

The eLearning Coach Podcast #11
eLearning Design Challenges and Solutions
with Tom Kuhlmann

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Connie Malamed: Hello learning people. Welcome to episode eleven of the eLearning Coach podcast. Some of you have been asking for transcripts of these episode and they're now available at theelearningcoach.com/podcasts. That takes you to a list of the sessions, then go to the specific one you want and you'll find the transcript at the bottom of the page.

In this session, I chat with Tom Kuhlmann, Vice President of Community at Articulate. Tom has a degree in educational technology and has been in the field for a long time. He writes the popular The Rapid E-Learning Blog. Tom interacts with scores of industry professionals at conferences and through workshops, so I thought it would be insightful to get his take on solutions for the challenges of designing eLearning and the obstacles we face in the industry. Here's the interview.

Hi Tom, thanks for being on the podcast.

Tom Kuhlmann: Thank you for having me, Connie.

Connie: I know you teach workshops, so you probably hear a lot from people about the problems that they're having. What are some of the biggest problems that people have when they're designing eLearning and how do you tell people to avoid them?

Tom: Usually the biggest problem is they just don't know how to build courses, so I tell them not to build them. No, I'm joking. The challenge I think a lot of people have is software has gotten a lot easier to use and so I think you have a lot of people who aren't necessarily trained in that discipline who are coming into eLearning; I think the challenge for them is that they've got to do everything. Years ago, you kind of had a team of people building courses. You might have...when I got started, there was the programmer person who actually assembled everything and then you had an IT person worked at the distribution of the course and you had your subject matter experts, instructional designers, media people. It was kind of more of a team effort to build a course.

Connie: Yeah, it was fun too, wasn't it?

Tom: Yeah, there were places where it was fun and places...there were challenges too. The challenge today is a lot of that is taken away. The company says, hey we're going to buy this tool and the tools have gotten easier, so it's a

lot easier to actually produce the course. That requires the person who produces it...and typically it's the one or two person team; they have to do everything. They have to be the instructional designer, the graphics person, the IT person; they have to understand how networks and uploading courses and all that type of stuff. To me, that's probably the big challenge that people face is that tools have made it easier but now they've got a lot more responsibility in crafting their courses. Which goes with what I think is going to pause...going back to what we were joking about.

Years ago, if I wanted to do something...let's say I wanted to build a drag and drop interaction and I didn't have the...back then it was either author ware or Flash is what we were using; if I didn't know how to build a drag and drop, then I'd go to my Flash developer and say, hey, I want to do this; I want to do a drag and drop. Sometimes you'd get that programmer who is excited about this stuff and says, you know what, let's play around with some ideas; this is what I'd like to do; then you kind of work on that together. A lot of times though...most people have kind of run into this, a lot of times you get the person who doesn't really want to do that, so they'll give you all these reasons why it's not going to work or, yeah, we could do that, but it's going to take this long or that stuff's gratuitous, we don't want to do that.

What would happen is, if you didn't have the skills to do something, let's say interactive like a drag and drop, then you didn't even consider putting a drag and drop in your course because you knew you just didn't have the capability. Today, I'm thinking...let's say with Storyline; you can build a drag and drop in about thirty seconds. Now the conversations no longer about putting the drag and drop, it's really how can I be effective using the drag and drop? I think that's a positive in that challenge that they have with having to do everything.

Connie: Yeah, that's a good way to look at it. People often complain that eLearning is boring and when instructional designers are new to it and don't yet have the skills, they often just make page-turner eLearning. What kinds of things do you teach people to help them avoid that?

Tom: The main thing, if you're talking about a real learning experience, is if the experience is relevant to the learner, then you can overcome a lot of what would be boring about that learning. If you're producing a course and you're putting it out there and it's not relevant to that person, then most likely everything is going to be boring; or if you make it really interactive, it's going to be tedious. I think probably the biggest thing is to make sure there's a real connection between what you're creating and how the learner uses that content in a real world context. I think that goes back...and we look at a lot of the page-turners or the linear type courses; I think the problem we have in our industry is we call everything eLearning.

