How to build an elearning dream team

The learning manager's guide

Introduction

How do some elearning production teams create high quality projects, at scale, time and time again? How do they innovate and work smartly to keep up with demand from the business, while others struggle to deliver content in a timely way?

At Elucidat, we've worked with hundreds of elearning teams across dozens of sectors, supporting them as they reach tens of millions of learners between them. They all have their own unique challenges, from achieving digital transformation to efficiently producing elearning content at scale in multiple languages and brands.

Regardless of where they are on their journey, one thing the most successful leaders have in common is recognizing their team is the key to success. They are all looking for exceptional people who can work together effectively and the best possible processes to efficiently produce elearning that delivers real-life impact.

This guide will reveal the secrets for success, including:

> The essential skills you need in your elearning team and where to find them

> Ways to structure elearning teams of different sizes

> What your team members need in order to succeed

> How to empower and supercharge your team for success

Whether you're just starting out in the world of digital, you're preparing to scale up or you're looking for more efficient ways to produce people-centred elearning read on to discover how you can build your own winning elearning dream team.

We hope you find this guide useful and, as always, welcome your feedback.

Kirstie Greany
Learning Consultant, Elucidat

Find the right skills

What are the key components of an exceptional piece of elearning?

Most Learning Managers will have their own nuanced answer to this question, but we likely all agree on the foundational principles. At a minimum, great elearning is:

An engaging and effective learning experience;

Visually eye-catching and appealing;

Functional and intuitive to use;

Created within a reasonable budget and timescale.

An elearning dream team is one that can deliver on these principles every time, and then add their own sparkle on top of that. To be confident that your team can deliver, there are several core skills to look for.

Bear in mind that you don't necessarily need a specific person to do each of these four core skills. There are plenty of multi-skilled individuals out there, and it's quite common for Graphic Artists to be experts in a particular authoring tool, or for Learning Designers to be able to manage the commercial side of projects.

Creating effective and engaging learning experiences

Effective elearning experiences are most often created by **Digital Learning Designers**.

They'll start by investigating what's needed to improve the desired performance of a target audience, then design a meaningful, engaging solution to help solve that problem. Learning designers represent the end user throughout the design process. They hone in on what will help, and filter out ideas and content that won't.

Skills to look for

- **Needs analysis** – they can uncover the root of performance problems via a consultative approach, and recognize what needs to be fixed

- **Creative design** – they can design enticing, engaging experiences and are able to bring content to life, creatively, to engage end users

- **Learning design** – they recognize how to structure and design experiences and content that engage end users and actively help them to improve their performance in the target areas

- **Content filtering** – they can curate and smartly filter through content to identify what may be useful and what is not, to support the design and overall project goal

- **User-centered** – they can put themselves in the shoes of the learning audience and understand what's needed, the context in which they need it, and what makes them tick, so they can create solutions that engage and work for that audience (also see Design Thinking)

- **Stakeholder management** – they can proactively work with stakeholders and subject experts to elicit what's needed to make the project a success, and gain buy-in to the design

- **Content review and editing** – with a keen eye for detail, Learning Designers carry a project over the line and ensure the quality is up to scratch

Bonus skills

- Confident using your elearning authoring platform
- Able to use design software, such as wireframing tools

Designing a visually appealing experience

When it comes to visuals, a **Graphic Designer** is your best friend. They'll be able to create an on-brand look and feel, as well as individual assets to support and convey learning points. When your visual communication is spot on, it's a powerful way of engaging learners, reducing word count and explaining complex concepts and processes.
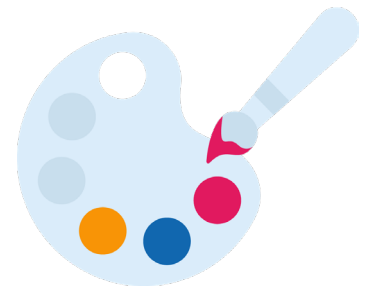
Skills to look for

- **Graphic design** - they can source and design content graphics

- **Image editing** - they can edit images to perfect them for a specific use

- **Working on brand** – they can design within brand guidelines

- **Visualize complex ideas, simply** – they can live up to the idea of a picture speaking a thousand words, and communicate complex ideas and processes clearly through visuals

