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**.
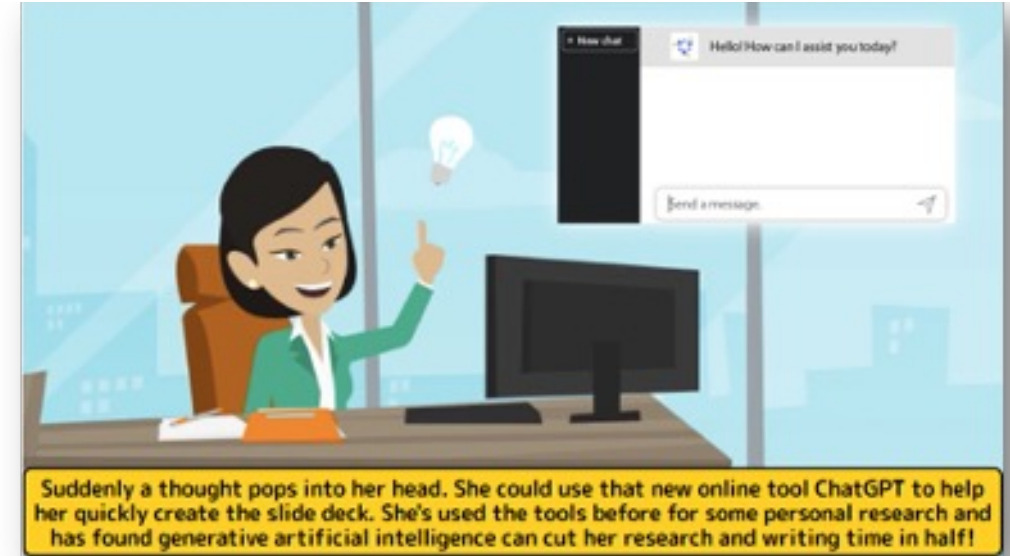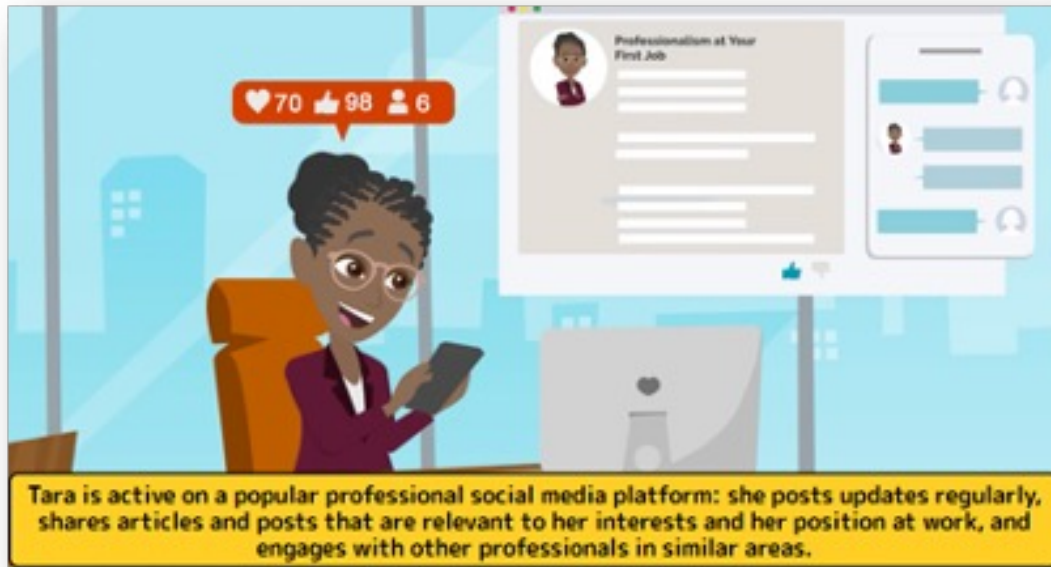
Storytelling in Learning

- **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.

Suddenly a thought pops into her head. She could use that new online tool ChatGPT to help her quickly create the slide deck. She's used the tools before for some personal research and has found generative artificial intelligence can cut her research and writing time in half!

Tara is active on a popular professional social media platform: she posts updates regularly, shares articles and posts that are relevant to her interests and her position at work, and engages with other professionals in similar areas.

Dustin isn't sure about whether he should put the document into the Teams chat, so he contacts his co-worker, Tara. He knows Tara is an experienced cybersecurity professional and she frequently mentors other staff.

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.
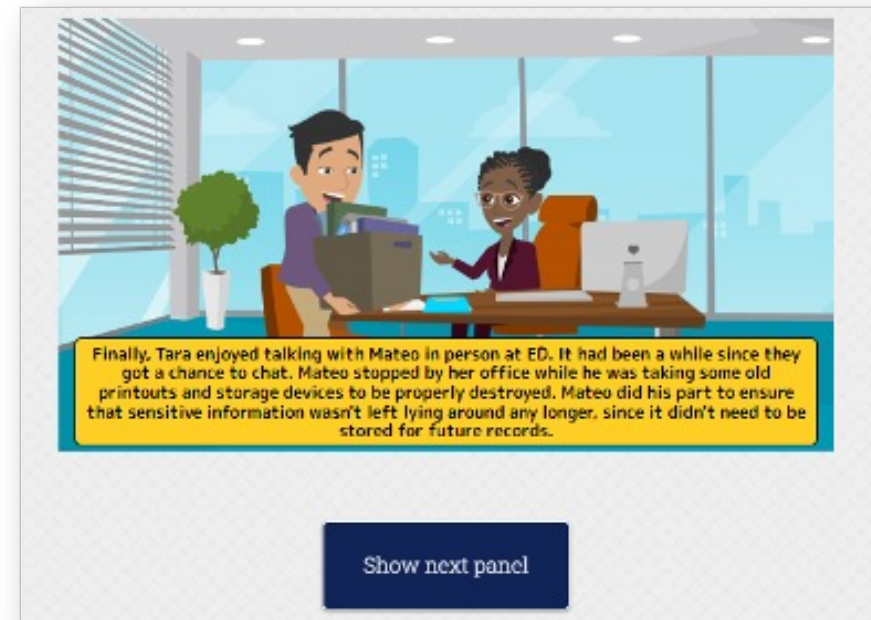
Instead of seeing each objective as a separate item to learn, the learner can think back to the story and see how everything connects characters together, reinforcing previously learned objectives. Forming those neural connections helps ensure that after the training is over, the knowledge will be retained 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.

Knowledge Application

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

Spaced Testing and Intrinsic Feedback

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

In what ways could bad actors utilize personal information shared through social media or emerging technologies to do harm to the Department? Select all that apply.

Impersonate you to gain access

Utilize social engineering attacks

Target you or others in the Department

Promote targeted ads

SUBMIT

Questions ✓ 02

That's right! Either a locked desk drawer or filing cabinet would suffice as physical access controls

Questions ✓ ✗

Actually, you should not connect your GFES to an unauthorized personal printer or share a OneDrive folder containing PII with everyone on the network.

NEXT

Feedback is detailed and targeted, providing both explanation and reinforcement.

What Did the Learners Like?

The scenarios made the information easier to remember.

The applicability of the scenarios is great.

It was engaging and edifying.

This course was very understandable.

The information was all so new to me. Was a clever way to train us.

I was able to back track and reread scenarios.

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.

I enjoyed how interactive the course was.

The real-life scenarios and little test questions to check your knowledge so you can see if you understood the material.