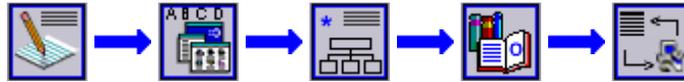


# FlexTraining Course Building Strategies

## Five Phases: Building Your Learning Content



## A Common Sense Process for Creating Learning Content

The greatest challenge in implementing a successful online training project is in creating professional-grade learning content and building engaging, dynamic courses. Use the links below to help develop a winning strategy and step-by-step procedures that will work in your specific environment. The development phases presented here, and the steps under each, could be described as a course building "methodology." However, it's really nothing more than a set of organized guidelines based on years of content development work, online training management and widely-acknowledged best practices.

FlexTraining allows you a great deal of flexibility in choosing file formats, developing online lessons, and organizing your ideas. These guidelines will help you make the right choices concerning developing learning material, and will allow you to maximize the effectiveness of your courses and stay within the boundaries of your skills and resources.

## Phase 1: Planning Your Courses



The Planning phase of course development is a necessary activity for any successful E-learning project. The steps below should help lead you to a documented, sensible training development plan.

### Steps in the Planning Phase

#### 1. Determine the scope of your training.

Start by identifying groups to be trained. For example, online learners might include new hires, current staff, customers, sales reps or candidates for management positions. For each group, establish a training goal. Now you will have a list of target groups and the training to be accomplished for each group.

## **1. Organize your (planned) material into courses.**

You may have some paper or electronic material, such as an Operations Guide or Policy Manual, which you can use as a basis for building your online learning content. Or, you may have no existing material at all. Either way, you need to identify what subjects and topics you will cover for each target group of online learners.

Break the subject matter up (even if you have not created it yet) into reasonable-sized courses. Keep the amount of material in each course down to a level where it can be understood and mastered in less than a day, usually much less. You will probably end up with a preliminary list of several courses for each target group.

Also, make a preliminary decision as to what electronic formats you will use to deliver your training. There are many choices available, including text, HTML, PowerPoint, video files, streaming video, audio and many others. FlexTraining supports practically any web-deliverable content, but the choice of format is always up to you. See the "Creating Learning Content" section of this Course Building Strategies guide for tips on structuring an effective course.

## **3. Lay out a course structure for each course.**

Give each course a tentative name, and break out the material to be covered into individual lessons. In many cases, you might still have no idea what kind of material you will use to build each lesson (text, images, video, audio, screen shots, etc). We'll address the content creation issues later - for now you just need to lay out a structure for each course. See the "Best Practices" section of this Course Building Strategies guide for tips on structuring an effective course.

## **4. Choose a Testing Strategy and Policies.**

FlexTraining offers a great deal of flexibility in how online knowledge assessments (tests) are administered. Completing this planning step is a matter of asking yourself a number of questions and documenting the answers:

- How many tests should there be in each course?
- Should advanced learners be allowed to "test out" of certain courses?
- Will a strict testing policy be used where high passing scores are established and a limited number of attempts allowed?
- Or, will testing simply be an additional learning experience, with answers and explanations provided after each test?
- What subject matter expert (SME) will you need access to in order to create your question bank?

There are other policies and options you will set when you actually build your online tests, but these questions are sufficient to get you through the planning phase.

### **What you should have when you are finished**

As you complete this phase, you should have some form of training development plan on paper. It may be long or short, detailed or summarized, depending on your budget and the time you have spent on it.

At a minimum, it should identify what courses you will need, what lessons/topics will be covered in each course, how you will test to see that learning is occurring, and what electronic formats you expect to utilize.

One last thing: The plan should specify exactly who is responsible for all the work involved in organizing and developing your learning material and online tests. Every task in an e-learning project should be someone's responsibility.

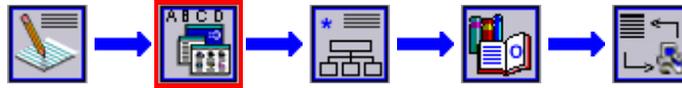
### **Success tips for the Planning Your Courses phase**

Before you start to document a development plan, read and understand the remainder of this Course Building Strategies guide. Don't get too caught up in the formality of creating a documented plan. Keep it simple and clean - there will be time later to add detail and finalize the document for presentation to management, if that's required.

