

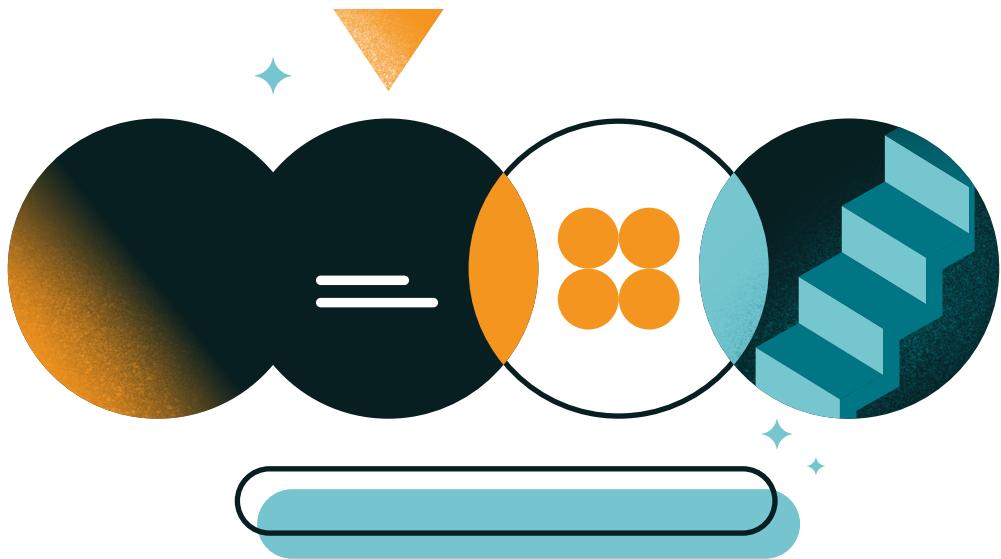
A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

How to Create an Instructional Design Portfolio That Makes You Shine



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Introduction

Your work helps people learn, grow, and succeed. But when it comes to landing your next instructional design role, your impact isn't always obvious on a résumé.

A portfolio takes your expertise beyond résumé bullet points and shows it in context. It turns abstract skills into tangible evidence and demonstrates what you can do.

So how do you build a portfolio that gets results? This guide walks you through creating a professional showcase focused on strategy, presentation, and impact to demonstrate your value. Let's build the portfolio that lands you the role.

Why You Need an Instructional Design Portfolio

There are three key reasons every instructional designer should have a professional portfolio:

Showcase Your Skills

An effective portfolio does what a résumé cannot: it shows your work in action. A résumé can only describe your skills, but a portfolio demonstrates them by allowing stakeholders to see your problem-solving, your design process, and the real impact of your learning solutions.

It turns your experience into clear evidence of your abilities.

Impress employers and attract clients

Potential employers and clients need to trust that you can deliver. Your portfolio provides the proof. It serves as a central place to showcase your capabilities, allowing them to assess your style, scope, and the quality of your work with confidence.

Identify Your Growth Path

Curating your best work is a powerful exercise in professional reflection. It helps you see what you excel at, where you've improved, and which skills need sharpening. By analyzing your own progression and drawing inspiration from others, you can more intentionally steer your career toward projects and roles that help you grow into the designer you want to be.



Examples of Good Instructional Design Portfolios

The best way to understand a great instructional design portfolio is to see one. Below are curated examples that illustrate different formats and styles, from template-based solutions like iSpring Cloud AI and WordPress to fully custom designed sites.

Anna Poli's instructional design portfolio captivates with its intuitive and visually appealing design. Visitors can quickly find everything they need to see, thanks to its well-organized layout. Anna's expertise shines through concise project descriptions, making it easy for potential clients to grasp her capabilities at a glance. Her portfolio impresses with its seamless user experience and showcases Anna as a top choice for instructional design needs.

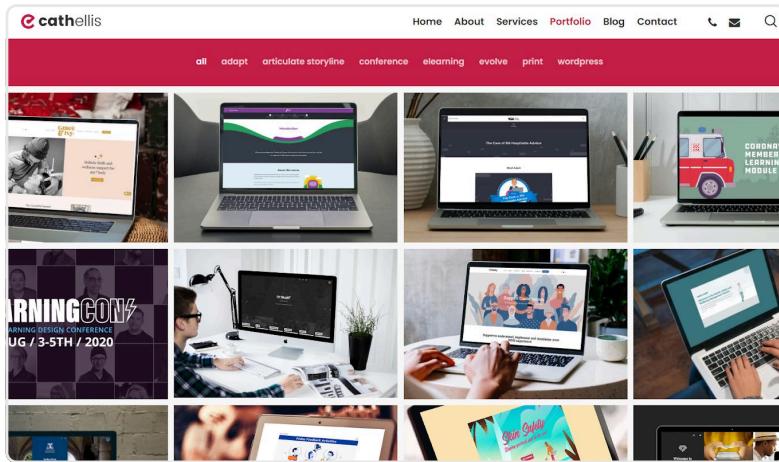
Hi, I'm David.

I design engaging and effective learning experiences that look great and solve business problems.



David Leisey's instructional design portfolio is an impressive showcase of expertise, creativity, and versatility. With a visually appealing design, diverse projects, and measurable outcomes, it communicates his skills effectively. This user-friendly portfolio is a valuable resource for those seeking a talented instructional designer.

Amanda Nguen's instructional design portfolio stands out for its clean design, well-organized project pages, and clear presentation of results. It shows Amanda's expertise, her ability to apply a range of instructional strategies, and her focus on creating learning experiences that are meaningful and effective.



Cath Ellis has given a lovely modern look and feel to her portfolio and displays her instructional design projects by technology type. She also uses easily recognizable icons and navigation that helps one feel comfortable when looking at her examples or moving around in her portfolio.



Shalini Mathias has a really interesting portfolio that was built with the Prezi presentation software! Both the outline and the presentation are available. While Prezi isn't as popular as it once was, this is a great way to demonstrate both knowledge and skill in different types of learning technologies.



4 Steps to Build an Instructional Design Portfolio from Scratch

Now that you've seen what's possible, it's time to build your own standout portfolio. This four-step framework will guide you from initial planning to a polished, shareable showcase of your work.

