Chapter I
Commodity, Firmness, and Delight: *Four* Modes of Instructional Design Practice

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This chapter is interactive, with surveys and reflective examinations of the reader's own work in instructional design. It examines instructional design using four professional models: manufacturer, engineer, architect and artist to help develop a broader understanding of the process of design. The values of the instructional design are also challenged, with the chapter examining the balance between utility and aesthetics, function and form. It concludes with a call for the instructional designer to work more as an artist, and offers tactics to encourage that change.

INTRODUCTION

How do *you* solve an instructional design problem? Do you attempt to craft a solution based on the unique demands of each problem and the application of well researched instructional strategies? Or do you build upon an existing model, one that has worked many times before, selecting from solutions developed for a range of previous projects?

Your work is directly connected to your conceptualization of your role within the field of instructional design. And that conception includes assumptions and biases about processes, theories, and products. In the course of this chapter we will ask you to re-conceptualize your professional practice as an instructional designer and to recognize the roles of instructional manufacturer, instructional engineer, instructional architect, and instructional artist. We will describe how the working ethos of each shapes their practice.

What then, would happen if you were an *instructional artist?* As an instructional artist, you might be encouraged to create fundamentally different designs and work in a completely different manner. You might begin from an idea, engaging and desirable, but unconnected with learning, only later to apply it to instruction. It might work; it might not; but the application would be entirely different. We can see that the perspective through which we view ourselves biases how we understand and address problems.

Your Balance in Design

The following survey is intended to stimulate personal reflection and discussion of the ideas included in this chapter. Participating in the survey will help you to engage with the article, to stimulate understanding of the concepts presented, and to reflect on your personal practice as an instructional designer. The survey was built from the characteristics which will be explored in this chapter, and will focus on the Vitruvian

Table 1. Survey

Q1	**Are you a teacher or an artist?**		Teacher ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Artist	
Q2	**Which is more important: a functionally useful product or a stable product?**		Functionally useful ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Stable	
Q3	**Should media be used as tools or content providers?**		Content providers ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Tools	
Q4	**Which is more important: pedagogical soundness or innovation?**		Pedagogically sound ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Innovative	
Q5	**Which is more important: software usability or utility?**		Usability ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Utility	
Q6	**Which is more important: software stability or visual richness?**		Stability ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Visual richness	
Q7	**Should designs be easy to use or motivating to the learner?**		Easy to use ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Motivating	
Q8	**Which is more important: functional capability or learner motivation?**		Functional capability ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Motivation	
Q9	**Should people or design experiences be more central in ID?**		People ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Design Experiences	
Q10	**Which is more important: pedagogical soundness or efficiency?**		Pedagogical soundness ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Efficiency	
Q11	**Should products or experiences be more central in ID?**		ID Products ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ ID Experiences	

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