We'll say, oh, this eLearning is boring, but it's really not eLearning as much as it is a bunch of information that the organization thought needed to be delivered. The expectation isn't learning as much as it is at the end of the year we just want a spreadsheet that says these twenty people took a course. In that case, the objective isn't the learning and, in that sense, it's like, what can we do to meet that objective at the lowest cost? Typically, that's going to be let's take a bunch of content, put it on some screens, give them a quiz and they can take it; they're in and out. It might be boring but it's a lot better than wasting their time doing a more extensive course that's still not relevant to their needs. I think in that sense, not all courses that we call eLearning are really focused on teaching anybody anything and it's really just a means to digitize some information and then track whether or not people have been exposed to it.

If you actually think about the learning part...if you actually built courses and the intent was for them to learn, then I think it's really about framing the content in a context that's relevant to the way that we use that content.

Connie: Right. I so agree with you about that.

Tom: I knew you would.

Connie: The type of presentation that you're talking about that's not really for learning is, what I call, information dissemination. For the past few years I've really been trying to get clients to hand that out in a PDF document. I keep telling them no one will be able to remember this and, of course, they don't really care because, like you said, it's compliance training and they just want to check off the box. No one will be able to remember this, why don't we put in a few PowerPoint slides, like in Presenter, and give them a PDF file to download. Then that will allow you to check off the compliance checkmark and yet people don't have to sit there and suffer. I really feel like I'm the learner's advocate and I'm always fighting for them so that they can only have things, like you said, that are relevant to them.

Tom: I would agree with that and then I would probably disagree, or add an element; like, gone with the PDF. I don't work with clients in the same way I used to, but I used to do some freelancer work with some customers. I kind of look at their courses and put them in one of two boxes; they're either, what I would say is, performance support or they're actually focused on performance. The performance based courses were ones where we wanted to change behaviors or get them to do something a certain way to produce a certain type of result.

Tom: The performance support courses would be everything else; that would be compliance course, that might be the PDF, that might be other information. Their information or marketing type courses where it's really about organizing content and then it supports other elements of performance. Maybe it's...I think of one I did a training program one time for this remittance processing facility; one of the

problems they had was they were training people on the floor where it was real loud, they didn't really understand the machines or the workflow and procedures. We took all that information, in which they really did have in written form and some printed out PowerPoint slides, we took all that information and we put it together into these little eLearning modules and we took them off the floor.

In that sense, they looked nice and they were decent courses to write content. They were linear click and read type courses with quick knowledge checks to kind of make sure they understood what we were doing. Which, at that point, was understand the workflow and understanding the parts of the machines and things like that. Then we were able to assess their understanding and, actually, what helped in that one was we made them more familiar with the machines and all that. They were less intimidated when they got on the floor.

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: Then that's performance support; when they actually went on the floor, their peer coach that they were working with, was able to just work specifically on the workflows and whatever they had to do from a performance perspective. In that case, the eLearning course served as the performance support and the performance-based training was actually on the floor. That's kind of a good example, I think, of finding that split I think the other thing where I don't agree with the PDF...and a lot of people in the industry promote that as well. To me, when I look at...I work for Articulate, so we make eLearning software.

If you step away from the word eLearning software and from the words like Quiz Maker or interactions, or whatever it is that we build, ultimately, the tools produce multimedia output. Whether I produce a PDF, or a Word doc, or quickly produce a multimedia output using these tools, I still get this digital version of this content. In a lot of ways, I can build an engaging representation of that information that is interactive, that is engaging, gives some opportunity to the learner to do more than just read and doesn't take any more time than assembling a PDF. A good example, a few years back, was one of our clients wanted to do a glossary, a multimedia glossary of all the company's acronyms; as if that was why the company wasn't succeeding, right?