Step 1: Define your personal brand

The first thing to consider is the content approach, or how viewers will see you and your brand with your display.

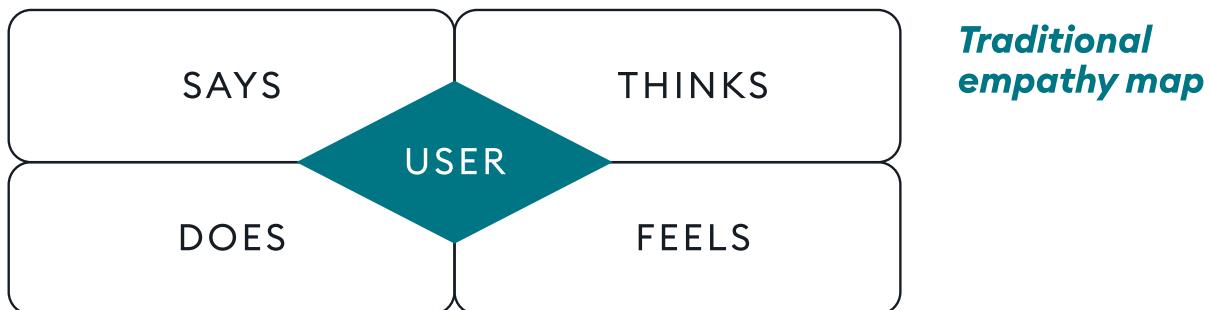
Ask yourself why you are building this display of your ID talent and what you want it to say about yourself and your work.

Take a look at your online presence from an external perspective. **Build a persona for your social media presence.** Is it inconsistent, with your personal and professional worlds mashed together? This is alright if that's what you want. But if it's not, now is the time to consider what you want your online persona to be and start to shape your portfolio to reflect that.

Who are you building this portfolio for: employers, grad school, or potential clients? **Define the persona of your ideal viewer.**

Try different views of your portfolio tailored to the groups that you want to attract to view your work. If you haven't seen one before, use an empathy map.

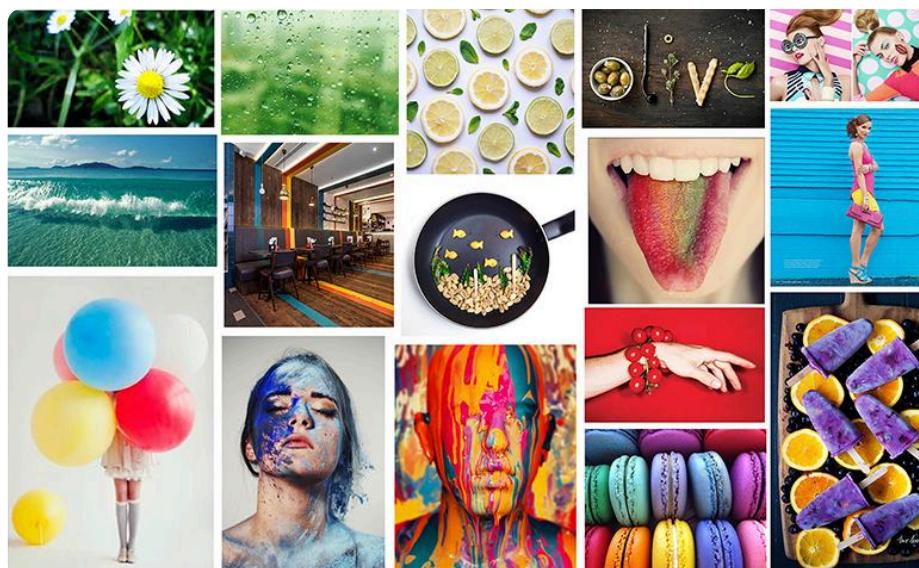
An empathy map is a picture of your client, audience, or employer. It adopts an outsider's view (a view that's empathetic to the situation and environment of the portfolio's viewer). It makes a list of what your viewer will be exposed to in their current circumstances, what they know about ID, what their own work environment confronts them with, what they are hearing from their bosses, clients, and employees, and other things that allow you to see your portfolio from someone else's perspective.



Build a mood board to capture the aesthetic you want to project.

Collect colors, layout ideas, and imagery that feel authentic to your brand. This will serve as your creative blueprint when selecting a platform or template.

Here's an example:



If you've been working in a corporate environment with strict branding guidelines, you've seen examples of the company's mood board.

The collection of colors, fonts, images, layouts, and language styles should be consistent and reflect the persona you are trying to promote (which, ultimately, should be you).

Assembling a mood board will help you identify the style and brand you want to create for yourself. Use it when looking at the templates or sites that you will choose to set up your portfolio.

Step 2: Assemble the content for your portfolio

Are you aiming to get a new job, take on new clients, or expand your professional network and reputation? To accomplish any of this, you'll first need to consider the content you have and prepare eLearning samples to include that.

Begin gathering your work

Collect all the work that you want to represent in your portfolio and categorize it.

If you have a very large portfolio or have multiple potential types of viewers, you may want to categorize against a grid such as type of client vs. modality, industry vs. timeline, client vs. budget. It's your call to determine how to make your samples super easy to use.

- If you have more offline than online samples, you can convert your face-to-face PowerPoint and workbook samples to HTML5 format if you prefer (using authoring tools like [iSpring Suite](#)), or you can post thumbnails of your work.
- If you have work that is restricted by an NDA or can't be used due to a contract, you can still take sample slides that are representative of your work and remove identifying marks, names, or other elements.

There must certainly be some work you've done that isn't entirely restricted by an NDA. If there isn't, you'll need to make some generic samples for display and mention that they represent the work you did for the employer.

- If you only contributed part of the design, writing, or coding for the project:

That's okay! You will need to explain how you collaborated, what you contributed, and how it worked out. Just don't misrepresent others' work as your own.

