DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR THE NEW WORLD OF LEARNING
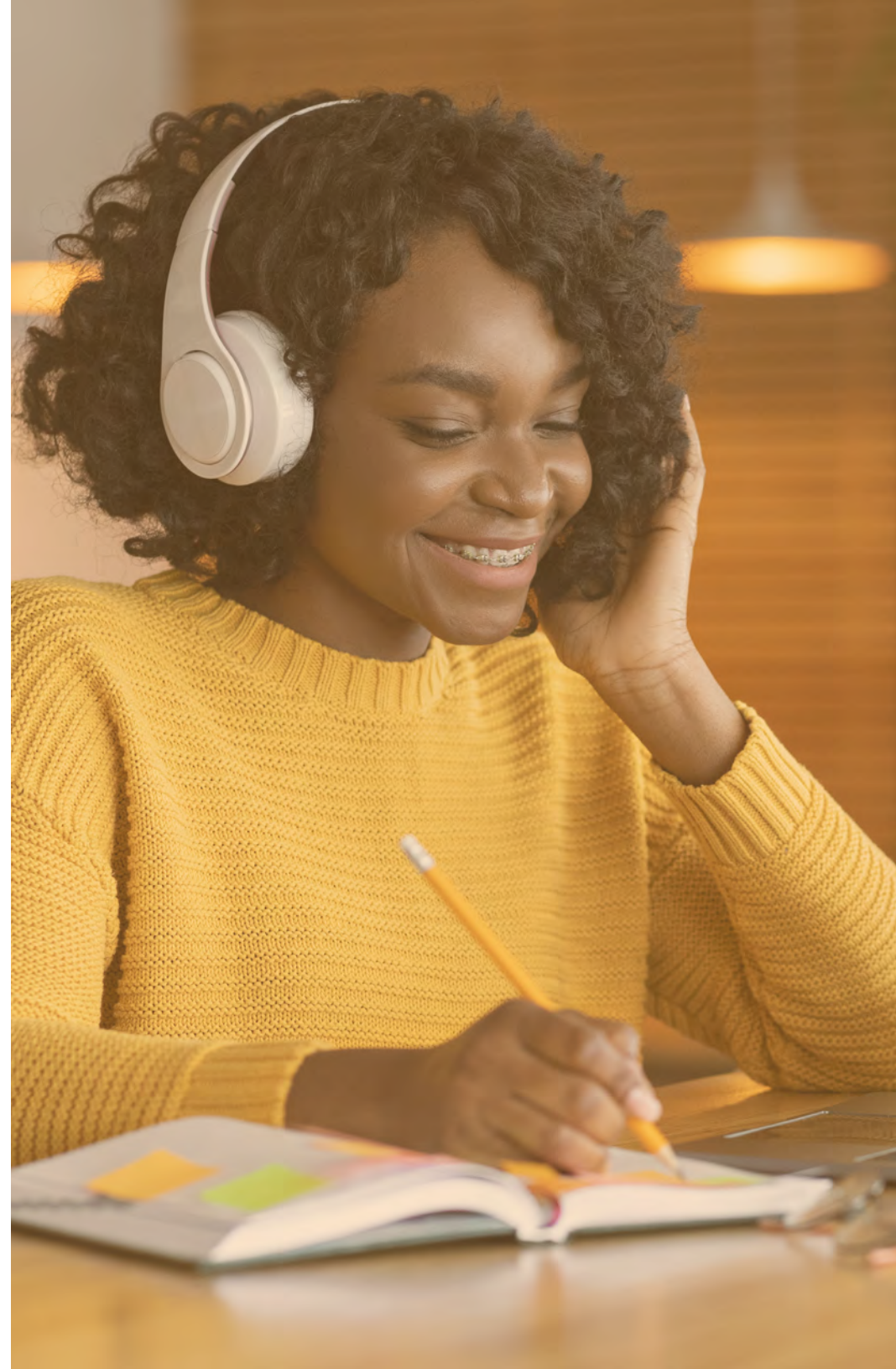
Does Your Content Unlock Learners' Potential?