I recognize that as, kind of, a waste of time project, but this person was really high up in the organization and so I wasn't in a position to say, well, we're not going to do it because...well, I kind of tried to discourage her from doing it...

Connie: That never works.

Tom: At that point, she was going to hire somebody outside of the organization to do it. It was in our interest to get it done and contain the cost. Why, back then I was the customer of Articulate, so I used Articulate engage...has a glossary interaction that was during the beta.

Tom: They had a glossary interaction; I took the terms and things she had given me, dropped them in there and in about ten minutes I was done with that. Where it would've taken us ninety days to get the Flash people working on what she wanted, and we were done. Was it a great eLearning course? No, we would've called it an eLearning course, that's what she called it but really it was just a multimedia document. Whether you build it as a PDF or some other multimedia document, I think the time spent doing it is about the same anyway.

Connie: You know what I think? I think that a PDF is not necessarily great for performance support. I mean, it might be, but it's probably more like some kind of job bate or mobile support. I think the PDF document is good when people can't get back into the LMS easily. I work with one client where the LMS is just very hard to get back into and then you have to retake the test. Also, there are times when almost a third category when it's not eLearning, it's not really performance support, it's some kind of compliance training that is kind of irrelevant to their job that's just something they legally have to do but it doesn't even really apply. In those cases, that's when I think it might be appropriate. People lose PDF documents, so that's probably not the greatest performance support tool.

Tom: Yeah, it's funny. I use this as a distinction is some of the workshops; a lot of the big companies I've worked for, they've always had in their ethics program, these training programs on how not to be bribed. These anti-fraud...

Connie: I'd like to take that.

Tom: Well, one is...every company I've worked at I had to take these courses on how not to get bribed but I've never had a job where I've gotten bribed.

Connie: Me neither.

Tom: I'm sure people...there were people who want to bribe the eLearning people to make the courses faster. The thing is, I never had a job where I was getting bribed but I'd have to take these big, long, elaborate scenarios, right? In that case, that click and read boring course might have been boring to me, but was probably the most appropriate solution for me at that audience. We did have people working in other parts of the world and in some cultures bribery and that is part of the normal business transaction. Learning to maneuver that, when you're working in sales...for them, a performance based solution, where they went through interactive solution scenarios and all that makes sense. That person sitting in a cubicle, in IT, never getting bribed, maybe that ten slide click and read course might be a boring, basic compliance course. That might be the appropriate solution for that particular audience and then for the audience where it is relevant. You have a more in-depth performance based solution.

Connie: Don't you think we should let the audience know that you bribed me to be on the podcast?

Tom: Ha-ha, yeah, I think they wouldn't believe that.

Connie: Ha-ha. What kinds of things, from talking to people and your own experience, do you feel that really motivate adult learners?

Tom: Going back to the relevance, I think that's the thing that motivated adults is that, from the learning, is that there's some value in we're talking the context of eLearning. It's that this course provides value to me and it's something that I can use> I also think the thing that's motivating is when it's safe. A lot of times it's actually...you were mentioning LMS's earlier, it's one of the issues, I think, LMS has presented to eLearning is everything is tracked and reported. Adult learners are typically a little bit more cautious. Especially when it's work based. If you're at home...I messed up all my locks at home, so I had to...I had one of those marquee systems, so I changed one and then I threw my locks away and I couldn't change the others.

Better go buy one of those kits to repair my locks; I had to go take all my locks apart, which I didn't know how to do, and then I'm on YouTube watching all these videos from these locksmiths on how to take my locks apart and change out my locks; taking the bolts out and all that. You know, when I'm at home and I'm sitting there and nobody's over my shoulder, I feel safe. I messed up a couple things doing it, that's fine. When I'm at work, you don't really have the luxury of being safe a lot of times. Being tracked, oh, you missed this question; you're never going to get the promotion, never become CEO of the company because you didn't know how to take this lock apart. I think for adult learners, that ability to be learning in a safe environment is important.

