

# Getting a Job in the Field of Instructional Design and Succeeding at it: Reactions to the Papers

Robert M. Gagné  
*Learning Systems Institute*  
206 Dodd Hall  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306

There are several themes that run through these accounts of jobs in a variety of settings. First, I would like to say that the reflections, the problem analysis, and the advice given are generally excellent. The contributors to this special issue have each realistically described the job situation with which they have had experience. Their comments are both authentic and insightful. To the extent that they can inform about useful procedures, and help to establish salutary attitudes, these comments should be highly valuable to students of instructional design.

We are told that instructional design is not a part of the established order, either in industry or in universities. In industry, as we are all aware, training itself has always taken a back seat to production and marketing. Even more naturally, then, the improvement of procedures of training occupies a place rather far down the totem pole of operations. This reminds us, at the very least, that training improvements that contribute to the lowering of costs and the increase of profits are bound to command greatest attention. The pill that will replace a two-week training course will obviously be a runaway best-seller.

decades neglected the essential problems of human learning for dogged pursuit of the problem of verbal memorization. Unfortunately, established traditions like these tend to carry over into the definition of jobs in that most traditional of organizations, the military. Here, too, no civil service job classification of instructional designer is yet in existence.

The positive side of this message is, however, a strong one. Instructional design is a distinctive specialty that has sound technology to offer. It is distinct

In universities, economics shows itself not through profits, but through concern for job security in a highly labor-intensive occupation. Here the uphill task is composed of struggles like removing the "instructional" from well-entrenched departments like Curriculum and Instruction, which have been living a lie for many years, or in nudging Psychology to admit that it has for

from "subject-matter expertise" and also from "technical writing." While striving to become an expert in these other fields as they can within brief time limits, instructional designers can represent themselves, I believe, as professionals who can tune printed communications or those of other media to the needs and capabilities of learners, and therefore to the requirements of efficient learning.

In other words, the positive message is that instructional designers have some technical knowledge that is highly valuable to education and to training. That knowledge must be guarded from contamination, and not compromised by the various influences of the marketplace. That knowledge must instead be continually polished, refined, and strengthened. The availability of jobs, whether in academia, government, or industry, will ultimately be determined by the high quality of performance exhibited by instructional designers.

---

Training has always taken a backseat to production and marketing and is far down the totem pole of operations.

---