST STARTING OUT IN THIS FIELD?

There are three things that I wish I had been doing and had known when I first started in the field.

First, be present on social media. The best way to meet inspirational people, see project samples, and obtain research in the field is through social media. There are thousands of active learning professionals and oodles of associations on Twitter, LinkedIn, and even Reddit.

Next, create a portfolio and ask for critiques. Building a portfolio is important from the aspect of being able to show your work at interviews. The most important reason to have a portfolio is because it's super gratifying to see your own progress. Ask for feedback on your work from those in the field that you admire. You must be open to feedback and apply it.

Finally, love what you do and practice, practice, practice. Professional development is a huge part of my life. I spend my spare time learning the skills to help me get to where I want to be in my career.

WHAT IS ONE QUESTION YOU ASKED YOURSELF TODAY?

Have I accomplished something today? I know it has been a good day when I have something to show for it. I might learn something new and apply it, sketch an idea that I have had, or find a website that inspires me or has cool resources.

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