Case Analysis 4 – Iris Daniels

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Case Overview

French software developer, Lapin, develops a number of complex manufacturing management software products used by the US company Hill Industries, as-well-as consortium of other large companies from several other countries. This consortium of companies, including Hill Industries, began pushing Lapin to offer web-based training versions of their traditional classroom based software trainings. Lapin's strategy fit perfectly with what the consortium was requesting, and so Lapin created an initial prototype to present to the consortium. However, the consortium was not impressed with this initial prototype, especially the US members, stating that it was not interactive enough, and so discussion ensued on how to improve the design while still maintaining the technical standards. It was quickly realized though that the consortium had different views on how the design of the web-based trainings should be handled, and no agreements were reached. Iris Daniels, Jim Huggins, and Kimberly Mooney in the ended decided the best approach would be to create a prototype of their idea, to present to the consortium, so that they could "demonstrate the design they wanted and to show that it could actually be done, given the technical constraints." (Ertmer, Quinn, & Glazewski, 2014, p. 193).

Key Stakeholders

Iris Daniels, Lapin, and Jacqueline Colbert – Instructional Designers

The instructional designers are concerned about creating a web-based training course that is effective, interactive, and can be used by each member of the consortium. Iris Daniels and the other US Americans are concerned about making sure that the course is interactive and engaging, while also following key principles of instructional design theory. Specifically, they "wanted to include simulations, case studies, and feedback to help learners improve their performance."

(Ertmer, Quinn, & Glazewski, 2014, p. 191). Jacqueline Colbert and the other members of Lapin

are directly concerned with figuring out the technical standards and the design of the web-based

trainings. Lapin is responsible for creating the web-based training, and so they have to quickly

figure out how to create the training so that it will work across multiple platforms and be an

effective training tool across the board. Jacqueline specifically is concerned with the ideas that

Iris, Jim, and the other US Americans are throwing out about adding interactivity, simulations,

feedback, and case studies, since this is not something that Jacqueline is familiar with.

Hill Industries, the Consortium, and Lapin – Clients

Hill Industries, and the various companies from around the globe that make up the

consortium, are concerned about getting web-based training that is effective, engaging, and can

be used by every company, in every country, that uses the Lapin software. With the consortium

being made up of companies from several different countries it is important that the web-based

training takes into account the cultural differences of each member of the consortium and

addresses the concerns of each of the members (Ford, 2001; Munter, 1993; & Walkgrove Ltd,

2015). Lapin would also be considered a client in this case because Iris Daniels, Jim Huggins,

and Kimberly Mooney are creating a prototype of their design ideas for the web-based training,

to present to the consortium and Lapin. Lapin is concerned with creating a product that addresses

all of the concerns mentioned above, and Iris believes that their team has the answers to

addressing all of these concerns.

The Seven Consortium Members, Lapin, Jim Huggins, and Kimberly Mooney – SMEs

As with the Instructional Designers and the Clients, the SMEs are just as concerned about

making sure that the web-based training is effective, engaging, and takes into consideration the

cultural differences of the consortium members. Specifically, the SMEs are concerned about two

main constraints of the project: Design and Technical Constraints. Each member of the

consortium has their own ideas on how the web-based training should be designed, the US

Americans want more interactivity, whereas the French group is more used to a straight forward

training approach. Before they can begin development of the web-based training they have to

resolve the dispute about how to design the trainings. They are also concerned about making sure

that the web-based training will work across platforms – PCs, tablets, and phones – and will

work globally on the major web browsers.

Hill Industries Employees and Other Consortium Members Employees – Audience

The employees of the various companies that use the Lapin software are the main

audience. They are the ones that will be directly using the web-based training once it is launched

and so it is important to take into consideration their thought, ideas, and concerns. Their major

concerns would also fall in-line with those listed for the other stakeholders above, but their main

concern would be with the overall effectiveness of the course. They will be relying on the course

to train them in the software that they will be using, if the course is not effective the employees

will not be able to properly use the software, meaning the training was just a waste of their time.