WELEARN

Talent shortages, the talent crunch, the War for Talent, the Great Resignation — whatever you call it, we've known for some time that **employers just don't have enough of the skills they need to get work done and deliver on strategic goals.** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, quit rates and job openings hover at historic levels, and workers, sensing they have the upper hand, are understandably getting much more selective about where they work.
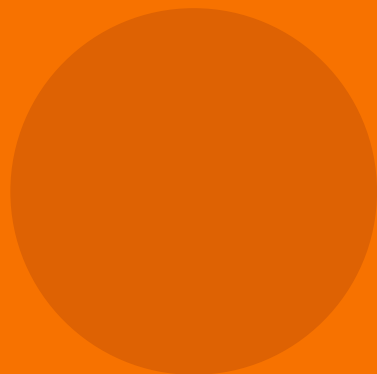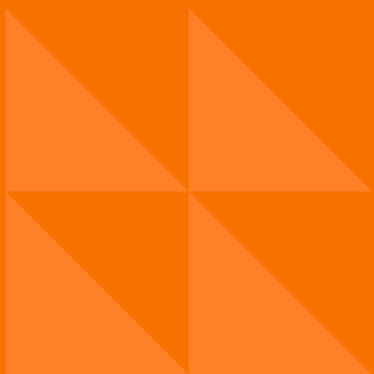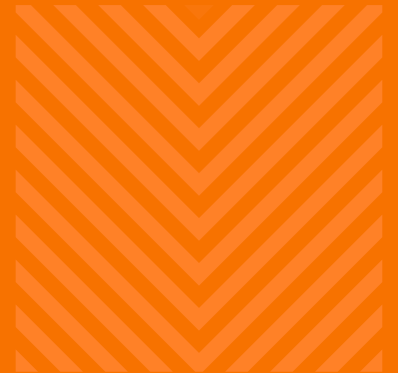
As a learning and development leader, you have a unique opportunity to address many of these challenges by reskilling your people to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. What's more, by investing in your people's careers, retaining them becomes that much easier as well.

Truly potent learning experiences can transform careers, grow your business, and in some cases save lives. But this is only possible if learning is accessible, relevant, engaging, and — above all — effective.

Most learning programs aren't any of these things even some of the time. Most learning is tiresome, perfunctory, and futile.

In this guide, we're going to share some of our secret sauce **(it's Thousand Island Dressing we left in the sun)** and give you a taste of the design principles we use to make learning awesome. If you're looking to try something different in learning, we think this guide will give you an idea of what that might look like.

LEARNING MUST BE ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

For every learning experience we make, we believe that, while not everyone will master the concepts, **everyone deserves a fair chance to try.**

A fair try means removing every possible barrier for your learners. If you're teaching to an audience of front-line workers, for example, make your content mobile-friendly because they probably don't have time to sit at a desk and consume learning modules. If you're using video or sound, make sure it can be captioned for hearing-impaired learners.

80%
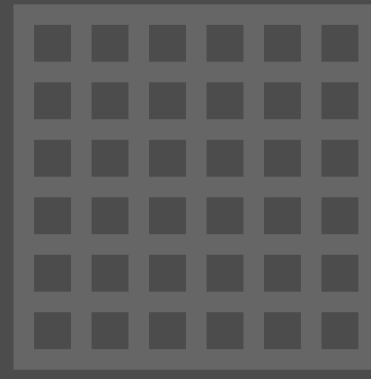### of the global workforce is deskless

Mobile-friendly content is particularly important to reducing barriers for deskless workers. Why does this matter to you? The most recent estimates suggest as much as 80% of the global workforce is deskless. Can you afford to design learning that doesn't take 80% of your audience's needs and limitations into account? Didn't think so.

We begin every design session by asking, **"Is this accessible to everyone?** Is there some segment of the workforce that is being excluded here?" Powerful learning experiences begin from a place of empathy with the learner. Make an effort to understand how your people are going to consume this and identify upfront any unnecessary obstacles.

Accessible, inclusive learning doesn't assume learners have your schedule, your vocabulary, your educational background, your new laptop, or your high-speed internet connection.

BEAUTY IS NONNEGOTIABLE

It might seem a little strange for an e-book on corporate learning to start ranting and raving about beauty. We don't think so. In fact, **we think the lack of conversation about beauty in learning is a major part of the problem with learning today.**
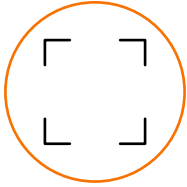
Beauty is no longer the province of poets and philosophers. There is, in fact, a growing scientific literature on the nature of beauty. Studies are revealing all the time that surrounding yourself with beautiful things lightens your mood, boosts creativity, and makes you more productive. Who wouldn't want to infuse their learning content with a little beauty if it's capable of all that?

