openSAP Invites, Episode 24 - Learn How ...

Learn how …

Transcript

Lorna Richards: [00:00:08] Hello and welcome to this episode of openSAP Invites. My name is Lorna Richards, and I will be your host for today. I am very excited to be talking with Johanna Wittig, who is one of the creators of the incredibly popular openSAP course "Be Visual! Sketching Basics for IT Business". This course is going live with its 10th edition in mid-June and thus far for the previous editions has generated almost 70,000 enrollments. So first of all, welcome, Johanna.

Johanna Wittig: [00:00:40] So thank you for having me, Lorna.

Lorna Richards: [00:00:42] So I wanted to let you know that I finished your course yesterday and it is so good. But before we get into that, if you could just maybe take a moment, introduce yourself, explain a little bit about your background and how this course came to be.

Johanna Wittig: [00:00:56] Yeah. So, my name is Johanna Wittig. I'm a user experience design expert within SAP Design. And the course actually started by the ask of a leader who said, guys bring sketching to the developers because they need to talk to each other, right? And share the same picture.

Lorna Richards: [00:01:19] Right. Yeah, I know. That makes a lot of sense. And so, as I said, I did finish the course yesterday and the feedback that I wanted to give you is just that I'm not a developer and I got so much out of the course. So, I feel like the reach is really broad on this course for how many people could benefit from taking it. So, this, as we said before, this is the 10th edition that's coming up. So, you must have received lots of other feedback over the years. Would you mind, please, sharing some of the feedback that you've received?

Johanna Wittig: [00:01:55] Yes, of course. One of the feedbacks that we received a few times was that people were so surprised about their own skills.

Lorna Richards: [00:02:07] Yeah.

Johanna Wittig: [00:02:07] You know, they started with nothing and didn't have any confidence about their own sketching because this is what we, what we also say. You can start wherever you are. You don't need to have any upfront knowledge. And at the end of the course, they felt pretty confident what they can do. And so, this was really a compliment to all of us designing this course.

Lorna Richards: [00:02:34] Yeah, I'm sure. And very, very true. Sincerely, I do feel more confident about my sketching ability after having taken this course. And what I really like too is, I liked how it built gradually over the weeks. So, could you please explain for everybody what they can expect to learn in each of the weeks?

Johanna Wittig: [00:02:56] Yes. So, as I said in the first week, we are starting really with sketching basics such as like how to hold the pen or how to sketch a straight line. And we touch basic shapes such as the circle, triangular and rectangular. And we teach a very nice method of breaking down complex objects. I think that's really a highlight because that makes you reduce objects. And the second topic of this week is handwriting. And this goes in the direction of better readability. And we also touch simple moderation from there, in the first week. In the second week, we combine writing and basic shapes. And that leads you, for example, to things like flow charts.

Lorna Richards: [00:03:48] Mm hmm.

Johanna Wittig: [00:03:49] And the other topic that we are attaching in the second week is screen sketching. So, we teach you techniques how to bring your first ideas to paper and share them with others.

Lorna Richards: [00:04:03] Mm hmm.

Johanna Wittig: [00:04:04] And in the third week, we are touching on different scenarios and materials that you might face when you are sketching, right? So, we are talking about like what to think about if you have a whiteboard in front of you, what to think about, like if you sketch on post-it notes or A4 paper. So, what are the different

attributes of this material? And the second topic of this week is that we teach you a set of useful objects that you can use, for example, to illustrate your sketches and make, for example, your agenda look a bit professional. And in the fourth week this is the most advanced one we touch on storytelling. So, this is really where we take techniques from film making and comic making and also touch a bit on the story arc and how to make a story interesting. And we have the topic of sketching very simple people. So, in the end you are able to sketch a small storyboard with people, emotions, and even have some different camera angles to make it more interesting. And one thing is we designed the course. The way that you start really simple and the longer, you take the course. The more the fidelity of sketching rises, and your skills will also rise. And this makes you always feel good and able to tackle the challenges of the course.

