



Instructional Design Product/Program Lead



Kristy Presson, CPTD®

Lead Instructional Designer
Public Administration (Government)

Role Level

Product/Program Lead

Key Skills

- Learning Design Expertise
- Project Management
- Collaboration & Communication
- Data Collection & Analysis/Evaluation
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Leadership
- Mentorship
- Coaching

TD Team Size

25 members

Company Size

500+

TD Tenure

20+ years

Biggest Challenges

Resource constraints

What is the BEST part of your job?

The best part of my role as a Lead ISD at DAU is that I get the opportunity every day to shape the learning experience for professionals who directly impact the success of national defense acquisition programs. Here's why this is rewarding:

- **Empowering the Workforce:** I create learning solutions that equip acquisition professionals with the skills and knowledge to make sound decisions, ultimately enhancing the Department of Defense's mission readiness and efficiency.
- **Driving Innovation:** As a lead ISD, I innovate by leveraging the latest instructional strategies and technologies, ensuring training is engaging, relevant, and impactful.
- **Collaborative Impact:** Collaborating with talented SMEs, immensely talented designers, and leaders enables me to synthesize diverse expertise into cohesive, high-quality learning programs.
- **Continuous Learning:** Being at the forefront of instructional design at DAU allows me to grow and stay updated on cutting-edge trends, which I incorporate into DAU's offerings.
- **Mentorship and Leadership:** Guiding other ISDs and being a leader in my field fosters professional growth in others while also contributing to DAU's legacy of excellence.
- **Meaningful Contribution:** Knowing that my work has a direct impact on improving acquisition outcomes and, by extension, supporting the nation's warfighters is deeply fulfilling.

Ultimately, the blend of creative problem-solving, leadership, and tangible contributions to the defense acquisition community makes my role both challenging and incredibly rewarding.



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How did you get into talent development?

It's a natural transition from ISD to TD. It's a combination of professional expertise and passion for helping others grow.

- **Expertise in Instructional Systems Design:** My proficiency in designing effective learning experiences naturally positioned me to take on roles in talent development; I understand how people learn and grow professionally.
- **Commitment to the Defense Mission:** My dedication to supporting the defense acquisition workforce drove me to ensure these professionals receive the training needed to excel in their roles, which aligns with the broader mission of talent development.
- **Passion for Mentorship and Leadership:** My ability to mentor and guide both learners and colleagues led to my passion for fostering growth.
- **Desire to Drive Organizational Impact:** I recognized that equipping people with the right skills and knowledge improves not just individual performance but organizational outcomes.

Advice for people interested in the kind of role you have?

- **Master the Fundamentals of Instructional Design:** Develop a strong foundation in instructional design models and alternative models that are adaptable. Stay current with trends in adult learning, eLearning tools, and technologies like LMSs, authoring software and generative AI.
- **Cultivate Leadership Skills:** Learn to manage projects, lead teams, and foster collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Mentorship is key—guide others and be open to learning from colleagues and subordinates alike.
- **Build Expertise in the Industry:** Gain deep knowledge in the subject matter you're designing for. For example, at DAU, understanding the intricacies of defense acquisition is invaluable. Stay curious and proactive about understanding organizational goals and aligning learning solutions to support them.



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- **Focus on Results-Oriented Solutions:** Always measure the impact of your instructional designs. Use data to refine and demonstrate the value of your work. Adaptability is crucial—tailor learning experiences to meet the evolving needs of your audience.
- **Develop Strong Communication Skills:** Build the ability to clearly convey ideas, provide feedback, and advocate for instructional design solutions to stakeholders at all levels.
- **Seek Continuous Professional Development:** Pursue certifications (e.g., Certified Professional in Talent Development (CPTD), instructional design courses) to stay current and competitive. Attending conferences and joining professional networks like ATD or ISPI to exchange ideas and grow your skills.
- **Find Purpose in Your Work:** Remember, instructional design is about empowering others. If you're passionate about making a difference through learning, your enthusiasm will shine in your work.

Tell us what your day or week typically looks like.

As a Lead ISD at DAU, a typical week is a blend of strategic planning, project management, and hands-on instructional design. I often collaborate with SMEs to refine course content, review deliverables from my team, and ensure projects align with organizational goals. Meetings with stakeholders and cross-functional teams are common, focusing on updates, resource allocation, and problem-solving. Time is also spent mentoring other ISDs, coaching faculty on teaching tools, analyzing course performance metrics, and implementing feedback to enhance learning solutions. Throughout the week, I balance leadership responsibilities with the creative process of designing impactful, learner-centered experiences.