dashlaks



Case Study for



for

COTR Refresher Course

2013 - 2014

DashLabs Engagement with the Smithsonian Institution

SUMMARY

About the Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, with 21 museums and the National Zoo—shaping the future by preserving heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. The Institution was founded in 1846 with funds from the Englishman James Smithson (1765–1829) according to his wishes "under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge." We continue to honor this mission and invite you to join us in our quest. (*Source: si.edu website.*)

Problem Statement

The Smithsonian had been offering in-class training to their Contractor Officer's Technical Representatives (COTRs) for years using course materials that were updated from year to year to only align with changes in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). This presented a multitude of limitations. Some include the inability for COTRs who needed to re-certify every 1-3 years to take the certification course except for pre-determined dates, which were offered 2-4 times per year at a centralized location. Another challenge is that the course manual was ineffective as companion tool as it only included the changes that occurred since previous training but not the full scope of knowledge a COTR is to maintain. Finally, SI had found itself dependent on a single vendor to deliver training since the materials left little room for follow-on support outside of the expertise of the original vendor that created the training. SI wanted to scale their offering to become on-demand, and fully comprehensive.

DashLabs' Solution

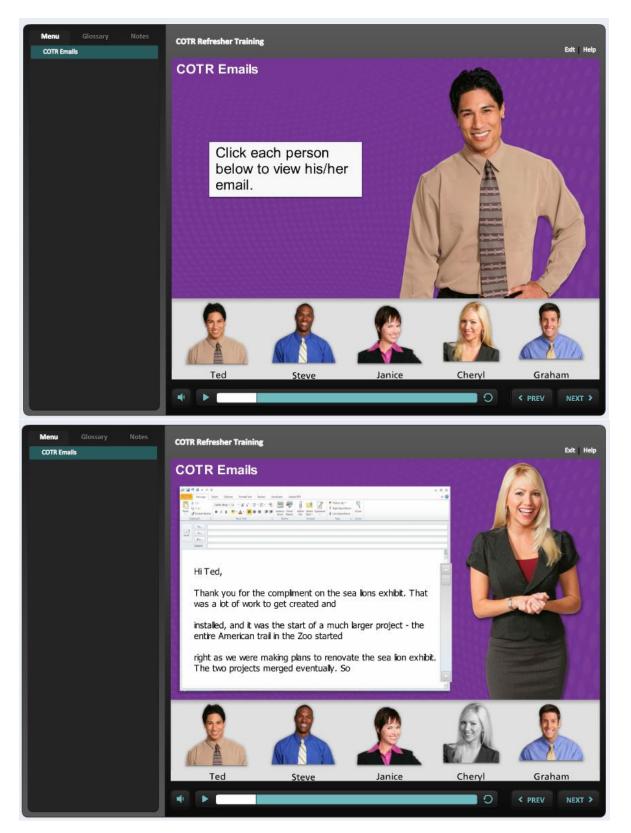
DashLabs first consulted with the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to determine key details that would describe the long-term needs of new and existing learner. DashLabs conducted analysis of internal and external resources, uncovering a baseline approach that invited SMEs to further fill in gaps of coverage identified in the in-person COTR Refresher Course. From there, DashLabs worked with SI to deconstruct and then reconstruct the course materials by seeking out content from both Smithsonian-designated sources, and those located through our analysis and design processes. As a public entity, the Smithsonian Institution presented to DashLabs the opportunity to allow our instructional designers to do their due diligence to reference the FAR to return questions and gather clarity from SMEs prior to initial engagement. The team was also able to utilize resources from other departments/courses to build from relevant subject matter. Instituting our F.L.O.W. process, we were able to present in the earliest stages of our work, a solution that surpassed the client's original understanding of their learning needs, then recommend an approach that would adhere to their bottom-line.

The Final Product

DashLabs moved forward with building a fully interactive 4-hour eLearning course in which the learner's new colleague, Ted—an avatar used within the course—sought guidance from the COTR throughout the learning experience. The online learning experience opened with a scene from SI's actual workspace in which the avatar appears to introduce himself as the newest COTR. He'd like to confirm his own knowledge which, in-effect, reinforces the learner's own knowledge. This learning-by-teaching method (called Lernen durch Lehrnen in German, or LdL) allowed existing COTRs to refresh their knowledge while also considering its application in their day-to-day activities, which further supported practical knowledge transfer. Because the Smithsonian Institution complex consists of twenty-one (21) museums, DashLabs worked with SI to pull in scenarios and character design that would be relatable across each museum type, acquisition need, and role-based interest—from groundskeeper to Zoologist.

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Scenes



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