If your learners will be required to take several courses in order to obtain a certification or to qualify for employment, consider grouping courses into Skill Groups. FlexTraining offers simple but powerful Skill Group assignment and tracking to help you monitor your learners' progress toward their goals.

When considering various content formats, your best bet may be to stay with text and images, at least until you have established your training system and gained some experience. You can always move to more sophisticated formats later. Read more about File Formats in the "Creating Learning Content" section of this guide.

## Phase 2: Creating Learning Content



The Create Learning Content phase of course development is where you create actual online learning material. You may decide to use HTML/text and images only. Or you might use other formats, such as video files, YouTube videos, PowerPoint files or audio narrations. Or you may decide to enter your material directly into the course-builder, which may be sufficient for very simple courses.

If you use multimedia files and image files, you will want to organize and back up these files into folders (with meaningful names), and eventually load them into the FlexTraining libraries.

### Steps in the Creating Learning Content Phase

#### 1. Understanding File Formats

Learning content may be developed and presented in a number of formats. There are many options, and the choice of format is usually a tradeoff between ease of development, ease of delivery, and effectiveness. And yes, you can simply build PowerPoints, export them into image files, and import them into FlexTraining lessons using the PowerLesson tool. But there are many other options.

Below is a matrix of file formats commonly used in e-Learning projects:

#### Learning Content File Formats

Format	Extensions	Note
HTML	.htm .html	Fast delivery, easy to create.
Images	.gif .jpg, png	Keep images fairly small for fast delivery. PNG format tends to be very large and slow.
Flash/HTML5	.swf, html, htm	Dynamic, interactive. Difficult to create from scratch, but many tools can build Flash and from other formats. Flash is losing popularity quickly.
Video/Audio Files	.mp4, .mp3	These are the best formats for video/audio.
Streaming Video/Audio	YouTube, Vimeo	Faster than using raw files, works with all browsers, but some see security issues.
PowerPoint	.ppt .pps	Quick and easy development, but not suitable for delivery. Need to convert or save and import slides.
Word or Excel	.doc or .xls	Easy development. But content can be dry and "textish", and students will need Word/Excel to view.
PDF	.pdf	Easy development. Content can be dry and slow, but can also be clean and professional.

FlexTraining's course-builder (authoring tool) is not a file format, but rather a means to pull together content of various formats (especially text, images, video, audio and Flash/HTML5) into a consistent delivery and tracking interface with built-in navigation and bookmarking.

## **2. Subject Matter Determines Format**

Your subject matter will often determine your choice of file formats and how you will actually build your learning content. For example, if you are training an audience on sales techniques and methods, you might choose a mix of text, images and audio narrations. MP4 video files or YouTube streaming video would be other good choices. In another example, training customers on how to use a new software product might best be initiated with a screen-capture tool, and then exported to video.

In some cases, your priority may be to get your training up and running quickly. Thus you would develop content using text and images, where your long-term choice might have been narrated video files or streaming video. Fortunately, you can make gradual changes to your content after your project is launched without starting over or rebuilding an entire course.

## **3. Keeping it Simple**

If you are like most FlexTraining course developers, the primary goal is to deliver and track effective training in a timely and cost-effective manner. Most developers need to take a realistic look at the people and resources available to them as they begin the task of developing learning material.

Sometimes people strive for complex, elegant training content where cleaner and simpler material would get the job done. Here are a few questions to ask yourself about the content you are developing:

- Does the content make sense and flow logically? Ask a co-worker.
- Is it clean and error-free? Typos and bad grammar can distract learners.
- Is it interactive? FlexAuthoring's Learner Exercises make adding interactivity simple and easy.

Multimedia is a great way to spice up your content, but for many companies it is a luxury and might just as well be added in a subsequent development phase.

## **4. Shared & Re-usable in FlexTraining**

Many people are concerned about spending time and resources to develop multimedia files for use in one training system, and then having to recreate everything if they change systems. This is an issue that should never come up. All

your image and multimedia content should be completely re-usable once it is created.

FlexTraining uses built-in libraries to manage your images, audio, video and other multimedia content. In fact, your content files remain in these libraries at all times and can be used by as many courses as you like **without creating additional copies or undergoing any type of conversion**. This is a great benefit and is important to understand.

