

# Case Study: Before Design Thinking

## Overview

This activity will give you an opportunity to practice using design thinking to mitigate issues that often occur in instructional design.

## Instructions

1. Read the scenario to learn more about a training program that didn't turn out as expected. Make assumptions as needed to work with the scenario.
2. Identify what went wrong in the scenario as well as any opportunities to improve the design and development process.
3. Be prepared to share your reasoning with your peers.

## Scenario 1: Bham Co. Does Everything Right With Disappointing Results

Bham Co. is a technology firm specializing in mobile application development. To standardize management practices across the company, the HR department recently implemented a new feedback model for performance reviews across the organization.

As a member of the internal training department, Eric was assigned to design and develop the training and support the rollout and implementation.

*We've got this!*

- Eric sent out a survey to all employees to assess the current state of performance conversations across the organization.
- He designed a solution that adapted the delivery media and content to the needs of each audience: high-level executives and managers.
- He followed industry standards and included relevant examples of what to expect in performance conversations.
- The training was completed on time and within budget and then rolled out to all three audiences.

*What happened?*

- After the training, Eric found that about 20 percent of executives and managers did not use the new model, stating that they didn't have the time to change the way they conducted performance reviews.
- Of the 80 percent who did use the model, there was inconsistency in the results and satisfaction.

- The HR team noted that managers knew the steps of the model and referenced the job aid, but they did not know how to probe and use questioning techniques to engage employees in the conversations.
- Additionally, employees did not feel successful in being heard or see any change over previous reviews.
- Leadership was disappointed, managers were frustrated, and the rollout of the new model was seen as a failure.

## **Your Task**

**What might have gone awry in the design and development process? Identify any opportunities for improvement.**

# Case Study: After Design Thinking

## Overview

This activity will give you an opportunity to practice using design thinking to mitigate issues that often occur in instructional design.

## Instructions

1. Read the follow-up scenario to see design thinking in action. Make assumptions as needed to work with the scenario.
2. Work with your breakout group to identify what impact that a design thinking approach had on the results.
3. Nominate a scribe to take notes and a spokesperson to debrief your work.

## Scenario 1: Bham Co. Listens

While Bham Co. executives and the HR department were disappointed in the initial rollout of the performance feedback model, they remained convinced of the importance of supporting managers in feedback conversations with their employees.

They considered that the training might not have landed well with busy employees at all levels of the organization. People understood the content of the model but couldn't apply it.

### *Returning to the Beginning*

- This time Eric focused on creating a learning experience rather than a training event.
- He knew that HR's perspective is that this model will improve performance conversations and make them more efficient when properly implemented.
- Eric had feedback from employees that they didn't feel heard during performance conversations.

### *Developing Empathy*

- Eric conducted some virtual focus groups to have conversations with employees and actively listened to their responses. In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of the problem, this gains the employees' buy-in and starts setting expectations that the organization cares about their experience and opinions.
- Similar focus groups were also held with the managers, who fill both roles in the performance conversation process.

- Eric analyzed the output of these conversations to define the problem:
- Originally, there was no standard process for performance feedback.
- Now there was a process, but it wasn't being followed.
- Even though there was a process to be implemented, the real skill that needed improvement was a soft skill.
- With the problem defined, Eric hosted another round of focus groups to brainstorm an effective solution.

### *Embrace Prototyping*

- The output of the focus group was a couple of ideas that Eric could prototype.
- Eric created some role-play prompts for executives and managers to practice.
- After testing the prototype, he also added a job aid to support the conversations and pre-work to explain the concepts and process.
- The result was a flipped design that made the most of everyone's time.

### *Finding Success*

During the following quarterly review cycles, the performance conversations went much better. The conversations were so efficient that over time, many managers and employees reported performance feedback had become part of their regular weekly conversations, not just reserved for quarterly conversations.

## **Your Task**

**Identify the design thinking principles that Eric was able to implement in the design and development process. What impact did they make on the revised training program?**