At WeLearn, we're on the record as being against sh***y learning. All too often, what makes something sh***y is that it's ugly.
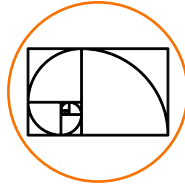
Beauty is often in the eye of the beholder, but there are certain forms that we prefer over others. Knowing how to make learning content beautiful will make it more engaging and easier to consume for the learner.
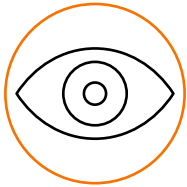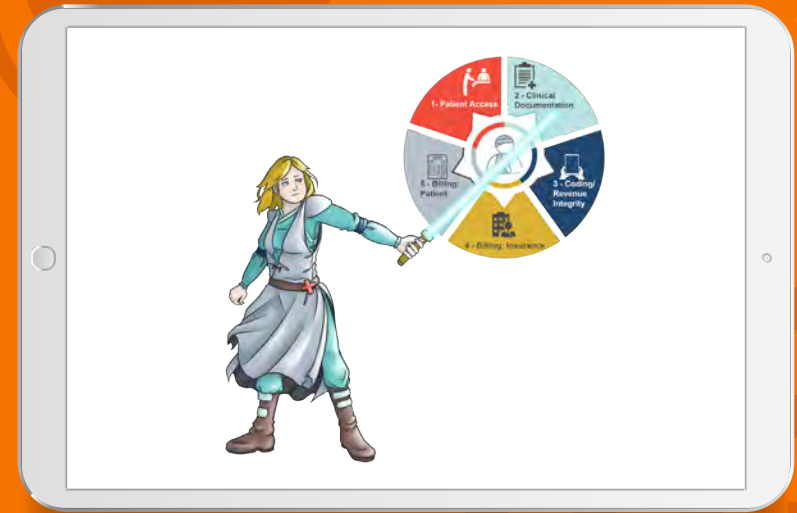
Use white space and avoid text walls.

Leverage the power of the golden rectangle, proportion, and geometry.

Use the "eye test." Your first impression is probably a better judge of how visually pleasing something is than staring at it forever.

Make it intuitive and ergonomic. Learners should be able to learn without much direction or hand-holding.

Easter eggs delight the learner and take your content to the next level. In this screenshot, we drew the "Jedi" character to resemble one of our clients. This made the content more remarkable (literally!) and memorable because it prompted learners to discuss it with each other.

STORYTELLING MAKES LEARNING STICK

A story well told makes learning entertaining and easier to retain over time. In fact, storytelling is more powerful than data and logic (don't worry, data and logic still exist; trust us, we're big fans — huge) as a method for persuading people to accept and apply knowledge. **Don't believe us? Check this out.**

A Princeton study showed that when people listened to a well-told story, their brains lit up in the same places as the storyteller's. Aside from just sounding cool, that means when you use a story format to deliver information, the audience experiences the story as if it's happening to them.

Recently, WeLearn received a Bronze-level Brandon Hall Group award for Best Advance in Custom Content Development for a learning program we developed for the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (BCEN) on providing emergency treatment for a drowning victim. To maximize learners' information retention, we used an actual drowning case to put the learner in the position of someone responsible for giving emergency care to a drowning victim.

While not every learning program has such life or death implications, don't underestimate the potency of well-constructed narratives.

When prehospital paramedics arrive on the scene, a police officer and a lifeguard have CPR in progress. The patient is a 10-year old African American male.

The pool is six to eight minutes from a community medical center, but it does not have a pediatric intensive care unit. The closest facility with a pediatric intensive care unit is 20-minutes away.

* * *

What is the first action medical responders should take?