This architecture provides total re-usability for your media files, both within FlexTraining courses and outside of FlexTraining if you should decide to use another training system at some point in the future.

## **5. Software/Document/Forms Training**

Online courses covering computer software, business forms or specialized documents would normally be best developed using a "screen-capture" tool such as Adobe Captivate or Movavi. These tools capture movement and data entry from your computer screen and produce video files as their output. These video files can then be placed in the FlexTraining Media Library and combined with the built-in navigation tools in the course-builder to create professional-looking training lessons.

As a simpler but less effective alternative, you could take "still images" of your documents or software screens and save them as GIF and JPEG files, using FlexAuthoring to combine them with text and built-in Learner Exercises.

## **6. Soft Skills and Streamlined Video Production**

A course on phone-answering skills or sexual harassment might be termed a "soft skills" course. These courses would not likely utilize screen-shots or document images. More likely, you would shoot video clips of certain realistic scenarios involving your subject matter and use the videos in combination with text and navigation in FlexAuthoring.

Like a development process that starts with screen-capturing, direct video creation also ends with a collection of MP4 format files. And these can easily be loaded into YouTube for streaming delivery, or loaded into the FlexTraining libraries.

In this example, the production steps would be as follows:

1. Capture videos with a common digital video camera or even a mobile phone (or use a high-quality video camera, using a tripod and good quality microphone).
2. Edit your video using an inexpensive desktop video editor, such as PowerDirector or Movavi. Cut into segments of reasonable length.
3. Add transitions and titles for a professional look.

4. Publish or export the videos to MP4 format.
5. Load the finished videos into the FlexTraining Media Library (or upload to YouTube) for use in the courses you will soon be developing.

### **What you should have when you are finished**

As you complete this phase, you should have a significant collection of media items at hand, including:

1. Images relevant to the subject matter being taught. Images should be cropped and resized to properly share the screen with headings, text, and/or learner exercises. Large images are OK because they will be shown at the size you specify in the learning screen that uses them, but they may slow delivery somewhat. Small images cause fuzzy-looking display.
2. Media item files, captured, converted and edited as needed.
3. Media files in your FlexTraining media library, uploaded from your computer.
4. An updated content development plan document, indicating what formats (text, image, audio, streaming video, video files) you plan to use for each course and section.

### **Success tips for the Create Learning Content phase**

1. Most customers begin with modest ambitions for content formats (text and images, for example) to build their initial courses.
2. Consider your audience and the software they have on their computers. If your students won't have speakers on their computers, narrations will not be effective.
3. If you have the time and experience to develop audio narrations, they are a low-cost and easy way to add another dimension to your training.
4. If you decide to use video, consider less-than-full-screen dimensions like 800 X 600 or perhaps 480 X 360. This keeps file sizes manageable and leaves room for some text on the screen as well.
5. For Audio, an MP3 format is a good delivery format which uses small files and provides good quality. A WAV format sounds good, but uses very large file sizes.

### Phase 3: Best Practices



This phase is where you utilize proven techniques and practices to help you produce the best content, with the least time and effort, leading to the best results possible. Most of these best practices are not directly dependant on the provided technology, but you will utilize technology to support and implement each practice.

Below are selected practices which have proven to have a positive impact on online training projects. These practices tend to either cut costs and development effort, or improve the quality and effectiveness of the training itself, or both.

### Steps in the Best Practices Phase

#### 1. View the Options and Policies available in FlexTraining and adjust as needed.

Your management menu includes sub-menus that let you define and modify the way FlexTraining works, without programming. These are the "Options" and "Policies" menus, and you should review the various settings under each sub-menu and understand what they are. Most settings have "Info" buttons next to them to describe what the item is, and they are named in a way that is also self-descriptive.

There is also an "Environment" menu that lets you configure the system to implement branding and other operational choices. Review these settings also.

#### 2. Utilize the FlexTraining Authoring Tools

FlexTraining comes with an integrated authoring tool set that lets you build courses from the top down. While you can contract out the course-building process, using the course-builder to create courses and lessons gives you another level of control and interactivity.

If you elect to use video as a prime source of your training content, it is best to break up the videos into small, digestible pieces that run for 2-5 minutes or less. This also helps the learner to return where he/she left off when returning to a course, because FlexTraining will automatically bookmark the learning screen to return to.