Taking....you were talking about being locked behind LMS, is you'll notice, on my blog, I rarely talk about learning management systems, or things like Score or Tracking, because I think those things aren't relevant to learning. I think those things are just administrative things that are built into the process.

Connie: Right.

Tom: They're not really learning things and being locked behind the LMS is one of those things where, when you put the course in the LMS, you kind of shut down some of the motivation the learner might have because you're tracking them and reporting it. Taking them out of that creating a safe environment for them to actually practice and, depending on the test, to practice and fail and get the right type of feedback to make the changes they need, I think is good. Relevant content, safe way to practice, are probably two of the most important parts. Then I think, again, is one of my pet peeves about eLearning is this tendency to lock everything down or control the learning experience.

Tom: Adults like to learn...have the freedom to learn. I go to a bookstore, for you blog...or your podcast listeners or younger, that's where people go to buy books; before Amazon. If I go to a bookstore and I find a book that's interesting to me, usually looks good; that's what draws your initial attention. I'll go in there and, if I'm familiar with the topic, I might look in the index to see what they're covering. Like, scan the chapters real quick, flip through and look for diagrams or pictures or whatever. Maybe I'll find an area I might be familiar with and kind of just read through it real quick. Then I'm starting to assess the value and comparing it to what I already know. Then at some point I determine, hey, this is a good resource for me and I'm going to continue with that. eLearning should be kind of like that, as much as we can do that.

Connie: Right

Tom: I can go in and explore and I can determine what is it that I need to learn and let me focus on that, then let me look at other areas. Then kind of jump through and design my own learning experience. Now, that doesn't work for compliance training and a lot of organizations don't know how to provide that type of freedom. I think that's one of the things adult learners like, is the freedom to create their own learning experience.

Connie: Yeah, if every workplace allowed people to explore and learn what they wanted, it would be a beautiful world.

Tom: That, and if you had flowers and trees out in front of the building.

Connie: And massage therapists would walk through the cubicles. When you teach instructional design in your workshops, do you teach anything different than the standard ADDIE process?

Tom: Yeah, we try a nudist approach.

Connie: Ha-ha.

Tom: That didn't go over well. No, I have a simple approach; it's a throw them in the pool approach. When I talk about building courses, it's how you get them in a pool. Again, I'm assuming that this is...the course is performance change. How do I get you making the types of decisions you need to make right away? If I had complete control of the course I was designing it would be, let's set it up; set up a situation, let's throw you in there and start working through it. Now, if I was going to the production of that, then it would be, understand the situation; give them the right type of feedback and building the structure. It'd be a little bit more agile.

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: The reality though, is when you're in an organization, everything tends to move a lot slower. You probably end up with a more standard project management process. It's funny, because atty's not a bad process; it's really more like a project management approach and it doesn't mean it has to be linear. It covers all those core areas that you're going to need to cover in the production process. It's not a bad way to go. I think the problem is a lot of times people...I worked in places where we had all our forms and everything was directed around atty, then we were required to go through the linear atty type process. Well, nobody did that.

Every company I worked for, nobody's actually done atty the way it's designed. They do cover all of those core areas, like, understanding the analysis, why are you doing the analysis, understanding your users and the objectives and all that. What are you doing to design the course? There's your brainstorming and all that. All that type of stuff is happening, it might not be happening in a linear process or strictly atty. In our workshops, we don't really tackle that type of production in detail, because a lot of people are just kind of getting started and I try to focus on other skills; given the limited time we have with them.

Connie: Mm-hm. I too, pretty much design around interactions on scenarios and real world skills. I think that that's a trend that's been happening and it's just going to continue, because people have so much that they need to learn. We really have to slim it down. I've been really trying to not let it be anything extraneous.

Tom: Yeah, see, in order...an advantage, in some ways, because when you're not...when you come in as a consultant...

Tom: They tend to listen to the consultants, right?

Connie: Well, because we're extra smart, yeah.