- **UX design** – they can design layouts and digital experiences that are simple and easy to use, and optimal for the audience

- **Creative thinkers** – they can design enticing, apt, visually-rich experiences and are able to creatively bring content to life to engage end users

- **User-centered** – they can put themselves in the shoes of the learning audience and understand what's needed, the context in which they need it and what makes them tick, so they can create visual solutions that engage and work for that audience (also see Design Thinking)
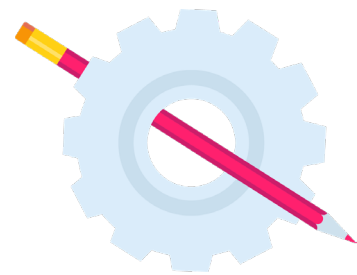
Bonus skills

- Illustration/animation
- Video editing

Ensuring the experience is functional and intuitive

It sounds obvious but it's too often overlooked; your digital learning must work and be easy to use. An **Authoring Tool Expert** will help you tick those all important boxes and produce content smartly and quickly.

They'll be able to take a design that the Learning Designer has come up with and make it a reality in an authoring platform of choice, making smart choices about how to do that quickly and effectively. They can also bring their knowledge of authoring tools to the table and work with Learning and Graphics Designers (and others as needed) to advise on how the learning design ideas can make the most of the features available.

Skills to look for

- **In-depth authoring skills** – they know a tool inside and out, and can build content and desired design outcomes efficiently and effectively

- **Design-oriented** – they can offer solutions and input in the design process via their in-depth knowledge of authoring tools

- **Business-minded** – they can streamline authoring processes and consider how to set up reusable elements and templates to speed up production

- **Quality assurance and user experience skills** - they know how to design intuitive navigation and user journeys, and are able to QA a finished product

Bonus skills

- Experience with learning platforms and upload processes
- Interest in design and learning design
- Development skills in your code-base of choice if you plan to create bespoke content outside of an authoring tool

Working within reasonable time frames, to budget

Project Management skills will help you keep your team and your projects on track.

Keeping an elearning production team running on time and on budget is a job in itself. An elearning **Project Manager** will guide the rest of the team through an efficient production process, taking responsibility for planning and resourcing, budget, schedule and stakeholder management.
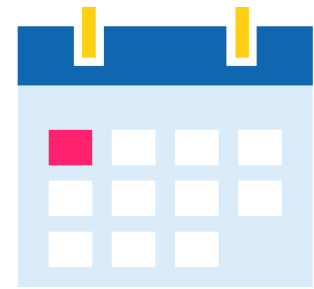
Skills to look for

- **Coordination of multi-skilled teams** – they enable teams to work together smartly and efficiently to meet project goals

- **Stakeholder management** – they proactively identify and liaise with stakeholders to ensure they are involved and informed, as required throughout a project lifecycle

- **Progress tracking and reporting** – they update stakeholders who need it

- **Risk management** – they proactively uncover risks and manage them with the team to keep projects on track

- **Scheduling** – they can create schedules and take ownership of meeting deadlines

- **Budget management** – they can assess likely budgets, set targets for teams, and take ownership of sticking to target costs

Bonus skills

- Experience with authoring and learning platforms
- Some technical knowledge

Don't forget...
Your **Subject Matter Experts** are key to your success. Not only do they provide the all important content for your elearning, but with the right guidance and an intuitive authoring tool, they could play a key role in the production of your digital learning as well.

Develop your team's digital learning skills and strategy

Help your team become elearning experts with targeted coaching and consultancy from the [Elucidat Professional Services team.](#)

89,000	**2600**	**10**
Locations	Employees	L&D technical experts

"Partnering with Elucidat experts was the best investment SGS could make. It allowed our team to discover the "digital learning designers" in them. The partnership allowed them to create and deliver with speed and increased their confidence to create the next batch of modules! Thank you Elucidat team."