Using short videos provides more robust navigation and more detailed bookmarking for student progress. Building courses in FlexTraining requires no knowledge of HTML or web page development.

### **3. Interactivity Reinforces Learning**

Instructional designers tell us that the key to knowledge transfer and retention is interactivity. If a learner interacts with an online course, rather than just viewing it, she will retain the information longer.

There are many ways to offer interactivity within your courses. Here is the simplest method:

Within the FlexTraining authoring tool, you can provide interactivity with an easy method we call "learner exercises". These exercises can be added to most learning screens simply by clicking the "Advanced" link in the learning-screen builder, and entering a question and your candidate answers. Each exercise consists of a question and up to four candidate answers, which you provide.

Vary the responses to each choice in the exercise to indicate which answer is correct. You can also include an image or a video in the exercise. Multimedia responses – which you may place in the media libraries ahead of time – will be available for your selection as the response for each possible answer.

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### **4. Narration Adds Life To Learning Content**

A voice-over narration can spice up your learning material with a modest amount of effort. You can add a narration to any learning screen using the integrated authoring tool. The steps are as follows:

- A. Develop your content for each learning screen without the narration, using whatever text and images you choose. You can add the narration at any time later.
- B. Based on your content, write down a summary statement or two for each screen that will become your narration "script." Don't repeat the exact words from your learning screen - your learners can read.
- C. Record your narration using a cell phone, or a built-in computer microphone and recording tool like the Windows Sound Recorder, or a more capable product such as Sony's Sound Forge Audio Studio. Use an audio editor like Sound forge or another editor – it's your choice. Record and edit it several times, if necessary, to get the narration right.
- D. Save each narration on your computer as a separate MP3 file. MP3 is an efficient audio format that works well over the internet. If the recording tool you are using lets you choose quality parameters, choose one from the middle of the pack (for example, you might choose "Radio" settings for decent sound quality). Avoid CD Quality and Stereo settings - these options create larger sound files with little or no benefit.

E. Upload your files to the FlexTraining Media Library and give each a meaningful description. You can test them within the Media Library screens to verify that they look and sound as you intended. Give the MP3 files meaningful names.

F. Add the narrations to each learning screen using the built-in authoring tool. Simply select the narration from the list on the screen. After you have recorded and utilized a few narrations, you will see that the process is straightforward and the improvement in your learning material is considerable.

G. If you are creating videos from screen capture or other content, and you are using a capable content development tool such as Captivate, you may choose to load the MP3 files right into the presentation itself, before generating the MP4 video output file. In this way, the MP4 file will contain both audio and video.

#### **4. Smart Choices for Video**

Video can be difficult to manage and deliver, or it can be simple if you make the right choices. If you decide to take on the challenge of creating video content, follow these guidelines:

- A. The easiest and simplest format to use to capture, transport, and display video is MP4. Various “codecs” may be used to actually capture the video, but as long as you use MP4 as the overall format you should be OK.
- B. You have a choice as to how to deliver these videos within FlexTraining: native delivery via the FlexTraining Media Library, or via YouTube/Vimeo.
- C. Reasons to choose native delivery include better security for sensitive video content you don’t want to be disseminated. Also you have more direct control of the video and you can use the VideoLesson tool in the course-builder to rapidly generate online lessons.
- D. The benefit of using a streaming service like YouTube or Video is that the video server is configured to handle every possible type of web browser and video player, because that is the business these companies are in. No matter what web browser is being used, YouTube will generally find a way to work with it in a smooth, reliable manner.

#### **5. Choose Images and Multimedia Carefully**

In general, use images, photos, audio, video and other multimedia objects that:

- Support the lesson objective
- Are student-centered
- Build on previous learning
- Have useful and meaningful content
- Are consistent with learning principles

- Maintain student interest/attention
- Are quality images, movies, etc.
- Are complete and accurate
- Use appropriate terminology
- Are properly sequenced
- Are clean and visually appealing
- Give proper stimuli and enforcement

## **6. Consider a Pilot Approach**

One strategy to consider would be the idea of selecting a single course to use as a "pilot." The pilot concept means that you fully develop all the screens, images and multimedia you need for this single course, and actually assemble and deliver the course, before beginning working on the material for your other courses.

