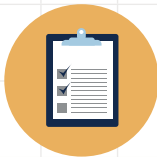# Words and Wisdom

Planning your project with MEDIA

Before you get started…

It's easy to get caught up in the fun and excitement of creating new materials. Before you go too far down that path, however, spend some time considering the questions below. Your answers will help focus the development effort and will form a strong foundation for moving forward.
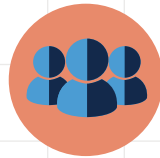
What are your learning objectives?

What do users already know about the topic?

What about engagement?

When you close your eyes and dream about this project, what does it look like?

Who are the key stakeholders?

What do the users think?

When do you need it?

Do you have some free time?

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What are your learning objectives? This topic was mentioned on a different one-pager, but duplication here is okay because this point truly is important. Learning objectives determine what's included—and equally importantly, what's excluded—from your materials. Test questions (or other assessments) should be directly linked to learning objectives. So, at the risk of being repetitive, learning objectives truly are critical to the development process. It's worth spending some time defining them.

What do users already know about the topic? What prior knowledge do users bring to the conversation? According to learning expert Tom Angelo, "The single thing that best predicts learning outcomes is what a student already knows. Prior knowledge is the foundation of what happens next." Instructional materials should meet users where they are and then take them to new levels.

What about engagement? Giving users an opportunity to work with content improves learning outcomes. Do you have ideas for learning activities, or are you looking for suggestions? We can help. We're also good at designing materials that are visually appealing, easy to use, and easy to "digest." (Small bites of instruction are usually better than large gulps!)

When you close your eyes and dream about this project, what does it look like? You may say vyou don't know—but deep down, you probably do. Perhaps unbeknownst to you, you've made assumptions about how your materials will look and behave. Take a minute to identify those assumptions and then share them with us.

Who are the key stakeholders? Who's got a say in the finished product? It's important to identify all stakeholders—both "official" and "unofficial"—at the outset of a project. It's equally important to have key players at the table at the right time. No one wants to create a product that immediately needs revision because someone important wasn't consulted at the right time.

What do the users think? Once we release the materials to you for review, be sure to ask users for their opinions, too. They're the ones who will be tasked with learning the material, and they almost always have valuable insights and suggestions regarding improvements.

When do you need it? Users are typically given one week before class to review materials. Two rounds of internal testing/quality assurance/revisions are generally built into our timelines. This means that the product you need on September 1 might need to be completed by July 15. It's important to fully flesh out—and understand—the development timeline from the outset of a project.

Do you have some free time? Creating things—especially good things—takes time, so plan on hanging out with us during the design and development of your instructional materials. The more time we can spend together brainstorming ideas, the better the final product will be.