Tom: And because they're paying you. When you're the employee in the organization, they tend not to listen. I won't mention the company I worked at before, but when I was working at the company before, I would throw out ideas and people over me wouldn't listen.

Tom: Then I started with Articulate and a couple blog posts; then a friend of mine sent me this stuff saying, hey, look, these people that were over here are now passing your blog posts around. Somehow, it's important, right? They wouldn't listen to me when I worked there but when I left, it's like all of a sudden, because I had a blog, now it was important to them. That whole consultant angle is interesting too. When you're a consultant you get hired, they bring you in and they pay you money. Somebody's committed to that and they want to make sure everything is successful. A lot of times in the organization, the people building the

eLearning courses, they may not even be in that loop where the decisions about the performance consulting type decisions are made.

They tend to just be hired almost like admin-type eLearning developers where it's, we've made all these decisions; here's the content, go build a course. They're not always privy to the budgeting; they're not privy to crafting the right type of objectives and all of that, where a consultant might be steeped in that. That's one of my beefs too, is in our industry we'll go highlight...you go to these demo fests, which I actually enjoy; all these demo fests. When you look at all of the high-end eLearning stuff that's produced and the vendors who are doing that, and then they talk about...it's usually the vendors who talk about what real eLearning is or isn't. When they're going on about that, well yeah, if I had \$100,000 to build a course; or even \$50,000 to build a course, it would look a certain way and behave a certain way.

When I'm in an organization, especially going back to the \$50,000 or \$100,000, you've got some executive who's typically giving...or somebody who's giving a direct, or somebody who's giving you that money, right? So, they're committed to everything being successful. When I'm in the organization and, if I'm lucky and I have access to clip art...

Connie: Right.

Tom: And no money, then the type of course and the experience I can craft is going to be a lot different.

Connie: Mm-hmm, yeah. It's very frustrating for people when they're not given the support and the authority to make the right decisions. I definitely feel for them.

Tom: Yeah, when I was at Washington Mutual, I can talk about them because they went out of business. Shortly after I left, by the way...

Connie: Mm-hm, sure.

Tom: They went out of business. When I got there, they were kind of getting into eLearning and one of the things that was funny was they had one photo quality picture of a house that we were able to use for our courses. I was like, this is ridiculous; I need more than one image. I prototyped a course and I went out, back then they didn't have iStock; it was always, like, Getty Images or one of those sites. The images were \$40, \$50 a piece.

Connie: Right, for advertising.

Tom: I pulled all these images together to work with the course and so I had all these placeholder images. Some other person, who wasn't even in our group and

wasn't my manager in any way, went and replaced all my images and made this big deal about me going out buying images and that I should've gone through her group to get some images from some CD that she has somewhere on her desk. It was ridiculous. They ended up spending the \$100, \$150 they needed to on those images. We ended up having all these meetings and they probably spent \$2,000, \$3,000 to talk about how we couldn't buy a \$40 image.

Connie: Amazing.

Tom: Our course that was being delivered to thousands of people, it was crazy.

Connie: Crazy. It's very frustrating.

Tom: I think a lot of people deal with that and it kind of makes building your courses a challenge if you don't really have access to the assets or the creation of those assets.

Connie: Right. Things are definitely easier now, in terms of being able to find photos that you need at a reasonable price. It's not great though. I mean, I do get emails from people that said we have zero budget to make eLearning and that's not easy. That is not easy.

Tom: Right, and then you just have to learn to make due with what you've got.

Connie: Right, you put mustaches on women to make them look like men; things like that.

Tom: That's a good one; I'm going to be blogging on that.

Connie: I spent half my day sometimes covering up cleavage in Photoshop, because I can't find any images that are appropriate. Anyway, that's another story. One thing I wanted to ask you about is, there's a lot of research that shows that people don't retain a lot of information from training, in general. It could be standup, it could be eLearning; after the fact, weeks later. What kinds of things do you think we can do, instructional designers, can do about that?