Lorna Richards: [00:06:03] Yeah. No, absolutely. I feel like it's exactly what you said, that you start right at the beginning with how to sketch a line, and then by the fourth week you're doing these more advanced sketches, which was so helpful for me because just that, just the, how relatable the objects are too. In terms of drawing people, like having that seven point process that you go over, you know? That was just so useful for me because when I draw stick figures, I don't think about the dimensions so much, but it just takes you right down to the basics as well as teaching you how to do basic writing. So, for anybody that's taking notes, this this course could be very helpful. So, I wanted to ask you, since the course was designed with an office environment in mind, so you talk about whiteboards, you talk about flip chart paper and things. You know, obviously we've all kind of reverted into this Home Office situation. So, in that case, what are some important considerations? How do you see what you did in the course in the office, how that is applicable to us now, who are in our home offices?

Johanna Wittig: [00:07:16] Yeah. The pandemic situation changed a lot also for people doing our course, as you said, like you have not the regular office supplies around you. But actually, we found out that people are very creative. They're designing their own workarounds, like gluing together these letter sized papers to have a flip chart paper or even start sketching on windows with a non-permanent marker. You know, you just can erase it and then over and over, train it again. And this is why we also came up with some tips and tricks in the course in the preparation week where we, you know, show you some tips around what materials can you use that you have around your daily life. Like, for example, you get a lot of parcels and maybe there's paper in there just, you

know, flatten that, put this to your door and use that. It's not about like, that it looks good, it's more about like that, you practice over and over again

Lorna Richards: [00:08:28] Right.

Johanna Wittig: [00:08:28] To really get into the topic. Right. And although we are in the in the virtual situation right now, I still recommend doing these basic things on paper. And this is why we, you know, we, we decided that by intention to design the course on paper.

Lorna Richards: [00:08:48] Yeah. Yeah, awesome. And, and along that along the lines of that too, you describe about how it's not just a matter of using your hand, it's like it's a whole body exercise. So, and you talk about this idea of muscle memory, which I think is so important for people to understand and in this case. So, could you please explain a little bit about what you mean by muscle memory?

Johanna Wittig: [00:09:15] Yeah. It's actually, as you described, it's a whole body movement of coming to sketch a straight line. And so, this is what you learn in the first week is that we really start from scratch, starting to teach you how to sketch a straight line. And this is like we show you also in the videos, like how your whole body moves with you, that you can really do this and sketch a straight line.

Lorna Richards: [00:09:44] Mm hmm.

Johanna Wittig: [00:09:44] And as you do this exercise over and over again, this is what we call then muscle memory. So, it's like almost in the sports. It's like you do those exercises over and over again and you know them by heart. And in our case, as we are sketchers, we know this like by hand and by eye, because that's what we are training. We are training our eye and hand coordination.

Lorna Richards: [00:10:12] Hmm.

Johanna Wittig: [00:10:13] And by just doing like lines after another, like, like all the time training, horizontal lines, you get a feeling and you get a flow and you get it, get a

memory, and then you feel confident, you know, to sketch on a whiteboard, a straight line, you know, that you can do it.

Lorna Richards: [00:10:33] Yeah, I really love that because it's like you say, we don't necessarily think of that concept in terms of sketching, but I really love how you how you brought that in. So then why do you think sketching can be such a useful tool for developers and business people who you don't generally associate with this kind of thing?

Johanna Wittig: [00:10:57] Yeah. [00:10:57] First of all, I can say that a picture is worth a thousand words. And this is what we often, yeah, recognize in meetings that you can talk for hours around a complex topic and you don't share the same picture inside of your head. So, this is why sketching is such a powerful tool. As soon as the first person is getting up on the whiteboard or even on your digital supplies and puts an image there, you know what you are talking about like and the group is talking about this image and evolving something around this image. So, in this case, it's a very powerful thing. And this is why we set up these sketching classes. And we started actually with really classroom classes and later then came to scale this more in this openSAP MOOC and made it available also for our colleagues and for the rest of the world. [00:12:04] Right.

Lorna Richards: [00:12:05] Right. Yeah, it was a great idea to do that. And you kind of touched on this earlier about we've got all these digital tools now and there is that sort of tendency to want to use the newest and coolest digital tool for communicating. And so why do you think then that the pen and paper can still be so useful for people when they're sharing ideas?

Johanna Wittig: [00:12:35] Yeah. First of all, I have to say that pen and paper is almost everywhere available. A lot of ideas have been invented on napkins or receipts or something like that. And we intentionally decided to teach sketching on paper because it has a different haptic. You know, the surface is not so slippery, such as a whiteboard or a tablet surface, right? So, you can really start with your pen and paper, start practicing and have a better control if you learn sketching on with pen and paper and later on, I mean, you can definitely apply everything that you have learned to other surfaces, right? Such as a whiteboard or a tablet.