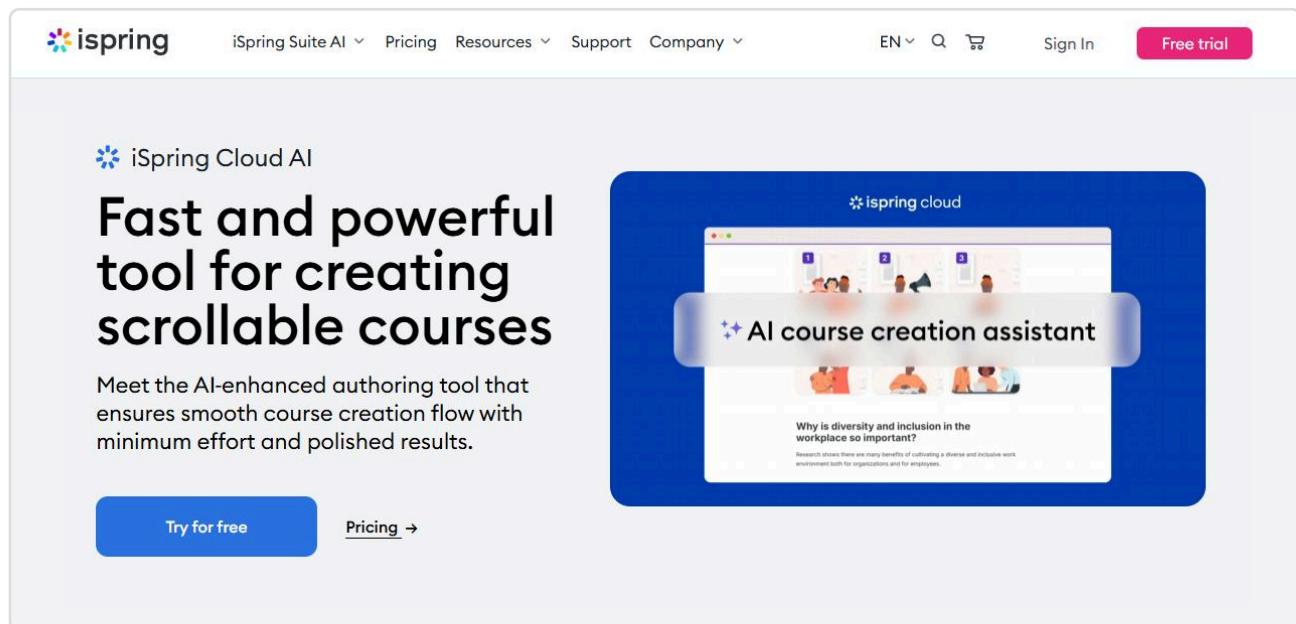
Tell the story of each sample

- Each of your samples should have information that's relevant to your audience (remember your audience personas and write for them!). In some cases, you will want to outline your contribution, tools used, context for the development (the intended audience and time period), and the outcome.
- Your samples should tell the story of how you have used a variety of ways to solve problems with design, accessibility, client management, or something that demonstrates not only your technical proficiency but also your style, your ability to manage or participate in collaborative work, and your overall professionalism.
- If you are grouping your projects by industry (e.g., healthcare, defense, and banking) consider an opening paragraph before the samples summarizing your experience in the industry, including your role titles, level of authority or influence, and overall length of time in the industry. Your potential employer in that industry will appreciate your relating to them specifically.

Step 3: Create and optimize your portfolio

Now it's time to put your portfolio online. Even without technical experience, you can create a professional site by choosing a platform that fits your needs. Consider your primary goal: showcasing interactive courses, building a versatile business website, or demonstrating technical skills. Here are the main options.

1. All-in-one eLearning platforms

The screenshot shows the homepage of iSpring Cloud AI. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the iSpring logo, 'iSpring Suite AI', 'Pricing', 'Resources', 'Support', 'Company', a language selector 'EN', a search icon, a shopping cart icon, 'Sign In', and a 'Free trial' button. Below the navigation, the main heading 'iSpring Cloud AI' is displayed with the subtext 'Fast and powerful tool for creating scrollable courses'. A brief description follows: 'Meet the AI-enhanced authoring tool that ensures smooth course creation flow with minimum effort and polished results.' To the right, there's a large image of a computer screen showing the iSpring Cloud interface with a 'AI course creation assistant' feature. At the bottom of the page are two buttons: 'Try for free' and 'Pricing →'.

Choose this option if your main goal is to showcase interactive courseware with zero technical hassle. [iSpring Cloud AI](#) is a prime example, offering an integrated portfolio builder specifically for instructional designers.

Best For:

Practicing instructional designers and eLearning developers who need to display real SCORM or xAPI courses how they're meant to be experienced.

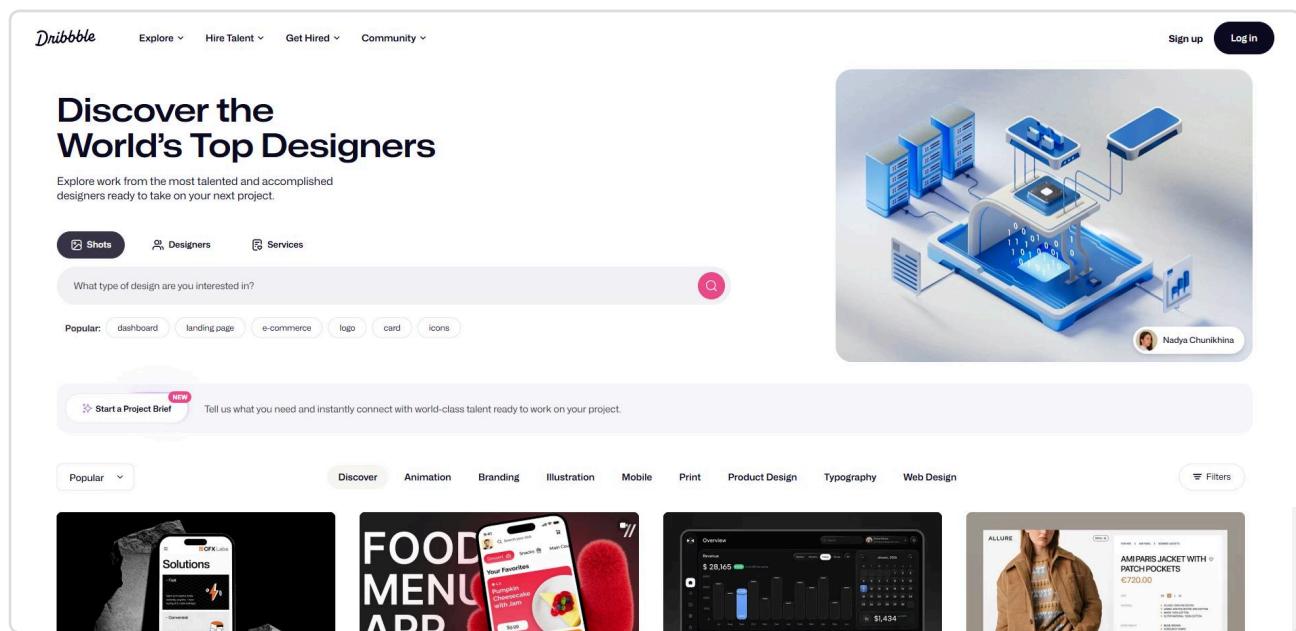
How it Works:

