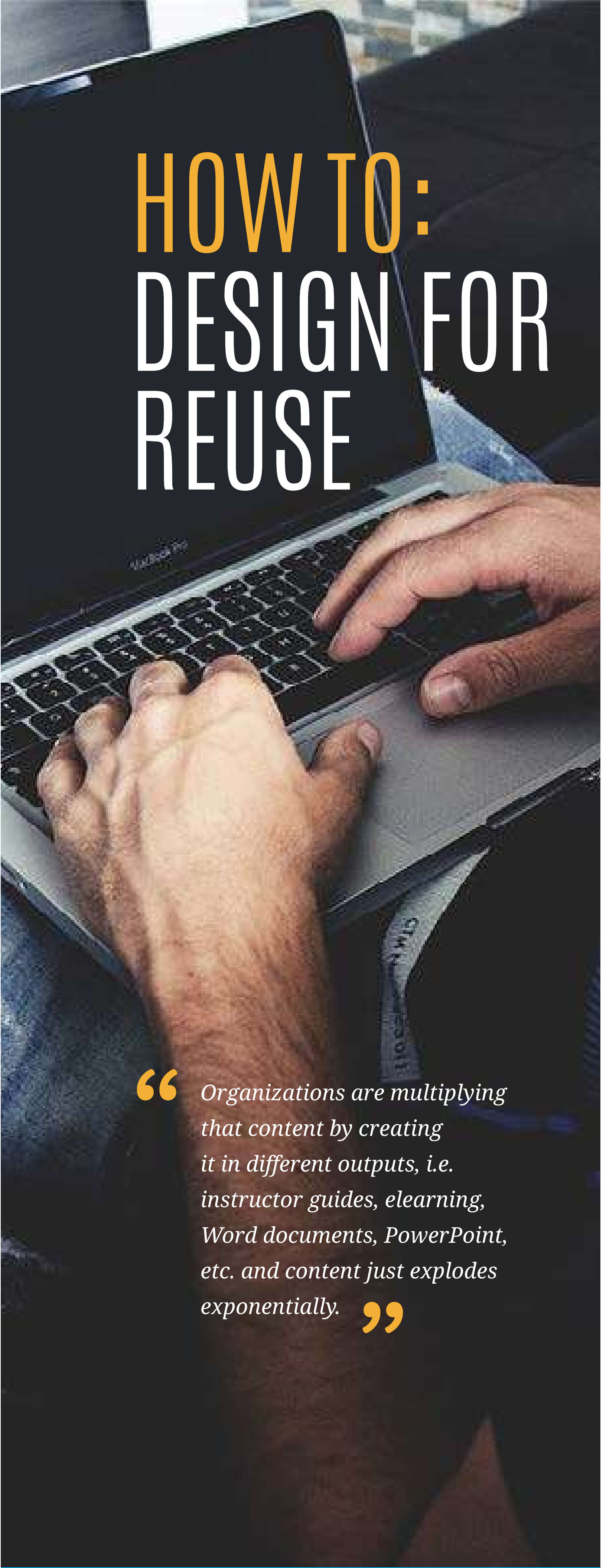

HOW TO: DESIGN FOR REUSE

> *"Organizations are multiplying that content by creating it in different outputs, i.e. instructor guides, elearning, Word documents, PowerPoint, etc. and content just explodes exponentially."*

Often there is a lack of consistency in learning organizations stemming from each unit with their own set of standards leading to a different learner experience and look & feel.

And then, organizations are multiplying that content by creating it in different outputs, i.e. instructor guides, elearning, Word documents, PowerPoint, etc. and content just explodes exponentially. And in order to use mobile, content developers need to break up content into smaller pieces and embed that in more places, making content difficult to maintain.

And then, you translate that content into 10 different languages. Congratulations – you are now part of the Content Overload Club! This is not a desirable state to be.

Reuse is, at its most basic form, taking content and using it elsewhere. The first step in this journey is to write structured content. This is the foundation that will support everything else.

WHY IS DESIGNING FOR REUSE IMPORTANT?

1. *Improves content quality by allowing more time spent on writing awesome content*
    - Write, review, approve once, use many times
    - Revise once, update everywhere (no more, "oops forgot that one")
    - Reduce production activities

2. *Increases speed to market/delivery*
    - Reduced amount of new content you need to create
    - Customized modules to support verticals/audiences

3. *Lowers production costs (for the same reasons it improves content quality!)*
    - Write once, use many times
    - Revise once, update everywhere
    - Reduce production activities

WHAT KINDS OF CONTENT CAN I REUSE?

Below is a model we came up with to show the ways content can be reused. So, starting with the bottom left quadrant, you might have content that is for one audience and only one format. So unless there was something created for another context that was useful in this instance, you might not have a lot to reuse. Then, on the bottom right quadrant, perhaps you have something like an instructor-led course, but it was designed for multiple audiences and this makes it a prime candidate for reuse. Chances are, at least half the content is applicable for every audience and then there is half that is unique to each.

