Information Guardians: Immersive Storytelling in Web-based Training

TRAINING AWARENESS

In partnership with K2SHARE
Information Guardians Story-based Training

• In FY 2023, the U.S. Department of Education released a story-based course — **Information Guardians** — which focuses on safeguarding sensitive information and information systems.

• This course provides learners with essential material on user responsibilities for complying with Department policies, guidance, procedures, and best practices designed to reduce risks.

• The instructional strategy used links theory with real-world application in a memorable way, using immersive storytelling.
A Culture of Storytelling

• Humans are drawn to stories — we are driven to know how a story ends, so storytelling provides a natural ‘hook’ for learning.

• The art of storytelling promotes learning because we remember information in context, while we tend to forget isolated facts.

• When facts are presented without context, a strain is placed on working memory and any learning that does occur rarely gets committed to long term memory.
Storytelling in Learning

- **Storytelling** provides the necessary **context** that our brains need to connect new information with familiar concepts or situations, thereby **creating lasting memories**.

- Living through an experience, even vicariously, not only provides hands-on practice, but it also promotes an internalized understanding of **how to apply newly acquired knowledge**.

- The Information Guardians course, through its use of storytelling, **helps learners connect how to safeguard sensitive information and information systems by providing contextualized situations**.
Training Concept

Learners explore a series of scenarios and situations involving Department employees who are dedicated to following the policies around data protection. The learner acts as their guide as they work to support the Department and protect the data entrusted to them.
Stories Map to Learning Objectives

Each information guardian’s story unfolds throughout the course. The stories act as waypoints that connect the dots between learning objectives. Instead of seeing each objective as a separate item to learn, the learner can think back to the story and see how everything connects characters together, reinforcing previously learned objectives. Forming those neural connections helps ensure that after the training is over, the knowledge will be retained as they encounter similar situations that trigger those memories.

Meet the Information Guardians — Tara, Mateo, Rachel, & Dustin
Connection and Repetition

- The characters encounter scenarios wherein they need to make important decisions.
- As the story unfolds, new characters interact with existing characters, interweaving knowledge and building the story.
- Character experiences and interactions illustrate the shared responsibly for keeping information safe.

Tara reflects on her day, starting when she realized her personal data was available through the professional social media platform for several months. While it's possible Tara's information could have been harvested while it was accessible to anyone on the internet, Tara thinks it's better late than never to protect her information: at least it's safe now!

Finally, Tara enjoyed talking with Mates in person at E5. It had been a while since they got a chance to chat. Mates stopped by her office while he was taking some old printouts and storage devices to be properly destroyed. Mates did his part to ensure that sensitive information wasn't left lying around any longer, since it didn’t need to be stored for future records.
Knowledge Application

Learners are presented with real-life situations and dilemmas and participate in the decision-making process.

Question 1 of 2
Mateo has come across some papers containing controlled unclassified information (CUI) that are ready for disposal. When selecting a shredder or disposal method, what should Mateo’s goal be? Select the correct response.

- To locate the nearest trash can
- To use a method that makes it unreadable, indecipherable, and irrecoverable
- To utilize the recycle bins that are locked for protection
- To use a method that results in strips of paper

Show next panel
Spaced Testing and Intrinsic Feedback

Testing is context-based and occurs in smaller, content area-specific chunks.

Feedback is detailed and targeted, providing both explanation and reinforcement.
What Did the Learners Like?

- The scenarios made the information easier to remember.
- This course was very understandable.
- I liked the summary of how all the fictional users in the scenarios were colleagues and brought it together to review how they all protected documents in different ways.

- The applicability of the scenarios is great.
- The information was all so new to me. Was a clever way to train us.
- I enjoyed how interactive the course was.

- It was engaging and edifying.
- I was able to back track and reread scenarios.
- The real-life scenarios and little test questions to check your knowledge so you can see if you understood the material.