iSpring Cloud AI is an online platform built specifically for the eLearning workflow. Its integrated portfolio builder allows you to upload projects directly from your iSpring Suite AI workspace.

Key Advantages:

- **Authentic Display:** Upload and embed fully interactive SCORM courses.
- **Purpose-Built:** The template is tailored for IDs, highlighting your bio, tools, and project case studies.
- **Unified Workflow:** If you use iSpring Suite AI, your portfolio is included. You can build, host, and share it from one platform without needing separate domains or widgets.
- **AI-Enhanced:** AI tools help with layout, formatting, and descriptions, speeding up creation.

2. Visual galleries and simple portfolio sites



Choose this option if your main goal is to create a quick, visually-focused gallery. Platforms like [Adobe Portfolio](#), [Dribbble](#), and [Behance](#) are designed for this purpose.

Best For:

Design-focused IDs who prioritize aesthetics and speed, and whose work is best shown through images, slides, or video walkthroughs.

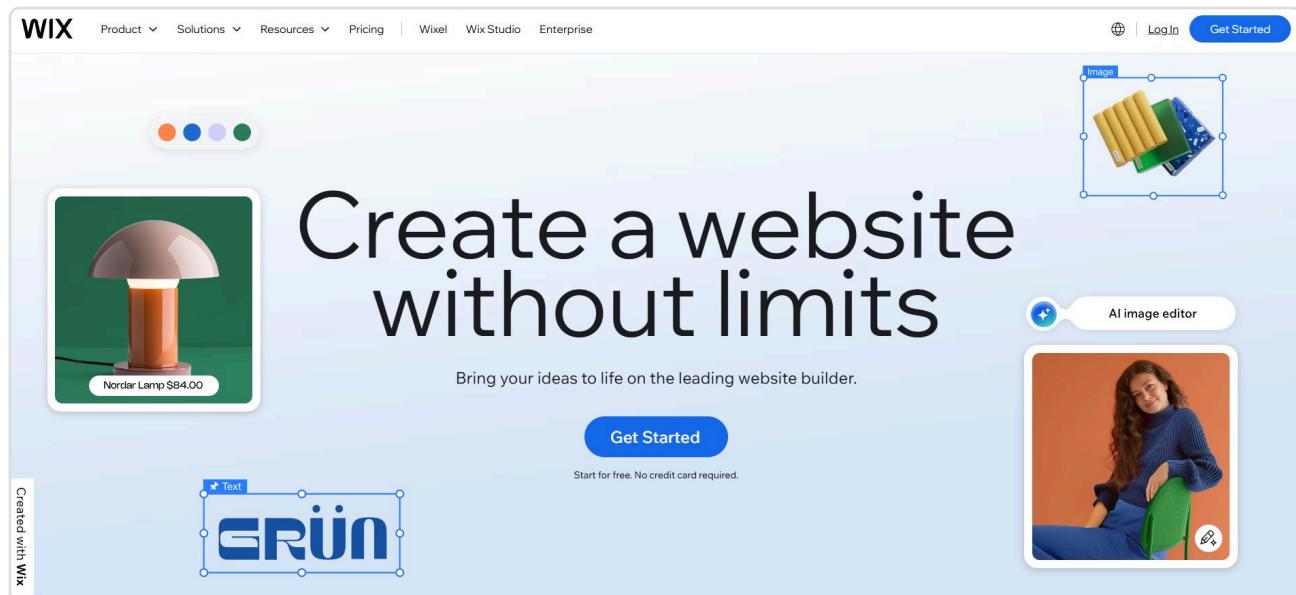
How it Works:

These are user-friendly, template-driven services or community platforms where you create a profile or a simple site.

Key Considerations:

- **Ease vs Capability:** These platforms are easy to set up and require no coding, but they offer limited customization. They are not full website builders.
- **Content limitations:** Platforms like Behance and Dribbble are display galleries, not standalone websites. They are excellent for exposure, but they can't host interactive eLearning modules. Showing anything beyond static images often requires paid upgrades.

3. General website builders



Choose this option if your main goal is to build a complete professional website with a blog, contact forms, and a portfolio. Tools like [Wix](#) and [Squarespace](#) offer the versatility to create this kind of multipage site.

Best For:

Freelancers and consultants who want their site to serve as a central business hub.