Up to the top left section, you have one audience, but multiple formats that the audience consumes i.e. ILT, elearning, mobile. So you have the ability to share content between these different outputs. It may not be the same exact content but you can reuse parts of the content through all the outputs. And lastly, the “mother of all reuse” is the top right quadrant where we have multiple formats and multiple audiences.

OUTPUT FORMATS

3 MULTIPLE-FORMATS SINGLE-AUDIENCE	4 MULTIPLE-FORMATS MULTIPLE-AUDIENCES
1 SINGLE-FORMAT SINGLE-AUDIENCE	2 SINGLE-FORMAT MULTIPLE-AUDIENCES

Now that you are familiar with what reuse is, why it is important and what types of content you can reuse, let’s dive in to the nitty-gritty. How, exactly, do you design content for reuse? Let’s break this out into two phases.

PHASE ONE

CONTENT ANALYSIS; IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR REUSE

{ *Pre-requisite: Current listing of curriculum or curriculum plan* }

1 STEP ONE

Identify topics from source content

- For example:
  - Company overview
  - Role overview

2 STEP TWO

Identify learning elements

- For example:
  - Discussions
  - Video
  - Activities
  - Case Studies
  - Labs
  - Role-play

3 STEP THREE

Create a listing of the type of information the organization communicates through training to identify content chunks.

- For example:
  - Processes
  - Policies
  - Procedures

4 STEP FOUR

Distinguish when and how the content chunks you identified will be used.

- For example:
  - Processes - Describe the flow of actions and decisions points. Provide a top level reference to procedures and reference materials
  - Procedures - step action table to guide a set of tasks

5 STEP FIVE

Review source material to identify content chunks.

- Look for patterns and repetition:
  - Use a highlighter while reviewing existing content
  - Highlight areas of the content which match the content chunk descriptions
  - Try using a different color highlighter to differentiate different content chunks

6 STEP SIX

Name topics, elements and content chunks.

- Give each chunk a name which best describes the content within the chunk.
- For example:
    - Sales 101 (process)
    - How to enter an order (procedure)
    - Handling a customer billing inquiry (process)

7 STEP SEVEN

Identify reuse in quadrants 2 and 4 –a lot of hidden reuse potential here.

For example:

Name of topic/ content chunk	Type of content	*Roles*		
		Sales	Customer Service	Manager
Sales cycle	Topic	X		X
How to enter an order	Procedure	X	X	X
Handling a customer inquiry	Process	X	X	X

Note: Remember to focus on the content and not how the role uses the content. For example, if a customer service rep and a sales rep both need to enter an order using the same system, they follow the same steps. The steps don't change because of the role.

Result: Initial Content Map

PHASE TWO

PREPARE CONTENT FOR AUTHORING

1 STEP ONE

Organize source content into topics and content chunks

- For this step, break apart content chunks, identified in source documents, into separate groups.
- For example, all processes are together, all procedures are together, etc.
- Suggestions:
  - Add space between the content chunk and other content within the document
  - Cut the content chunk and paste it into a new document
  - Save the document using the name identified in Phase 1

2 STEP TWO

Conduct an initial editorial review of content for rewriting for reuse

- During this review, do the following:
  - Strip away any narrative or context within the content
  - Replace subjective language with objective language
    - For example, “You, I, we, they become “the X”
  - Remove location based language
    - For example, “before, after, page #, in the last lesson, etc.”
  - Break dense paragraphs into bullets
  - Revise bullet language to have parallel construction and length
  - Use Writing for Reuse: Writing principals as a guide when reviewing content

3 STEP THREE

Conduct a second editorial review of content for rewriting for reuse

- During this review, do the following:
  - Edit content to reduce wordy/lengthy descriptions
- Clarify descriptions and statements so that content reads clear and concise

4 STEP FOUR

Conduct a peer review of content

- Peer:
  - Read the content end-to-end
  - Comment on areas which require more than one reading to understand
  - Revise/edit flagged sections to make content easier to read
  - Flag sections that require SME guidance/feedback
    - This includes areas where more information is needed for context, or language revision requires SME input
  - Review for grammar
  - Edit the object to reduce distractions for the SME
- This helps the SME stay focused on providing a meaningful review and feedback of content

5 STEP FIVE

Prepare content for editorial review/approval

- Do the following prior to sending for review:
  - ➔ Provide editorial with content that contains clear callouts of where input is needed
  - ➔ Define the context of the review
    - Detail exactly what you need, and only what you need
- Note - When clearing comments, remember:
  - ➔ Maintain ownership of the content
  - ➔ Determine which edits are applicable and which to ignore
  - ➔ Learning owns the content

So there you have it. It seems like a lot of work up front, but the truth is you already do all this work every time you author a new piece of content. But putting in the effort up front to prepare content for reuse will save you time and money later on.

Curious about how others are re-using content from a single source and deploying to multiple devices for anytime, anywhere learning? Read this case study from PSCU.