Tom: I think a couple of things. One is, again, the application of the information. Probably the first thing is the relevance, again. I think if the content's relevant, when you go to learn something, you're able to place it in context to other things you already know.

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: Let's say I'm building eLearning courses and I want to start learning how to do something with video, for example. I have a reason to learn about video, or video production, there's a context; I'm framing it around other things I'm doing.

That's the ability to retain that; it's going to be there if it's relevant. There's some stickiness to that; the relevance and, kind of, tapping into existing understanding of things. Then the other part is the application. If you want to learn something, take the idea and then figure out how you're going to apply the idea. If you're building a program, here's information or here's the content, or whatever it is, it's relevant to what you're doing and now we're going to give you an opportunity to practice using this new information so that you can get the feedback that's good or bad; to make the adjustments so that you can continue to learn. Then braiding that through a series of events. We did a program, a few years back, where we built these auto alerts in Outlook so we could, kind of, pre-setup emails to send out to the trainees.

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: The emails were set up for them to process something. They were around some safety issues and disaster preparedness for the organization, so if the site shut down, what would you need to do to go get the site up and running; one of these emergency location situations. We have all this information but the odds are you're not going to have an earthquake or hurricane where you're business is closing down. That's pretty slim; it's hard to then to do ongoing training and having everyone up and running, right?

Connie: Right.

Tom: All the time. What we did is we kind of introduced them to the core concepts so they understood the importance of this and how the system works. Then, to kind of keep them abreast of things, or to simulate those disasters were also taking too much time from their real work. We set up these emails and the ideas were they'd be presented with some challenges and they'd have to process the challenge quickly. It might have been something simple, like, go locate a certain type of manual or what's the most recent change in this procedure. They have to go locate the information as if it was a disaster. Then, they had to report it back to somebody in the organization; then we tied it to some competition, they got candy bars and t-shirts and Starbucks cards. It's amazing what people will do for candy. You tell them to do something, they won't do it. You give them a fifty-cent candy bar and, low and behold, they're all standing in line waiting to do it. That spacing the learning experience and giving them opportunities to build on that over a period of time, I think, is really good. It's one of the things that I think a lot of organizations miss out on. I was reading something a few years ago about, like, 85% of the money spent on training is all spent at the front end. So, really, only about 15% of your resources then to do things at the back end, but what if you planned at the back end to have this space training opportunity? They could be simple, quick check eLearning modules if you wanted to deliver those electronically. They could even be simple things, like, email...prescheduled emails that we had done. Something to get

them to kind of think through and apply the information over a period of time. In that refresher type approach, I think is important as well.

Connie: I think that's really important too and, definitely, the research supports the basing of training. Also, just closing the loop, having people get back together online or in person and finding out what are the challenges now that you're applying it. Just as you continue to talk about it, it makes people retain it better.

Tom: Which is one of the neat things about where training is today versus a few years ago. If you thought about, well, let's close the loop; how do you get everybody together? A. You don't really need to worry about that; a lot of organizations are using things like Yammer and these internal social networking sites. It makes it a lot easier to do that.

Connie: Right. Which brings me to another question I wanted to ask; which is, what trends do you see in eLearning?

Tom: One is, obviously, mobile; it's big, right?

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: The fact that you could carry a computer in your pocket is pretty amazing. I think the ability to deliver information, using these mobile channels...I think, for the training folks, it changes our perspective a little. One is, mobile is not about delivering compliance training on a small screen.

Connie: Right, that would be torture.

Tom: Which is one of the things I find...because, you know, we're doing our beta for Studio '13 and then we've got...Storyline's got the mobile HTML5 and the iPad output. I get a lot of emails from people; I talk to people at conferences. It's like there's this mindset that I built this click and read course for the big screen and I want to take that exact same experience...or let's say it's even really highly interactive, right?