Luz Hoyos-Rossier, Global Head of Talent Development at SGS

Read story

Where to find people who could be great in L&D

Many organizations look for people who have done similar roles previously to join their team. Candidates like this bring a lot of valuable experience and are likely to hit the ground running. Keep an eye out for these job titles:

Learning Designer
Script-Writer, Instructional Designer, Digital Learning Designer, Learning Consultant, Learning Content Designer, Learning Experience Designer

Graphic Designer
Graphic Artist Visual Designer, Animator, UX Designer, Front-end Designer, Web Designer, Art Director

Authoring Tool Expert
Content Developer, eLearning Developer, eLearning Author, Digital Learning Developer, eLearning Producer, eLearning Tool Expert

Project Manager
Project Coordinator, Producer, Digital Producer, Program Manager, Account Manager

Thinking outside the box

There's also a real benefit to homegrown talent or fresh ideas from different industries. Gamified Learning was heavily influenced by Game Designers moving into the learning industry, and Learning Campaigns wouldn't be what they are without Marketing and Communications experts turning their hands to digital learning. So, you may also want to consider looking more broadly for your talent, including the following backgrounds:

- **Internal experts:** Who knows what will be most effective for your employees more than one of your employees? Experts from around your business that want to turn their hand to training others will bring a lot of insight and great internal relationships.
- **Psychology:** Beneficial for understanding how people learn and designing effective "habit changing" experiences
- **Marketing:** Could bring expertise in writing and storytelling, making content appeal to specific audience groups and learning campaigns
- **UX:** Beneficial for on-screen design and creating experiences that are easy to use and effective on different devices
- **Humanities:** Likely to be able to write well, quickly get their head around different subject matters, communicate complex concepts simply and understand different perspectives and viewpoints
- **Art and Design:** Beneficial for branding, creative ways of bringing content to life, visualizing key learning points and supporting written learning with memorable visuals

Structure your elearning team

There are many different ways to structure an elearning team; the one that's right for you will depend on your situation and your goals.

Consider these factors:

- **The amount of content you're aiming to produce.** A target of one elearning course per month is very different than a target of three per week, which will have a big impact on the team size you require.
- **The proportion of your courses that will be built from scratch vs. edited or adapted.** If your development model is template based, you'll require more people who can combine elements and adapt them at speed, and a smaller set designing the template itself.
- **How innovative you want your courses to be.** If you're shooting for the stars with your elearning, you're likely to need someone who can confidently set a vision and help a team deliver on it. For example, our vision for successful elearning at Elucidat is People-Centered Elearning.
- **The skillsets of the people in your team**. One Learning Designer's or Project Manager's skill set will be different to the next; find a structure that plays to your team's strengths.

Let's look at four tried and tested team structures:

1. SME-driven dream team

A Learning Leader sets a vision, then a core team of learning designers and authoring tool experts develops a set of reusable templates and interfaces in an authoring platform that make that vision a reality. They then enable subject experts to work directly in the authoring platform and use the templates provided directly to create content.

Learning leader
Owns the vision, sets the expectations

Learning designer
Gets how to design for performance

Authoring tool expert
Internal tool champ

Subject matter experts
Know their subject inside out and can follow a template

Works well for: scaling up without having to double your team size, empowering those 'on the ground' to share their knowledge, producing consistent learning experiences that are true to your vision.

Potential pitfalls: subject expertise doesn't equal learning or performance expertise, so this relies on the learning design coming first, and the content creation from experts following.

2. Lean dream team

Graphic artist and learning designer dream team, where both are able to produce content in an authoring platform. An intuitive authoring tool that enables high-end results without the need for coding skills is crucial for this set up.

Learning designer
Gets how to design for performance

Graphics/media expert
Great with layouts, can produce/curate imagery, videos etc.

Works well for: fast, dedicated, collaborative design – where projects need their own visual and learning design "flavor." This is a great place for new digital learning design team to start, or multiple "two-person teams" can be set up to work at higher scale.

Potential pitfalls: inconsistent designs without a leader setting a vision and potential for siloed thinking – may need new inspiration from outside.

3. Multimedia dream team

A learning designer heads up a mini production team involving an authoring tool expert, graphic artist and copywriter.