ID Challenges

There seems to be two overarching ID challenges within this case: 1) *A lack of an*

audience and cultural analysis – Varying cultures and the needs of the audience need to be taken

into account for this international project, and 2) *Design* - They cannot agree on a single design,

and hence cannot move forward with design and development. Within these ID challenges there

are a number of specific constraints that will cause problems for Iris, Jacqueline, and the rest of

the group as they try to come up with a single design for the web-based training:

1) *Working with many different cultures from around the globe:* This is an international

   project that involves large companies from several different countries, and so everyone

   will be looking at the project from very different perspectives. With every project, you

   have to take into consideration your learners and audience and their various differences.

   An international project like this is no different, but it will make it more challenging

   because you have more cultural differences to account for – varying learning styles,

   varying customs and norms, varying languages and level of English proficiency, etc. The

   question to ask is, can the web-based trainings be a one size fits all course?

2) *New Concepts unfamiliar to the Lapin team:* Iris, Jim, Kimberly, and the US group are all

   proposing ideas that are literally foreign to the Lapin team. Dieter Hoffman presented on

   the fact that instructional design thinking and theory was central to US design, but not in

   the French design. He stated that "French universities generally do not have anything like

   instructional design in their programs." (Ertmer, Quinn, Glazewski, 2014, p. 192). Before

   any consensus can be made the US group has to help the Lapin team, and everyone else

   in the consortium, understand their design ideas and the theory behind them.

3) *The Consortium cannot come to an Agreement on the design:* Because some members of

   the consortium are familiar with instructional design principles, and some are not, they

   are having a hard time coming to an agreement on how the web-based trainings should be

   designed. Each member of the group has different ideas on how to best approach the

   design of the trainings, and what needs to be included for them to be most effective. As

   with the next constraint listed, they have to all get on the same page before they can begin

   moving the project forward.

4) *Iris has to get buy-in from all of the members of the consortium:* Iris, Jim, and Kimberly are creating a prototype to demonstrate their design ideas to the consortium, in hopes that the members will understand and see their perspective. They are working with people from around the globe with different levels of understanding in regards to instructional design, and different ideas on how best to create the web-based trainings. To help move the project forward they have to gain buy-in from each member of the group, and get everyone on the same page.

5) *They need to figure out the technical constraints:* For the most part it seems in the case that the consortium has figured out how to handle the technical constraints – adopt HTML5 as standard, avoid plug-ins, and only use major web browsers. However, sometimes it is easier said than done. When they finalize the design and begin development this constraint will begin to cause more problems for Lapin and the consortium, especially since they are working at an international level.

The above constraints are listed in their order of importance for overcoming the ID challenges listed above. The constraints can be grouped into 3 main issues that need to be resolved: accounting for cultural differences, coming to an agreement, and accounting for technical constraints. The first two are most important because when working on an international project like this one there are bound to be drastic cultural differences between not only the audience, but with those working on the project. You can never make assumptions about what a culture does or doesn't do, and so it is important to take culture into account when working on any project and especially on a project like this. Once cultural differences have been accounted for, you can then begin working together to come to an agreement. Constraints 3-4 are all about how the consortium cannot come to an agreement on the design of the web-based training, and

how they have to gain buy-in from each member before they can begin moving on with the

project. This buy-in and agreement on design is crucial to moving the project from the design

phase to the development phase. The last constraint is one that they believe they have solved, but

one that will continually creep up once they have begun the development phase of the project.

Potential Solutions

1. *Perform a thorough cultural and audience analysis:* To fully understand how to best

   approach this project it would be beneficial to take the time to complete a thorough

   cultural and audience analysis. The case never states what sort of prior analysis was done

   before Lapin presented their initial version of the web-based training, but it doesn't seem

   like much analysis was done. This analysis would focus on figuring out what sort of

   cultural differences need to be taken into account, and would hopefully revel any

   potential issues that an international project like this may face. It would also allow each

   member of the consortium to see how things are done in other countries and give them a

   clearer idea of how to work together on future projects. Performing this analysis should

   help resolve constraints 1-2 listed above.