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: I want to take that exact same experience and put it on somebody's iPhone. You've just got to understand that, what you deliver on the mobile devices, it's not the same as what you would deliver for desktop. I think the challenge for eLearning, in the mobile space, is that understanding that mobile is probably not suited for compliance type training. Compliance training really is the bulk of what people are doing in the organizations when it comes to the training and eLearning. It'd be interesting to see the percentages but my guess is it's the majority of what people do as a route of compliance issues. Mobile delivery is probably not the place where you want to think compliance.

I think for mobile point of sale type content is, like, I'm doing something I need information at just the right time and I have quick access to it. I've kind of always got...in a sense, I've got this Lexicon, I've got this encyclopedia of content available to me to learn at the point of need. So, mobile is a trend. Years ago, video was really hard to produce and it was hard to deliver but that's all changed. I think the ability to quickly create videos and deliver those and get those out to people is definitely a trend. What's funny though is you watch a video, nobody complains about it being linear. You put the same information in ten slides and everybody complains about it being click and read.

Connie: Interesting.

Tom: The thing is, it's easy to get video together; there's that sense of personality that video gives you. Even if it's just a talking head video, if it's not two hours long. A quick, five-minute talking head video around a core idea, I think, people can tolerate that. I think the video is probably a big trend as well and it works well on all these mobile devices where, they get HTML5 working on twenty million different phones and each browser is different. The pain of just being able to deliver makes it very convenient. You lose some interactivity but you're talking about just in time information and maybe the interaction happens off that mobile device, in the real world. The delivery of the information, via video, is a lot more attractive than trying to build up these interactive HTML5 courses.

Connie: Yeah, it does seem as though mobile and the smart phone is most appropriate for performance support. Mobile on an iPad, you can probably get away with quite a bit more; I've seen your demos of courses on the iPad and they look pretty good.

Tom: To me, I look at it as everything is a screen. An iPad screen, to me, is like...would be your desktop, laptop; you've got the real estate. A mobile device, like a smart phone type device, you've got a different consideration. It's also about posture, right?

Connie: Exactly.

Tom: If you look at a cell phone versus looking at a tablet, you're not typically walking around with your tablet open, or your iPad. Although you do see that, people with their tablets taking photos but, generally, they're sitting down and interacting with the tablet in a different way than they are with their smartphones.

Connie: Right, it does seem a little bit different than when you're on your laptop or desktop too, though. I mean, I guess that's been proven; it's a little bit more laid back, when they call it lean back. It almost seems as though they could make a case for making your eLearning different on an iPad, too, than on a desktop.

Tom: Yeah, assuming that people want to sit at their tablets doing eLearning, being relaxed, right? I worked at a company once that, when the iPods came out, they did a pilot program and they put all this training on the iPod. It was all podcasts at that time but put all this training on the iPods and gave these iPods out to this pilot group. The industry was talking about how you've got this mobile training with iPod you can listen to them anywhere; get all this information. Then they went and audited then about thirty days, ninety days later and all they were doing was just listening to music. They loaded the iPod with their music and nobody actually...when you think of the mobile device, most people I know that have the smartphones, aren't getting the smartphones from their organization. They've got these other phones in their organization and then they've got the smartphones...are usually their own. There's that intrusion that the organization's now going to deliver their stuff on my phone. I've got to sit there and look at some course on my phone...

Connie: Right.

Tom: On my time. I think that, to me, is this challenge that exists. Maybe it's not as big of a challenge yet because there's this movement now to organizations allowing you to bring your own device and they'll connect your device to their services.

Connie: Mm-hm.

Tom: Somewhere that process, negotiating that, is you're intruding on my freedom. There's just something about that.

Connie: It does come down to freedom too because there's push...when an organization is pushing things on people, but when people are pulling information that they want to know and it's on your phone, that's good. I look things up all the time when I'm on my phone. Push versus pull.