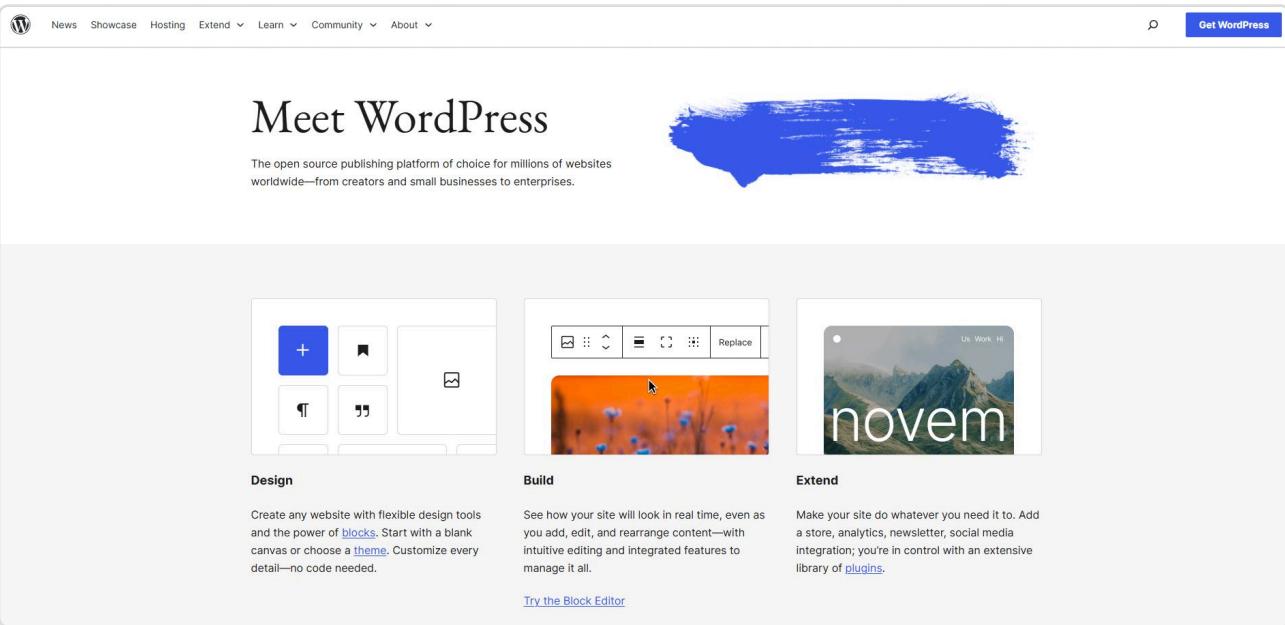
How it Works:

These powerful platforms offer drag-and-drop editors, hundreds of design templates, and built-in widgets for various business needs.

Key Considerations:

- **Versatility:** These platforms provide the most design flexibility and business features without requiring coding.
- **Interactive content:** Hosting interactive SCORM packages usually requires paid plans, third-party plugins, or workarounds like embedding content from another service.

4. Self-hosted and custom-coded websites



The screenshot shows the official WordPress website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for News, Showcase, Hosting, Extend, Learn, Community, and About. On the right, there's a search icon and a 'Get WordPress' button. The main content area features a large heading 'Meet WordPress' with a subtext: 'The open source publishing platform of choice for millions of websites worldwide—from creators and small businesses to enterprises.' Below this is a large blue brushstroke graphic. The page is divided into three main sections: 'Design' (with an image of a block editor interface), 'Build' (with an image of a live preview of a website), and 'Extend' (with an image of a plugin interface). Each section has a brief description and a 'Try the Block Editor' button.

Choose this option if your main goal is to demonstrate advanced technical skill and maintain total control.

Best For:

Freelancers and consultants who want their site to serve as a central business hub.

How it Works:

This approach involves building a website from the ground up or using a self-hosted content management system, such as [WordPress.org](https://wordpress.org/), on your own web hosting.

Key Considerations:

- **Maximum control:** You own all design, functionality, and data. You can implement any feature needed to display your work.
- **Technical responsibility:** This option requires the most technical knowledge to set up, secure, and maintain. It involves more than managing HTML and typically includes maintaining a full CMS.

How to Build a Portfolio with iSpring Cloud AI

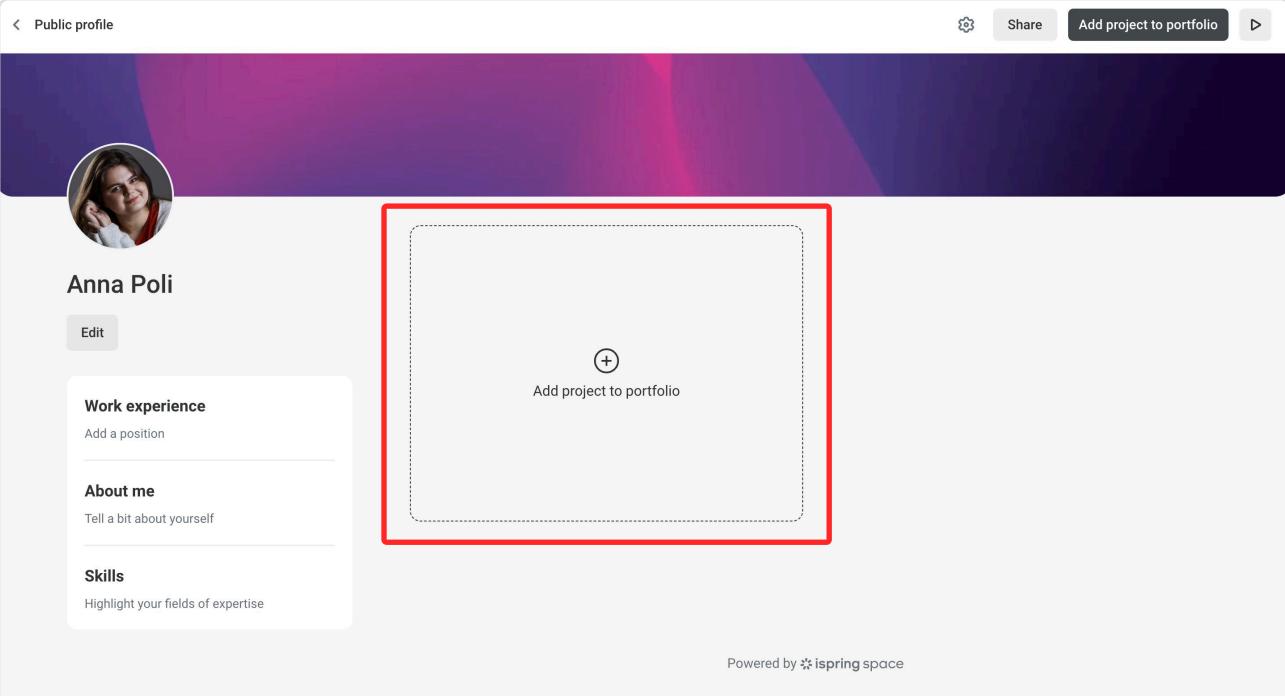
iSpring Cloud AI is the easiest and fastest way to build an impressive ID portfolio from scratch. If all of your projects are ready, it will take you no more than half an hour (the first 25 minutes of which are spent brainstorming a witty bio). Check out the entire process:

1. Upload the projects you want to show in your portfolio to iSpring Cloud AI and go to your Cloud account.

Please note: You'll need an iSpring Suite AI subscription. If you don't have it yet, you can [download a 14-day free trial](#).

