

# Instructional Design at a Telecommunications Firm

A Report on My Internship at ViaSat, Inc

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*The following is a synopsis of my summer internship at ViaSat, Inc. This report includes my past experiences, present results and future possibilities. For more details about the internship timeline, please refer to my weekly log.)*

In April of 2016, I was offered an instructional design (ID) summer internship at the Denver-area office of ViaSat, Inc., a satellite broadband services and technology company. The position would give me an opportunity to learn the capabilities of eLearning development tools in a corporate training environment. In addition, the internship would present a situation to collaborate with another ID intern, to gather information from subject-matter experts (SMEs), to create learning content (i.e. storyboards, PowerPoint presentations), and to develop graphic design standards.

## Goals

Prior to accepting the internship, I spoke with my potential ViaSat department director and ID lead. After that conversation, I discovered I would not only be designing and developing high-quality training modules using Articulate Storyline, but also contributing my academic knowledge and offering fresh perspectives to employee training, or onboarding, courses. In addition, I would be collaborating with the other ID intern to achieve these goals. All of this would happen over a 12-week period that would include intern collaborating and socializing events such as company tech talks, Denver-area outings, and a hackathon at the corporate headquarters in Carlsbad, California. I accepted the position and began work on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

## Learning audience

My fellow ID intern, Jasmine, and I were assigned to the Technical Operations (TO) department of the Denver ViaSat office. After consulting with our ID and technical leads, we concluded that our learning audience would be newly hired TO staff working in the Network Operations Center (NOC). Since the NOC staff worked different days and shifts, creating simple online training modules would offer flexibility in training schedules. Many of the newly hired NOC staff would

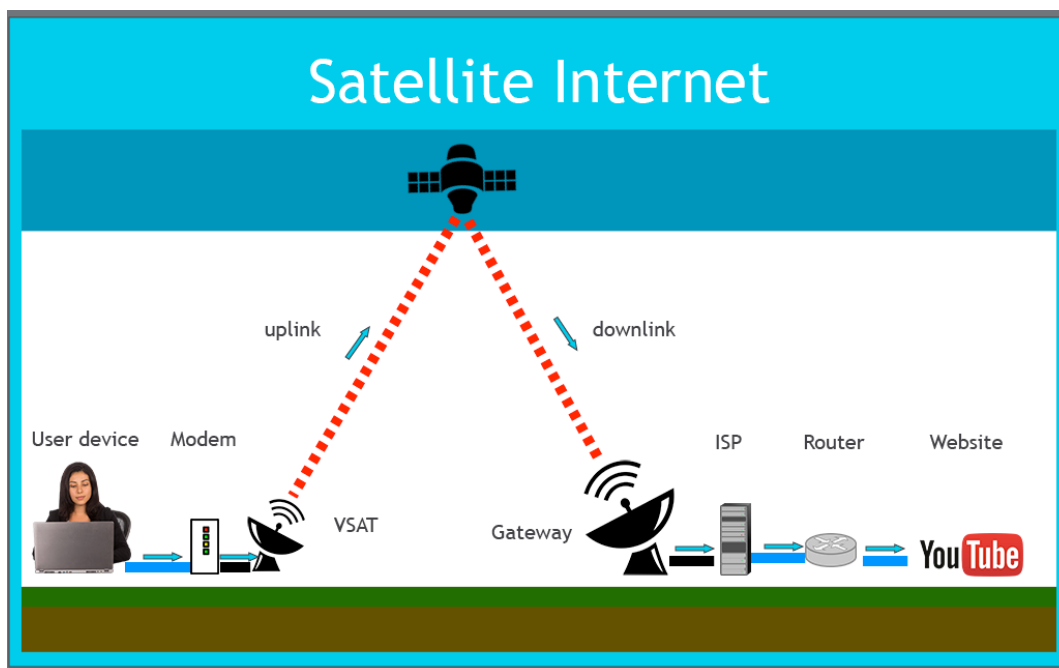
have some network operations experience, so it was important to focus on relevant information regarding ViaSat procedures and equipment.

### Proposed learning activities

From the beginning, Jasmine and I planned to design and develop up to three training modules incorporating SME-approved content, audiovisual elements (narration, video, images, music, etc.), and quiz assessments.