Tom: When I was at WaMu, or Washington Mutual, it's funny, we were using Adobe Breeze or Mac Media Breeze, is what it was called at the time. Some executive got his hands on it and then realized, I can just take PowerPoints and convert them to Flash and make a course. Everyday we came in, there was, like, ten memos from him that should've been memos but were eLearning courses that he was tracking, because he could make these training courses. We were just being bombarded with that stuff, which is really, I think, a challenge with a lot of the rapid development you see that where, because we can make it and it's relatively easy and it's not that time consuming, let's make a bunch of stuff, right?

Connie: Right.

Tom: You kind of overwhelm people with all this basic, or bad, content that didn't...going back to what you were saying about with the PDF, maybe that

didn't need to be an eLearning course. Maybe it could've just been an email memo or it could've been a simple PDF. A lot of times we're just taking content that already exists on the organization's network and now what we want to do is make it into an eLearning course, but maybe we just need to train people on how to find the stuff on the network and not worry about pasting every ethics policy and calling it an eLearning course.

Connie: I totally agree. What kinds of things can we expect to see coming from Articulate in the next year or two?

Tom: We've got Studio '13 coming out and that should be coming out really, really soon; maybe it will be out by the time the podcast is published. We're kind of excited about that. One of the things I like, well I'm obviously an advocate about rapid eLearning and I work for Articulate; I like the simplicity of the tools. I like the fact that the tools empower people. We've made some interesting changes with Studio; the integration of the player. I used to call it the Franken course. When you're working with a PowerPoint to Flash tool, you're essentially leveraging PowerPoint's authoring environment to create a Flash movie. Then that Flash movie gets loaded into the player that Articulate provides, in Presenter at least.

Then you can insert Flash content; so, Quiz Maker and Engage are actually separate applications that have their own players, then you integrate those with your PowerPoint based content. Now you've got a little bit more complete type course. You can have your PowerPoint based, or your PowerPoint authored content, and then you can augment it with the quizzes, augment it with the pre-built in interactions. You kind of always get that Franken course look, where it looks like it was cobbled together because you're integrating these three different tools.

Connie: Right.

Tom: One of the big changes we've made is coming up with a single player and that's one of the reasons why it's taken us a while because we re-wrote that whole player structure and built it on the same player. Everything will look integrated, so when you put a quiz in your course or you're putting Engage in a course, it'll look like it belongs in the course.

Connie: Nice.

Tom: You have a lot more freedom with the tools; a lot more freedom with customizing the player. Also, the HTML5 capability and working with the iPad, that'll be in there. We're really excited; we've even got a surprise in there for people. I think people will actually like the surprise; I don't want to mention it now because I don't know where it will be in the process with the podcast but I think people will like it. Again, I manage our user Community and try to craft a good

experience there. We're really committed to people being successful using our tools and so I'm excited about what we'll be doing in the Community helping people.

We'll be doing some changes in the Community as well; I think the Community members will love and I think part of our obligation as a tool vendor, in the eLearning industry, is really to help push eLearning forward. My concern before I came on board with Articulate was, we're contributors to move things forward with the industry. That we're not just vendors of software, which obviously that's our bread and butter, but that we're also contributors to the industry and having an authoritative voice and helping people build good eLearning and getting past a lot of the obstacles people have in building their courses.

Some neat things coming now with the tools; we've got some other things coming up soon. We're working on Storyline 2, which is going to be pretty slick and then Studio '13. Then we'll be doing some changes in the Community that I think people will really dig.

Connie: That sounds pretty exciting and mysterious.

Tom: Yeah, so you'll need to stay tuned.

Connie: Oh, wow. Tom, I wanted to thank you so much for taking out time of your busy day and talking with us.

Tom: Well, thank you; I always enjoy it and I guess I'll be seeing you around at some of the conferences and stuff.

Connie: I hope you enjoyed this session. It's good to get the perspective of someone who is so immersed in our industry. You'll find the show notes at the elearningcoach.com/podcasts/11. If you're finding this podcast worthwhile, please leave a rating in iTunes and thanks for listening. I'll talk to you at the next session.