Copywriting expert
Can add pizzazz to any copy, for a target audience

Learning designer
Gets how to design for performance

Graphics/media expert
Great with layouts, can produce/curate imagery, videos etc.

Authoring tool expert
Internal tool champ

Works well for: higher scale production and where consistent production standards or design approaches are required. Also good for teams that have strong multimedia skills, but not necessarily experience in "learning."

Potential pitfalls: a lot rests on the learning designer's shoulders, who has to set up a vision, add input and review all projects.

4. Outsource model

Learning Leader commissions a third party supplier to deliver on their vision, retaining accountability for the vision.

Learning leader
Owns the vision, sets the expectations

Third party supplier

Works well for: teams that don't have the skill-set or time required to produce the desired project themselves. Bear in mind you don't have to commission the entire project; instead, you could outsource parts of it. For example, the Learning Leader could do the concept design in-house, with production commissioned outside. Or, learning design and content could be handled in-house, with graphics and styling commissioned outside.

Potential pitfalls: can be a more costly and lengthy process, and still requires a lot of input to get the right outcome.

Find out more about how you can outsource parts of your elearning project to Elucidat's Professional Services team.

Changing structures over time

As your team develops and your learners' needs evolve, your team structure may also need to adapt. More L&D teams than ever are feeling the pressure to keep up with the speed and amount of change in their organisations, and are moving to a model that empowers SMEs to contribute to elearning creation. Skills are much more important than roles, so be prepared to flex the roles in your team over time to suit the people working with you and help them deliver the outcomes you need.

Empower and supercharge your team

When you've got your people and team structure in place, you can focus on making sure your team's potential is realized into something amazing.

First, there are some essentials:

> The tools and technology your team will need in order to execute their creative ideas

> Training in digital learning design for anyone new to the role

These basics are sometimes overlooked, but your team could falter early on without them. Carefully assess the authoring tools available to make sure you've got the best one for your needs. Then make sure your team are confident with the best practices and processes that will help them succeed as elearning designers and producers. Provide free training with this self-paced Introduction to Elearning Design program that's open to all.

Here are 6 techniques we've seen work effectively:

1. Set a clear vision for elearning in your organization

For your elearning team to be successful, they need to be crystal clear what they're aiming for. So, take charge. Or recruit an experienced Learning Designer to do it for you! If you're producing online learning in-house or with third parties, it's key that you have a clear vision for what "great elearning" looks like.

Create a manifesto that everyone commits to. The starting points for this? Your end users and your analytics. Dig into data about what's worked well, what hasn't and why. Pair this with some user surveys and interviews, and focus on what helps boost performance: digital or not. Take what you learn and set out a clear vision for elearning in your business.

Our Professional Services team can guide you through this process in an interactive workshop.

Get practical:

- **Provide best practice examples** of elearning based on your findings. From the top end bespoke "experiential" designs to the reusable single page performance support resources, create inspirational prototypes of each. Enable your team to view, reuse, and adapt these models.
- **Link these examples to user profiles and situations of "need"** so it's clear when and where they should be used.

2. Empower your team to truly represent end users

Teams that create people-centered elearning embody their end users and represent them and their needs throughout the entire process. If you are an in-house learning team, your customers are your learners. This is where your #1 focus needs to be.

Learning is the **#1 reason** why people want to join organizations.

94% of employees would stay at a company if it invested in their career development

Yet only **15%** can access learning directly relating to their job

Learn more about what the modern learner wants in our infographic.

However you configure your team, empower them to talk with and involve end users, monitor learning analytics and get up close to user needs. If a subject expert or business manager is standing in the way, then make the case for why connecting designers to end users and goals make sense.

Get practical:

- **Equip your team with templates and guides** that can act as the playbook for how they plan, design, create and improve content. You can try our free ready-made template to capture audience and project needs to save you time.

- **Provide a set of ready-made user profiles,** or personas, that can be used as a starting point for your team.

3. Make data analysis part and parcel of core roles

It's all too easy for us to assume that we've understood our audience correctly; but the proof is in the engagement data. Currently, less than 10% of Learning Designers make data-based changes after an elearning project has gone live, missing valuable opportunities to increase the impact a course has.