The primary benefit is that you will experience every step in the development process, and your learners' reactions, on a small scale. This experience will help you work more efficiently when developing subsequent courses, possibly changing your mind about what kinds of material to use.

Put another way, you might develop enough material for one course, view your resulting course, and then change your mind about what kind of text, images or narration to use. For example, you might decide your narration distracts from the on-screen text and needs to be shortened. Using a pilot approach, you will only have to rework a small amount of material before you continue on with your other courses.

The verbiage in this section does not specify whether you will be building all your content at once or utilizing a single-course pilot concept. The decision is yours, but a pilot approach is an excellent way to save time and effort, and to produce course material that you will be pleased with.

### **What you should have when you are finished**

As you complete this phase, you will have most of your content development work completed.

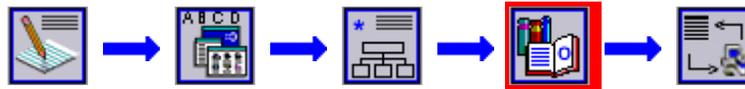
1. As you use the course-builder authoring tool, you'll build up a set of template-based learning screens, as well as images and multimedia suitable to your purpose. Many of your learning screens should include learner exercises to provide interactivity based on the templates you selected.
2. You should have one or more online tests defined for each course, based on the built-in testing framework.

3. Narrations and other multimedia should be complete and loaded into the FlexTraining Media Library. While the *Content Library* holds files for direct use in your courses, the *Media Library* holds the multimedia items you will use to build learning screens in the authoring tool.
4. Learning screens and lessons are presented in a defined sequence, which you control. Changes to these sequences can be made at any time later, within the course-builder.

### **Success tips for the Best Practices phase**

1. As you build learning screens, use the preview tab frequently. Also, when you first assemble your course, quickly schedule it so you can view the course from the student module. You can turn the scheduled "active" status on and off as needed. Do this early in the development of each course, so you can see how your course will look to the learner.
2. Keep video and images small for easier screen layout. Don't make your students scroll down through a learning screen unless it is unavoidable. Short screens make on-screen navigation easier for the learner.
3. Test your learners at the beginning of each course (pre-test) and at the end (post-test). This technique lets you verify that the online students are actually learning, and demonstrates to management the value of your training program.
4. If you create your own narrations, speak slowly and enunciate every word carefully. Most people tend to rush their speaking in normal conversation and to skip over syllables that need to be pronounced.
5. Set realistic expectations with management about the timing for your training to go live. FlexTraining is the fastest training development system available today, but you will still need to verify and edit your content carefully as you build courses.

## Phase 4: Case Studies



Below are three scenarios which illustrate realistic online training projects, each with their own goals and objectives. Although the names and facts here are fictitious, the underlying methods and techniques are representative of how real-world training is developed and implemented.

### Scenario 1: Safety Training, Simple Text and Images

#### Scenario

Tony is in charge of safety training at his manufacturing company. He sees education costs rising as people are brought in from distant locations to attend classroom training. He does not have a large staff to support his mission - only one administrative assistant is available to him.

#### Goals

After careful consideration, Tony decides that the best way to cut costs and still offer effective training is to deploy an online training system like FlexTraining. He wants to have a set of courses up and running in three weeks.

#### Constraints

Tony realizes that many of the staff who will utilize the online training will be using low-quality WIFI to connect to the internet, and some will not have speakers attached to their computers. Therefore the training material needs to be bandwidth-friendly and should not include multimedia.

#### Solution

1. Some of the handouts and PowerPoint presentations that were used in classroom training contain images and text that will be useful in online courses. Tony reviews these materials, and pulls out many photographs, charts and text material related to safety rules and practices.
2. Tony lays out each course in a simple Microsoft Word document, placing images and text in a logical flow in order to get his ideas across to the learner. These scripts will form the basis of his individual learning screens within each course.
3. To quickly add interactivity, Tony inserts a learner exercise after every third learning screen. These are also part of the course outline he creates in Word.
4. Tony uses the course builder to create his actual learning screens from scratch, choosing various templates to add some variety. For example, he starts every lesson with a screen made from the "Title" format. He also edits

and re-sequences the screens within FlexTraining until he is content with the final result. He builds a multiple-choice test at the end of the course to assess the level of learning being accomplished.