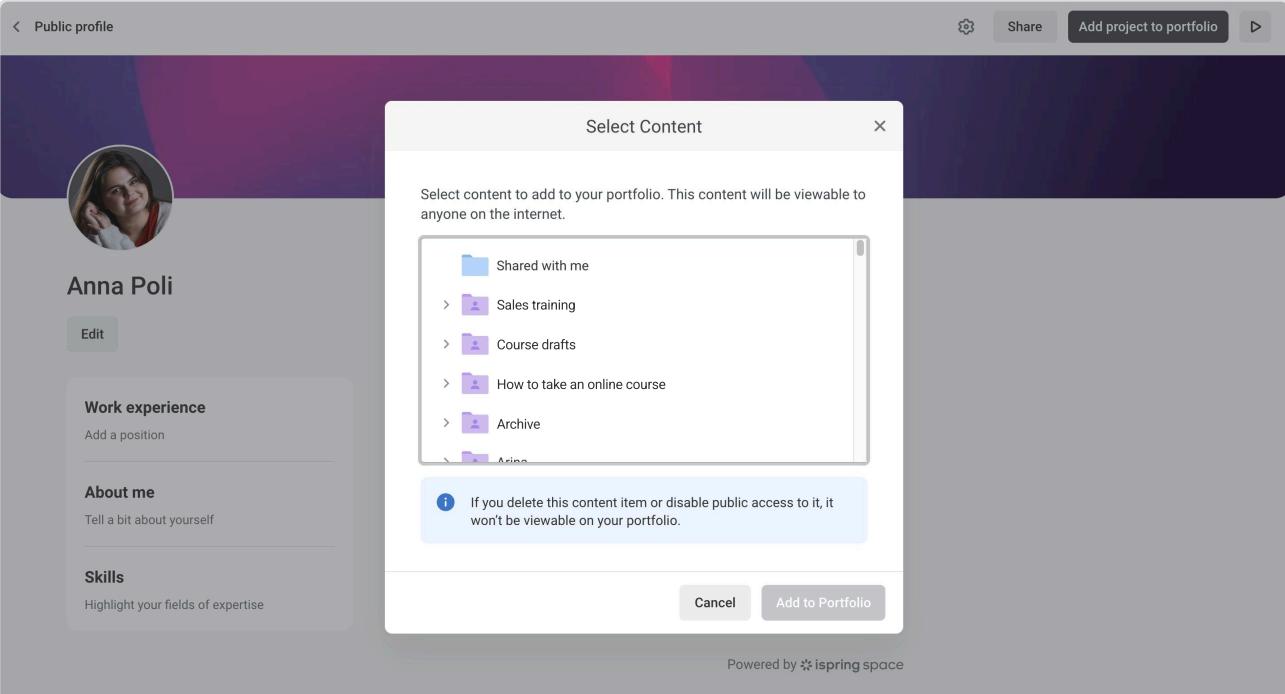
2. Click on **Portfolio**.

3. Click on the **Add Project** field.



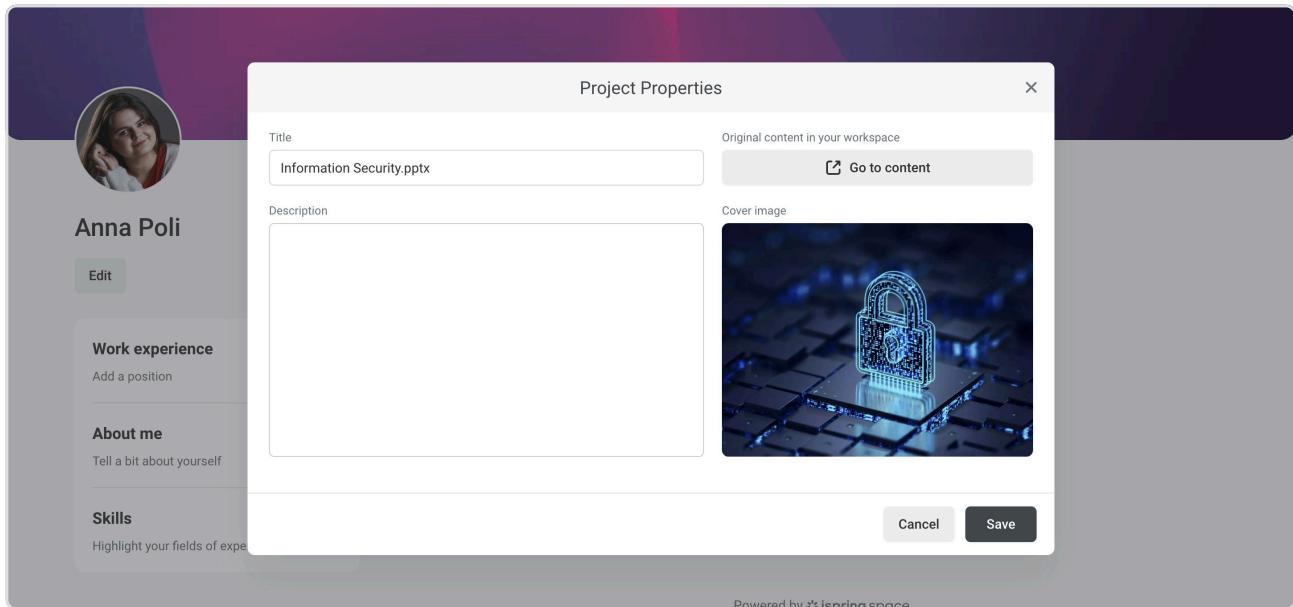
The screenshot shows a public profile page for 'Anna Poli'. The top navigation bar includes 'Public profile', 'Share', and 'Add project to portfolio'. Below the profile picture, the name 'Anna Poli' is displayed with an 'Edit' button. On the left, there are sections for 'Work experience', 'About me', and 'Skills'. The 'Add project to portfolio' button is located in the center-right area, enclosed in a red box. The page is powered by 'ispring space'.