Arm your team with analytics feeds for their projects so they can monitor what's working and what's not, and make tweaks to increase the project's engagement and reach. Make it part of their role that they should make changes beyond launch, and ask them to report back on how it's doing. At a macro level, ensure your learning leaders and managers are looking at data feeds across projects.

Get practical:

- **Provide access to learning analytics dashboards** so everyone can track and improve their project's success.

- **Include a simple user-rating survey** in every piece of content. Pop in a quick, re-usable, "was this useful?" survey at the end of each piece of elearning content and have your team monitor results. It will give them a quick snapshot of what's working well.

- **Review macro-level data as a team** regularly so you know what times of day are the hottest usage times, which devices are most being used, in which locations content is most working and which formats of elearning are most popular. Ultimately, are you meeting your vision?

4. Get your elearning team thinking commercially – even if the content's not for sale

Thinking commercially about elearning production, even if it's not for sale, helps everyone focus on value. We find it drives better design results and smarter working as a result. If you have department leads commissioning elearning projects for your team to do, take a consultative lead. Is it business critical? Who's it for? What's it shelf-life? What's the real problem it's trying to fix? Are you sure a course is the right fit?

Get practical:

- **Have ready-made investment models.** Sometimes you have to talk money, particularly if you feel project commissioners are asking for the moon on a stick (when, in fact, just the stick would be fit for purpose). Create some ready-made financial models that show on average how long and how much it takes to produce different kinds of outcomes. But don't think of it like window shopping! This isn't to say you let them choose which "model" of elearning they like. You are the expert!

- **Set targets for your team** so they know how many budgeted days there are to spend on the project, and target media spend. Keeping track of time input means you have something to compare with measured output – helping you with the classic ROI evaluation.

Read more on how to demonstrate ROI with Elucidat.

5. Support smarter working – reuse, recycle, recoup

One powerful way to develop elearning content with a commercial hat on is to think about ways you can reuse existing content. Step back and assess how to avoid your team starting from scratch every time, saving them loads of time.

Can you re-use global styles, layouts, pages, menus, even whole topics? For example, swapping out the videos in a branching scenario means users get a new learning experience, with a consistent interface, in half the time.

Get practical:

- **Add new, great designs to a central "bank."** Alongside prototypes to support your elearning vision, continuously review and share best practice designs centrally. We do this via our showcase of elearning examples.

- **Host re-usable guides and briefing packs** teams can use when planning their projects or working with others. Alternatively, use ours... for free!

- **Use tools that enable teams to duplicate**, re-use and easily edit existing projects.

Elucidat features to help your team work smarter, not harder

1. Design your own bespoke page types, then save them for your team to reuse
2. Create a brand style once, then apply it to multiple courses with one click
3. Upload approved images to your asset library, so your team can choose from them easily
4. Use master courses to create and maintain versions easily

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6. Foster a community for efficiency and invigoration

Last, but not least, build a sense of community and sharing within your team to encourage fresh ideas and collaboration.

Teams that work together create greater results, faster. Encourage sharing, peer reviews, joint brainstorming, project re-use, and inspiration sessions via a community of practice. Don't let your team's ideas get siloed or stale! For big teams, consider an online community portal or forum.

Get practical:

- **Set up a community of practice** for sharing, reviewing, seeking answers, and sharing data insights.

- **Encourage peer review** at two places as a minimum – the initial design ideas before anything has been built out in detail, and before it goes live.

Power up your dream team

With a clear vision, the right tools, and the perfect combination of skill-sets, you can **create a winning elearning dream team** that works efficiently and effectively at scale.

A smarter approach to producing innovative elearning at scale

Get your team on-brand and on-time. Elucidat is the fastest way to produce awesome training at scale. Super fast.

As well as the latest in authoring tool features, you'll benefit from:

A library of expert-design elearning blueprints to help you create training 4 x faster

Advanced user permissions to support how your dream team works

Brand control and asset management

Built-in learning analytics

Built in translation process

Authoring Tool Comparison Template

Book a Demo Today

Already an Elucidat customer?

Speak to our Professional Services team about our service that helps you create your own dream team.
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