5. Finally, Tony uses the "schedule" screen within the course-builder to publish the course and to begin enrolling online learners.

## **Scenario 2: Software Training, Screen Captures**

### **Scenario**

Tom has been assigned the responsibility of developing training material for the rollout of a new accounting software product. The learners will be spread across several locations and will use a variety of computers with various software configurations.

### **Goals**

Tom wants to be able to show his learners the actual screens, and actual user activity, that this accounting software involves.

### **Constraints**

Tom has a limited budget and won't be able to hire outside consultants to create his screen-based in-motion learning content. Also, the fact that his online learners have different tablets and computers means that he needs a content format that is very commonly used.

### **Solution**

1. After doing some research, Tom decides that he will use .MP4 videos to show his "live action" software captures. The MP4 format streams well over the internet, so students will be able to see the videos without long delays for download time.
2. Tom chooses Adobe's Captivate product to perform the screen captures and create the MP4 movies (there are other products available, such as Movavi). He breaks his course outline into small, digestible sections that each cover one activity that users perform in the accounting system. He saves all the screen "movies" in Captivate and uses a simple interface in Captivate to export the MP4 movie files.
3. Tom likes the narration concept, and he records a set of narrations on his multimedia-enabled computer and saves them in the efficient MP3 audio format. One narration matches each of the screen-capture movies he created earlier. Tom uploads the MP4 movies and the MP3 audio narrations into the FlexTraining Media Library. He could also have chosen to add the narrations to the videos right in Captivate or another video-creation tool.

Finally, he builds his lessons and learning screens in the course-builder within FlexAuthoring that include the videos and the appropriate audio narrations. He also builds several learner exercises, and adds them to some of the learning screens

using the provided templates. He wants to insure that his online students are engaged and learning.

### **Scenario 3: Soft Skills, Video Clips**

#### **Scenario**

Starting this year, Deborah's company has a new strict policy against sexual harassment. She has been asked to prepare an online course to help educate employees on the nature of, and ways to recognize, behavior that may be inappropriate.

#### **Goals**

Deborah feels the best way to communicate simulated "soft skills" interpersonal behavior is through the use of full-motion video. She wants to record employees interacting with other staff and customers in typical work scenarios.

#### **Constraints**

Deborah needs to have something ready to use in a couple of weeks, without breaking her budget with high production costs.

#### **Solution**

1. Since planning is essential, Deborah analyzes various ways to capture video and present it over the internet. She decides to use her cell phone and the MP4 video files it creates. She writes several scenarios and assembles her "actors" who are actually co-workers.
2. Videos are recorded and reviewed, and a few are re-recorded to improve their quality. Some of the videos have to be shot a few times before Deborah is happy with the visual and sound quality.
3. Afterward, she edits the videos on her computer, adding transitions (fade in and out) and on-screen captions for a more professional look. When she has finished editing, she saves the videos on her desktop computer, again in MP4 format.
4. Once she has created all her MP4 movies, Deborah uploads them into the FlexTraining Media Library and incorporates them into her learning screens.

Deborah also has some PowerPoint presentations she wants to use. She knows that the FlexTraining PowerLesson tool is made to quickly turn PowerPoint slide decks into full-built online lessons.

She opens each presentation and uses the "Save to Pictures" menu option to save a collection of JPG image files – one per slide – on her computer. She then opens FlexTraining in her web browser and navigates to the course-builder and its PowerLesson tool. She follows the simple procedure and in a few clicks has created a new lesson from a set of PowerPoint slides.

Several lessons in her course are created this way, while other lessons are built in a similar manner using the VideoLesson tool and her MP4 files. She edits and adjusts some screens and adds a few learner exercises as well to complete the course.

## Phase 5: Using FlexTraining



## Putting your Courses Together

You have (hopefully) documented your course outline and plan, decided on what text you wanted to include, created or acquired your images and perhaps audio and video files. You may have already loaded your multimedia content into the FlexTraining libraries.

From here, you will be using FlexTraining's integrated course builder to complete the development of your online training, and to schedule it for online enrollment.