2. *Develop the prototype with help from members of the consortium:* Iris, Jim, and Kimberly

   began developing a prototype as a way "to demonstrate the design they wanted and to

   show that it could actually be done, given the technical constraints." (Ertmer, Quinn,

   Glazewski, 2014, p. 193). By working with the various members of the consortium to

   develop this prototype they will be able to do three things: 1) Gain buy-in from the

   members, 2) Address concerns as they relate to cultural differences, 3) Account for all

   technical constraints. By working with the consortium members, they will be able to see

   exactly how the prototype is addressing their specific concerns and cultural differences,

and by being allowed to help with the design they will be buying into their own ideas –

meaning Iris, Jim, and Kimberly will not have to do a whole lot of convincing. In

addition, working with the consortium members as they develop the prototype, it will

give them the opportunity to assess what kinds of technical constraints may be faced in

an international project like this.

These solutions are directly aimed at resolving the ID challenges and constraints listed in

the previous section. The first solution focuses on constraints 1-2 and the first ID challenge, by

performing a proper analysis that should reveal any cultural issues that may cause problems for

the project. The second solution focuses on constraints 3-5 and the second ID challenge, by

working with the consortium members to create the prototype it should help gain buy-in from

them, address any concerns about the design upfront as they relate to cultural differences and

preferences, and should reveal any possible technical constraints that the project may face.

Implications – Pros & Cons

Solution 1 – Pros: They will be able to figure out the cultural differences between the various

companies within the consortium. They will be designing the web-based training with the

learner in mind. They will be able to better work together as a group because they will

have more insight into each other's cultural customs and norms. It will give them more

insight into how to properly design the web-based trainings. Once Lapin has completed

the cultural analysis they could use this information for other projects they are working

on. The analysis should help to address the question – will a one size fits all course work

for this project?

Solution 1 – Cons: There is no way to address all cultural differences. Conducting an analysis of

      this size could drastically extend the time it would take to complete the project. An

      analysis of this size – for an international project – could potentially be very expensive.

Solution 2 – Pros: It should help to gain buy-in from the consortium members, as they are

      helping with creating it and putting their own ideas into the prototype. It will help to

      address the consortium members concerns and cultural difference because they are

      working together to develop the design. The individual members will be able to identify

      potential technical constraints specific to their company and country of origin – blocked

      web browsers, slow internet speeds, old computers, etc. Working with the consortium

      members on the development of the prototype will make is so that Lapin doesn't feel like

      Iris, Jim, and Kimberly stepped on their toes by going and developing the prototype

      without being asked to. They will be able to demonstrate their ideas to the consortium

      members, and gain-buy in outside of the meetings – something Jim said Iris should

      probably do.

Solution 2 – Cons: It may be difficult to coordinate with all of the consortium members to get

      their feedback and ideas while developing the prototype. Some of the consortium

      members may not want to help with this process. Lapin may feel as though they are being

      replaced by Iris and her team, because they are making a prototype without being asked.

Final Recommendations

      In the end, my final recommendations would be for the consortium, and specifically

Lapin, to conduct a thorough cultural and audience analysis to determine what cultural

differences may cause challenges for the design of the web-based training, and to give them a

better idea on how to design the web-based training. In addition, Iris and her team should work

together with the consortium members to put together a prototype that will be a model of the

design ideas for the web-based trainings. The analysis should be the first thing that is done

before any design ideas are thrown around, or before the prototype is even begun. They should

conduct an analysis of every single company from every country to get the most comprehensive

and thorough results. This analysis and the results that it produces should be used to guide the

decision making process when it comes to the design and development of the web-based

trainings. These results should show what challenges may be faced due to cultural differences

such as – varying learning styles, varying customs and norms, varying languages and level of

English proficiency, etc. An analysis like this will take a lot of time and resources, but in the end

should assist Lapin, and the consortium, in their efforts to create effective, engaging, and

culturally sensitive web-based trainings.