4. Select the project you want to add, and click **Select**.



The screenshot shows the 'Select Content' dialog box over a public profile page for 'Anna Poli'. The dialog box title is 'Select Content' and it contains a message: 'Select content to add to your portfolio. This content will be viewable to anyone on the internet.' Below this is a list of items: 'Shared with me', 'Sales training', 'Course drafts', 'How to take an online course', 'Archive', and 'Archive'. A warning message at the bottom states: 'If you delete this content item or disable public access to it, it won't be viewable on your portfolio.' At the bottom of the dialog are 'Cancel' and 'Add to Portfolio' buttons. The page is powered by 'ispring space'.

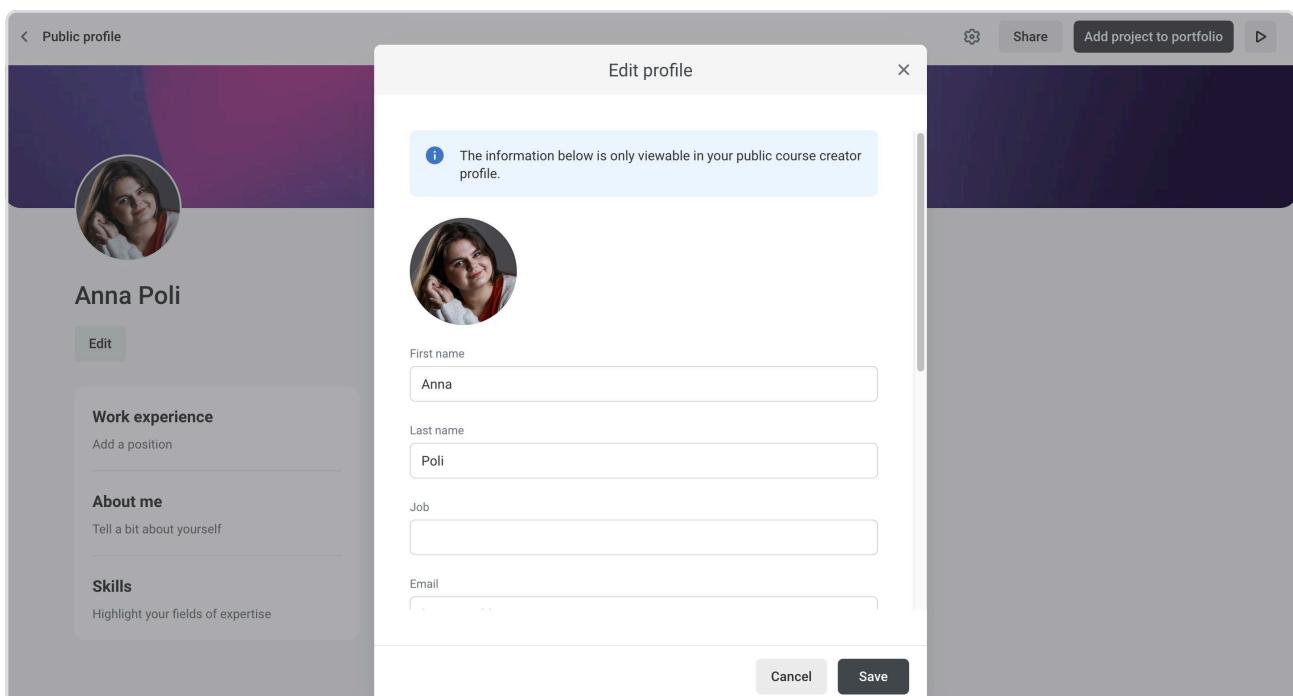
5. Add the project name, description, and cover image. Click **Save**.



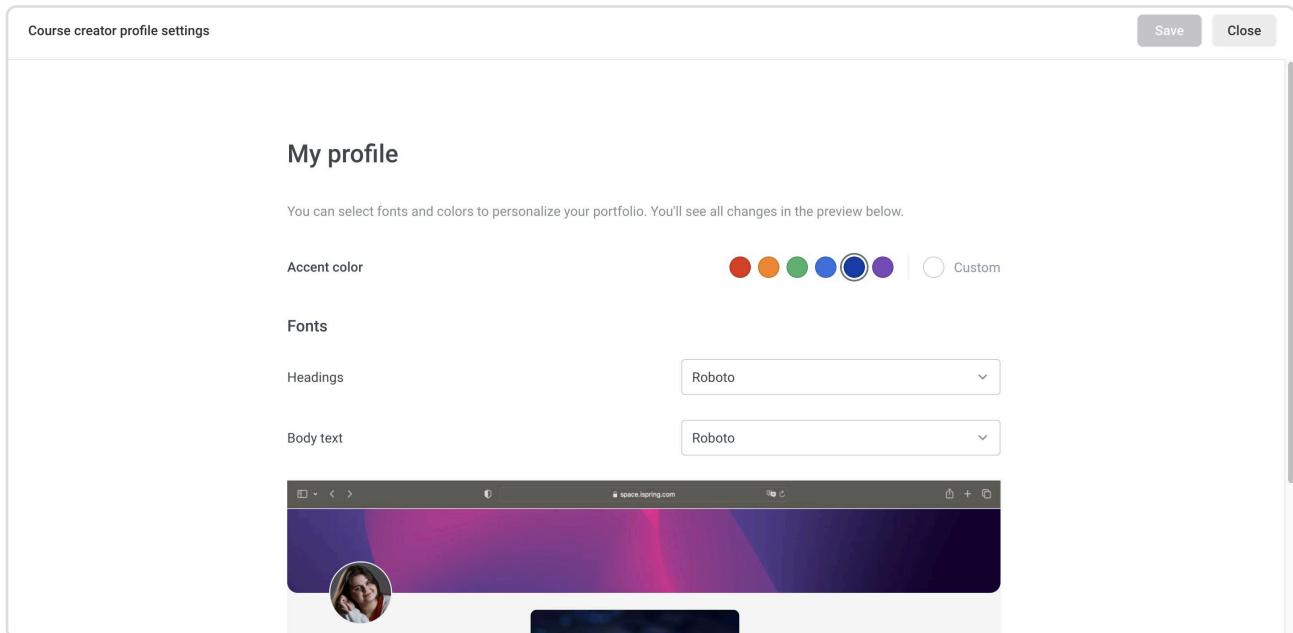
Repeat this process with other projects.