- The first module would cover an overview of satellite communication. We spent several days in classroom sessions with our technical lead learning topics such as electromagnetic wave characteristics, the radio spectrum, frequency modulation, and satellite orbits. In addition, we reviewed previous Microsoft PowerPoint presentations for technical details as well as for visual ideas. Our first draft of information came in the form of a Microsoft Word document. After a review by our technical lead, we created a PowerPoint presentation to be reviewed by the SMEs. After getting their feedback, we imported the PowerPoint content into an Articulate Storyline format complete with a 10-question assessment. This final module would be reviewed by our ID and technical leads, the department director, and all the SMEs for feedback on graphic design, equipment terminology, and assessment value. Below is a similar Adobe Captivate reproduction of a page that would have been included in the module:

*(Please note: pages of the original Articulate Storyline module could not be shown due to proprietary laws)*



- The second module would cover the operation of ViaSat proprietary equipment in ground stations. In addition to the information gathering methods and approval process conducted in the first module, Jasmine and I were granted a tour of the local ViaSat ground station, also known as a “Gateway.” We were allowed permission to photograph ViaSat-designed equipment that would later be used as an interactive element in the Articulate Storyline module. In addition, we created a number of animated GIFs using GIMP, an open-source graphic editor to illustrate the signal flow of data within the Gateway. At times, this module proved to be a challenge in terms of learning material from the SME, but we ultimately understood the emotional intelligence factor of “connecting with that stakeholder when you speak his or her language” (Mersino, 2013, p.135).
- The third module would be an overview of Splunk, an operational intelligence platform. Based upon the feedback from the SME, we decided that a number of brief screen-capture videos would help orient the NOC staff. Jasmine and I organized a voice-over recording session, with a talented co-worker, to compliment the video. I edited the audio using Audacity and Jasmine edited the video using Blender, an open-source video editor. In addition, Jasmine and I would be collaborating with two other interns (in picture below) to create a unique project during a 30-hour period at the ViaSat Hackathon in July. As a group, we decided to create a website designed to assist interns in finding housing and social opportunities upon accepting an internship in a new city. My contribution included finding public domain and Creative Commons images on web sites such as Pixabay and Google Images.



## Methods for assessing success

In terms of our professional development, Jasmine and I would provide verbal and written updates of projects at Kanban meetings with our department colleagues as well as weekly Sprint meetings with our department director. As the internship progressed, Trello platforms were incorporated into the department meetings.

In terms of our project development, the SMEs, the ID and technical leads would review our work to ensure that the modules would include interactive components, effective assessments, relevant learning objectives, and adherence to copyright laws. At the end of the internship, Jasmine and I would not only review our modules for Section 508 compliance, but also other modules created within the company Moodle platform.

In terms of our Hackathon success, our team, known as “Ka and the Sunshine Band”, would be judged by ViaSat senior project leaders during a 2-hour “Show and Tell” presentation on the last day of the event. Also, our team presented our project to the Denver office department heads and fellow interns after we returned to the office.

## Outcomes

Overall, the feedback Jasmine and I received from the department director, ID and technical leads, and SMEs was very positive. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, we gave a presentation to a number of stakeholders involved in the design and development of the first two modules. A few of the SMEs recommended some adjustments to the Storyline projects, but they were impressed by what we had accomplished to that point. During this meeting, I realized the significance of what Anthony Mersino (2013) called “social awareness” where Jasmine and I were able to gauge “the organization and political climate” (p.99). Since most material discussed was proprietary information, there was not a possibility of sharing the presentation with my UC-Denver internship coordinator as previously planned.

Similarly, our Hackathon team received positive feedback during our “Show and Tell” presentation in Carlsbad on July 18th. Various senior department heads asked questions regarding project management, marketing possibilities, and development of our website. Our team came in tied for 3rd, but the margin of victory between our team and the winning team was less than one tenth of a percent. We gave a brief presentation upon our return back to the Denver office.

## Conclusions and Reflections

My instructional design internship at ViaSat, Inc. proved to be a rewarding experience. In addition to learning various eLearning tools such as Articulate Storyline and Moodle, I broadened my project management experience by collaborating with talented individuals from a variety of backgrounds. I decided to expand upon some of the things I learned in a series of blogs entitled, "Reflections of a Middle-Aged Intern."

There were some instances where I felt overwhelmed by the subject matter as well as the project scope, but I was very fortunate to have people around me who were willing to answer my questions as well as give me positive feedback for my accomplishments.

### Next steps

I hope to maintain my professional relationships with the people I have worked with at ViaSat through social media sites such as LinkedIn. Already, Jasmine and I have given each other positive recommendations on our profiles. In addition, both my former department director, ID lead, and technical lead have offered to be professional references for any future employment. In addition, I plan to utilize my internship experience for any possible instructional design opportunities down the road.

## References

Mersino, A. (2013). *Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers*. New York, NY: American Management Association.