## Libraries

The centerpiece of your learning content is the material you have placed in the FlexTraining Libraries. While the *Images Library* is for pictures and other images, the *Content Library* is for various files which you might use as learning content. For example, a PDF may comprise a learning screen all by itself. Finally, the *Media Library* is for audio and video files that will be included in learning screens that you author.

## Assembling Learning Screens and Courses

FlexTraining provides a streamlined, top-down course assembly toolset. You can stop at any point and return later, and you can come back and make changes to your content and your courses at any time later. So you can relax - it's very easy to recover from any errors you might make, and to adjust, resize, resequence, edit or replace material later on.

The basic steps are as follows:

1. Make sure you know where everything is – text, videos, narrations, images, etc. And be sure you have built a couple small test courses to become comfortable with the integrated tools provided in the course-builder.
2. Load (or finish loading) your media items and images into the FlexTraining libraries.

3. Create your Learning Screens in the course-builder (authoring tool). When it's time to enter on-screen text, you can paste the text from your course plan document, or another electronic document, so it will have already been spell-checked. Typing your text directly into the authoring tool is a bit more error-prone. An advanced user may choose to paste blocks of HTML into the text boxes in the authoring tool, which is permissible.
4. Preview each learning screen using the Preview icon in the authoring tool and make changes until you are content with its appearance. Remember that courses contain lessons, and lessons contain learning screens. Try and give each lesson and learning screen a meaningful name.
5. Add tests to your course as desired. If you have reference material like a glossary or a technical manual, or some other background material, consider adding a course guide.
6. If your course will be taught by an instructor, you might consider adding one or more assignments. These require review by a human, so they are really only appropriate for instructor-led courses.
7. Use the schedule window within the course-builder to schedule your course so that students may enroll and begin training. Until a course is scheduled, no one can enroll in it.

Please note that if you are using the FlexTraining PowerLesson feature to create your lessons within the course-builder, you won't actually need to load the PowerPoint slide images into the FlexTraining libraries before-hand. This is done automatically for you as part of the accelerated building process offered by the PowerLesson tool.

Similarly, if you use the VideoLesson tool to quickly build lessons from video files, then you won't need to load your videos into the FlexTraining Media Library before you start. This will be done automatically as part of the VideoLesson process.

## **Success Tips**

### **Techniques**

When loading your Media Library, use longer, meaningful descriptions so you can locate the item easily in a list. Also, use long file names for Content Library files and any image files you are using.

Size your video or flash for optimum screen presentation. These are the dimensions, in pixels, that the movie will occupy on the screen. Adjust your height and width for the best appearance - movies displayed too high and/or too wide can look fuzzy and distorted.

When you add an item to the Media Library, you will be able to specify a height and width or a "percentage override". Using the percentage override causes your media

item to grow or shrink to match the display device. This property is called "responsiveness" and is very desirable.

Multimedia items are not in any way "converted" when they are loaded into FlexTraining. The movies and narrations you worked so hard on are left intact, for re-use in FlexTraining, or in any other system. All your FlexTraining multimedia items are totally re-usable.

Try and properly size your images outside of FlexTraining. Images do not have a specified height and width in FlexTraining - they will display at their actual size. To resize or crop an image, do so with an image editor like Adobe Fireworks, Photoshop, Windows Paint. Err on the side of making them slightly large, rather than too small. Small images tend to get stretched as they are displayed and thus do not look good.

FlexTraining allows you to specify a "percentage override" in the Learning Screen you are building, for an imbedded image. As in the case of a video, this allows your images to expand and contract with the display size. 65% is a good starting point as you perform some trial-and-error by trying some different sizes.

Maintain consistency in fonts and colors. Keep your fonts, background and text colors consistent from one learning screen to another. FlexTraining allows you to use different colors on each screen, but you should do so only for a good reason.

Place a Learner Exercise at approximately every third or fourth learning screen. It's an easy way to add interactivity. Record one audio MP3 file with something like "Please choose the best answer below" and add it to the Media Library. Use it as a narration for every Learner Exercise screen to give your course a more professional feel.

Avoid excessive scrolling. Learning screens can be any length you want, but you should keep them short so your students do not have to scroll down, if possible. This can be accomplished by breaking up your content into smaller pieces.

Keep courses manageable. FlexTraining courses may be of any length and include any number of learning screens, lessons and tests. Use good judgment in breaking down your courses into digestible screens and lessons.