6. Once you've added all the projects, add info about yourself.

Click the **Edit** button under your avatar. In the opened window, fill in the blanks with your bio, profession, work experience, and the tools you use. Click **Save**.



7. Now it's time to make the portfolio feel like you! Click on the settings button in the upper right corner. Customize the colors and fonts of your portfolio page. Once finished, click **Save**.



Congrats! Your portfolio is ready. To share your portfolio, click **Share** in the top right corner, copy the link, and post it wherever you want.

Optional Step: Optimize your website

This is an optional step for those who host their portfolio on a website. If you use iSpring Cloud AI, skip to Step 4.

Once you have your site up and running, make sure it operates smoothly for the audience. Here are some handy things to consider:

- 1. Check your images and videos.** You'll want to compress them as much as you can so they will load quickly.
- 2. Check all links, buttons, calls to action, and contact buttons.** Make sure you put contact buttons in the right places so viewers can connect with you if they have questions or see something they like.

3. Have someone check your overall navigation to make sure that the structure of your site is easy to follow and not too difficult to navigate. Most website viewers will only have the patience to click 2 or 3 times at most before losing patience, so don't make your instructional design portfolio so deep that viewers will give up before finding your brilliant examples.

Step 4: Promote your portfolio

You have built this instructional design portfolio for a reason, and that is to get noticed. However, you won't get noticed if you don't let people know your portfolio is available! There are a couple of great ways to get your portfolio noticed and improve your overall social media presence:

1. Use social media to let people know that you have a new portfolio. What social media platforms do you connect with: Facebook, LinkedIn, and/or Instagram? Others? Tell your collaborators, friends, and followers to check it out. Offer to discuss anything they see or to share experiences.
2. Join a professional group or association. Are you a member of the ATD, eLearning Guild, or the CCCE? There are many local, national, and international learning associations through which you can promote yourself and your portfolio while contributing to the profession and learning from the experience of others.
3. Use good old-fashioned word of mouth! It's amazing how many people will be willing to help you spread the word about your new portfolio and even give you additional work if you ask. It's not a burden to talk to people about what you are hoping to do. If there is quality in your work and your relationships, having a good conversation offering to help people can really aid you in promoting your portfolio and perhaps your career.

Extra Tips

As an instructional designer, you know a lot about designing information to help the learner acquire knowledge and skills. Do your homework in looking over the websites suggested above and figure out how your portfolio fits with your personality and how you intend to present your work to your audience.

Here are a few more tips you may find useful:

Show your process, not just the product

Instructional design is a discipline. Consider including a "My Process" section or using case studies to briefly illustrate how you move from analysis and design to development and evaluation. A simple flowchart or icons can make this visually engaging.

Curate for the job you want

Your portfolio should be a targeted showcase, not an archive. If you're applying for a corporate eLearning role, highlight relevant simulations and systems training. If you're aiming for K-12, focus on different formats. Tailor your featured projects to your career goals.

Prepare for the interview

Your portfolio is a conversation starter. For each featured project, be ready to talk in detail about the challenges you faced, why you made specific design choices, what you'd do differently now, and how you worked with SMEs and stakeholders.

Check for technical issues

Before sharing your link:

- Check all links and buttons (project launches, PDFs, your LinkedIn profile).
- Test it on multiple devices (phone, tablet, desktop) and browsers.
- Ask a friend to navigate it and time how long it takes to find your contact info and understand your services.

Test across devices

Make sure your portfolio looks good on desktop, tablet, and mobile.

Responsive design ensures your work can be appreciated by all viewers.

Design your portfolio so it works for everyone. Accessible design is a fundamental mark of quality.

Keep it current

Treat your portfolio as a living document. Regularly review and update it with new projects, skills, and insights that reflect your growing expertise.

Make contact easy

Place your contact information or a link to your contact page in a consistent, prominent location like the site header or footer. Ensure any contact buttons are visible and functional.

Portfolio Building Checklist

Once you have created your portfolio, quickly run through the checklist to make sure you haven't missed anything and your portfolio works just as you want it to. Also, make sure:

- Your bio includes the latest information that is completely work-related.
- There are no misspellings or grammatical errors.
- The contact information is correct and easy to find.
- The portfolio has your vibe, i.e., represents your social media/professional persona.
- There are no projects in the portfolio restricted by an NDA.
- You mentioned all people who contributed to the projects in your portfolio (if there are any).
- All links, navigation buttons, and project samples work fine.

Summing Up

Creating an instructional design portfolio is a professional activity that will help you keep yourself on top of your skills, allow your design abilities to shine for others to see, and provide you with more credibility in the world of instructional design.

Instructional designers and other learning professionals need digital representation now more than ever, as the world becomes more globally connected and less reliant simply on word of mouth or resumes to get work.

Your portfolio should be carefully thought out as part of your personal brand and a reflection of your true skills. You can do this by carefully preparing your content, creating a site that is easy to use, and delivering an accessible experience to all of your prospective clients, employers, and colleagues.

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- An extensive library of eLearning content created by professional graphic designers
- Cloud storage for courses
- An online tool for reviewing content with stakeholders
- An online tool for collaborating with SMEs
- And more

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Useful Resources

Whether you're a novice ID who wants to delve deeper into instructional design or a seasoned professional who wants to refresh their knowledge, check out some more articles about ID and course authoring:

- [What Is Instructional Design?](#)
- [How to Become an Instructional Designer](#)
- [The Top 5 Instructional Design Skills](#)
- [Instructional Design Principles: Keys to Authoring eLearning Content](#)
- [The 60+ Best Instructional Design Software Tools You Should Bookmark](#)
- [Instructional Designer Salary: 5 Proven Ways to Earn More](#)
- [How to Create an Online Course – A Complete Guide](#)

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