Open airway, perform rescue breathing, continue CPR if needed

Place patient in recovery position

Suction liquids from lungs due to the patient swallowing water

Perform the Heimlich maneuver, jaw thrust, then CPR
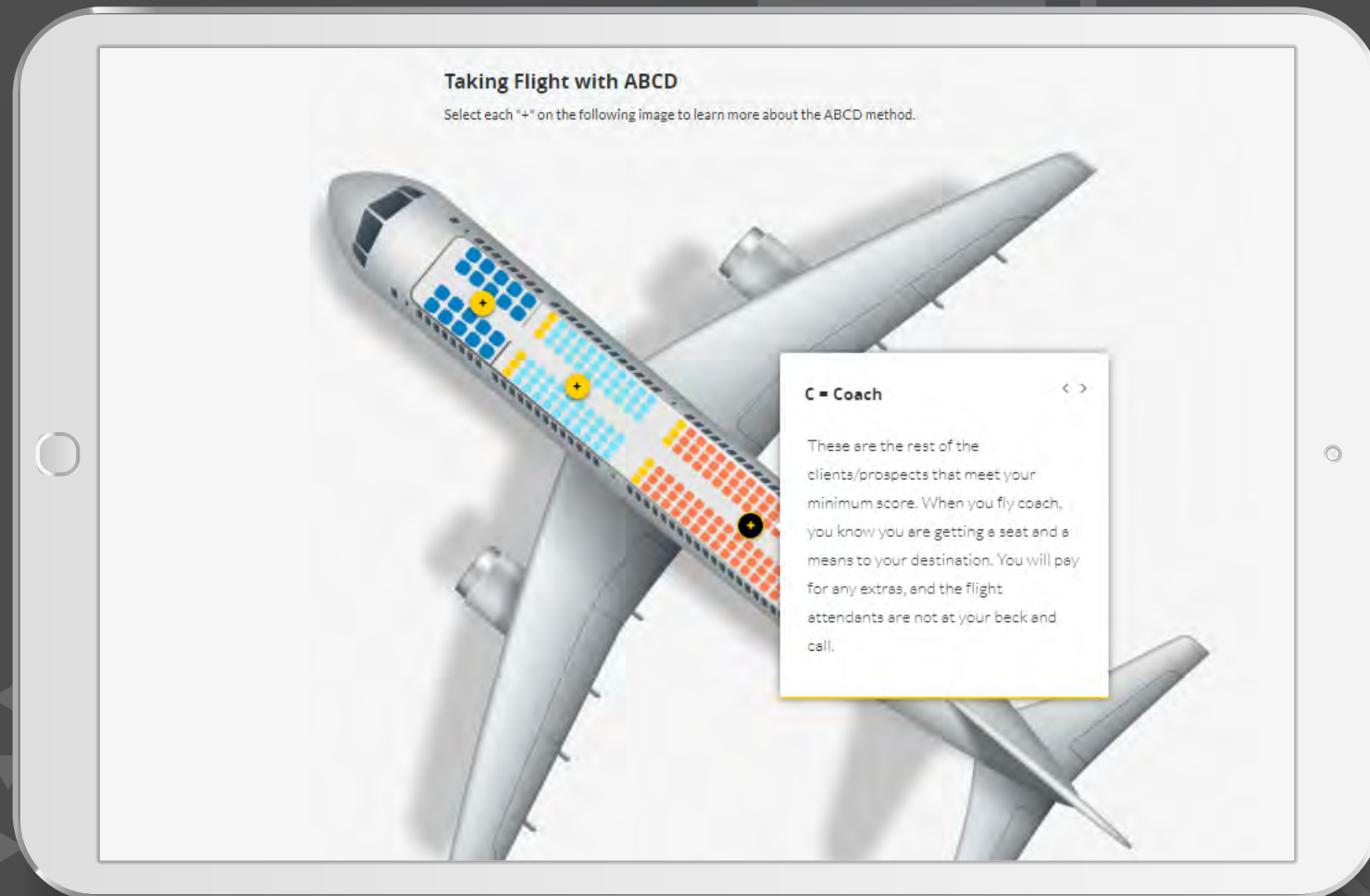
PRACTICE REALLY DOES MAKE PERFECT

We have a saying around here: If you aren't doing it, you aren't learning it. We take a sandbox approach to learning where, once you've been given a concept, you don't just take a quiz and move on to the next module. You need to play with it and practice doing what you've learned.

Even better, we recommend integrating your practice into realistic scenarios so that you can benefit from the power of narrative and storytelling as well.

For example, if you're trying to educate insurance agents on how to help potential clients select the right plan, don't just teach them the formula to estimate a client's insurance needs; give them a realistic scenario where they might get vague or incomplete information and have them practice applying the method.

Here's another example that
illustrates what we're talking about:

Taking Flight with ABCD

Select each "+" on the following image to learn more about the ABCD method.

C = Coach ‹ ›

These are the rest of the clients/prospects that meet your minimum score. When you fly coach, you know you are getting a seat and a means to your destination. You will pay for any extras, and the flight attendants are not at your beck and call.

THE POWER OF "WOW" IN LEARNING

We truly believe that carefully crafted learning experiences can play a major role in closing your organization's talent gaps. **But for that vision to come to fruition, the quality must be there.**

At WeLearn, we know the only way learning gets better is if we change the mindset and principles we bring to learning design. For us, those include:
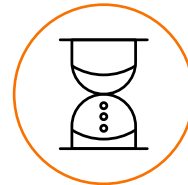
A focus on making all content accessible and inclusive

A relentless pursuit of beauty

Capturing the power of good storytelling

Making space and time for practice

Your employees won't settle for status quo learning much longer. Discover how WeLearn can help your content go to work.

CONTACT US

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