When it comes to working with the consortium members to design and develop the

prototype Iris and her team should begin by letting Lapin know that they plan on making a

prototype, with the help of the consortium members, to demonstrate their ideas. This first step

will make sure that Lapin doesn't feel like they are being pushed to the curb by Iris and her team,

but that it is a joint effort to create a prototype that will be able to represent everyone's ideas and

address all of their concerns. The next step would be to get together with the consortium

members individually to get their ideas on how best to design effective learning for an

international audience. Each member of the group will have their own ideas on what should and

shouldn't be included in the project, and will have their own ideas on how to address the cultural

differences. The purpose of meeting individually at first is so that you can more easily coordinate

with the various members of the group, and so that they can speak more frankly and freely about

their concerns and ideas. Once the initial portion of the prototype has been finished and all the

members of the consortium have been able to give their input the next step would be to have a

group meeting to go over the entire prototype and to make revisions. The purpose of the group

meeting is to give those who could not meet individually a chance to give their input, and to hash

out any conflicting ideas that were brought up by the individuals. Only after everyone in the

group has had their say should Iris and her team move on to finalizing the prototype as the model

for how to design the web-based trainings.

I believe this would be the best approach because it addresses the two main challenges

and each of the constraints specifically. By preforming an analysis, they will have a clearer

picture of what the learners need and what they don't need, and will be able to better understand

where the members of the group are coming from when they give their input into the design of

the web-based trainings. Then working on the prototype with the consortium members will help

to gain their buy-in, will allow them to address their own individual concerns, and will allow

them to point out specific problem areas as it relates to their own culture. It will also take the

burden off of Lapin, and Iris and her team, of designing the model for the web-based trainings

themselves.

Readings and Experiences

I thought all three of the readings for this week were right on point with the main topics

within this week's case, and were really helpful in assisting me to analyze the case. Specifically,

I really liked the article by Walkgrove Ltd. because it gave me some really good ideas on how to

approach e-learning on a more global perspective, and how to begin thinking about the bigger

picture of culture, e-learning, and instructional design. It also helped me to understand that you

cannot truly categorize cultures into neat and tidy groups, and that a culture can change from

country to country, company to company, and office to office – something that I believe Iris,

Jacqueline, and the rest of the consortium should know before trying to put together the design of

the web-based training. The Munter article was great because it showed how different cultures

really can be, and how you have to be willing to take the time to understand the cultures of those

you are working with in order to work with them effectively. This idea really stood out to me as I

was reading the case and Jim mentioned to Iris that "I think we might find that different cultures

view the purposes of meetings differently." (Ertmer, Quinn, Glazewski, 2014, p. 193). The Ford

article was great because it pointed out the dynamics of how a team works together to solve

problems, and deal with conflict. Specifically, it gave me the idea of having Iris and her team

work with the consortium members individually, on the development of the prototype, before

bringing them together as a group to discuss it. Each of them come from different cultures and

have their own ideas and beliefs about how to do things right – understanding the group dynamic

vs the individual dynamic is important for ensuring success.

As far as my own experiences I have never worked on an international level, but I do

currently work on a statewide level. In a state as large as Utah, we have facilities in rural towns

where the population isn't more than 500 people, and then we have facilities in urban cities with

populations of over a million. Each of our facilities has its own culture and its own way of seeing

and doing things, and it actually becomes very apparent when people from the various facilities

around the state get together and begin discussing issues. One of my all times favorite classes

that I teach is a defensive tactics and crisis response class, because I love it when we have

individuals from each of our facilities around the state there to give their own perspective. It is

interesting to see how different things are from one facility to the next, and how different each

individual approaches a situation based on their own prior knowledge and experiences. These

experiences have shown me how incredibly important it is to take into consideration your

audiences cultural differences, because the last thing you want is to offend someone, or exclude

someone because you did not account for them while designing your course.

References

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