Lorna Richards: [00:13:28] Mm hmm. How do I incorporate? So, I've got all these, I've got my new learnings and I feel like I'm fresh. I just finished your course and it really honestly, it has helped me in taking notes in meetings. My writing is more legible. I find myself doodling little shapes now, so I can get better and better. So, given that once you finish the course, how can how can I or people that finish your course incorporate these new learnings into this new normal of hybrid communication or even virtual only?

Johanna Wittig: [00:14:05] Haha. Yeah, that's a very interesting question. I mean, as I said before, everything that you learned in the course, you can also apply into, like, tablet. Sketching things on a tablet. Add them to your PowerPoints, add them to your Word files, whatever you have. And the interesting thing, I think in the future is like, how do we bridge this reality and virtuality thing, right? And I think we are not everyone is there yet. But in a - I have a little story to tell there. So, like one of our sales guys, he's very much into sketching and he always uses whiteboards. And so, when pandemic time started, he just plugged his iPad to his computer. And when he when he got these sales calls, he just used his iPad and sketched on his iPad and transferred that to the customer. And so, he was like back again into his normal way of interacting and communicating with the customers. Right. So, and I think there are a lot of opportunities to test things out there. And I think it's going to be very interesting times.

Lorna Richards: [00:15:32] Yeah, definitely, definitely. And I loved the in the fourth week where you touch on the concept of storytelling because I feel like that is really important, not just for IT professionals, but also for people in education, people that are in any kind of business role, sales people, that idea of storytelling and you even you even go through the hero's journey. So, you know, the scope of the course is just it's so wide and so open. But maybe you could talk just a little bit about. Yeah, just I guess the range of people that have come and given you feedback that they have gotten something out of the course.

Johanna Wittig: [00:16:19] Um yes, we heard from totally different backgrounds, stories that people really got a lot of inspiration from the course. So, educators, people that are working in like also like adult education, people doing workshops. We also did workshops, also onsite workshops definitely for sales people. I mean, they also want to have like their prepared flip charts and want to train them over and over again. And they

really strive for perfection there because they it looks pretty good when they are at the customer and, you know, start sketching and use an extra color for highlighting something or and I think in that case, a lot of different disciplines can take away something from the sketching course. And even if it is only, you improve your handwriting and people can benefit from it because they, they can read it now and you can take a picture and send it around or you can even read your own notes. I think that's a great thing. So yeah.

Lorna Richards: [00:17:40] Yes. And that has definitely been a takeaway for me. So, speaking of takeaways, that leads us into our final question then. So, what would you describe as the key takeaways for people that are taking this course?

Johanna Wittig: [00:17:56] I think in the beginning one of the aha moments is this breaking complex objects apart and breaking them down into like simple basic shapes, like if you think of you want to sketch a vacuum cleaner. The principle that we teach shows you that you don't need to look on each and every detail. It's okay to do like a 'U' and then put another 'U' on it and then put a little rectangle on it. And everyone will notice this as a vacuum cleaner. Right?

Lorna Richards: [00:18:36] Totally.

Johanna Wittig: [00:18:36] So this is one of the cool things that we come up with very iconic sketches when we really train ourselves to simplify things. Right. And that's the second thing I found very impressive and also very much valuable for participants is and what we heard often is this writing thing, right? So, people tend to say it's so hard to have a good handwriting and we practice this very simple 1 to 1 technique and you can use it and you can practice that while you listen to conferences or whatever you have to do in your home office. Right? You can just have your paper there and practice writing. And third, I think it's a very nice thing of the course is that you step by step raise your skills or you learn that you are getting better, right?

Lorna Richards: [00:19:41] Yeah.

Johanna Wittig: [00:19:41] You recognize that like everything is building up on each other and at the end you are able to sketch a storyboard, right. And so, this is a very

nice thing that we recognized with this course, is that people gained confidence to really, you know, just say, okay, I take the pen, I do this drawing, right? It's okay. I feel I feel safe because I have done the course and I know that I can do this and they even start, you know, trying things out. So, one of my colleagues who's also a developer, he is then he then after the course he started, you know, designing technical diagrams in a sketched version because he said, like, look, I can sketch, too. And I found this pretty cool because he was, you know, he was applying it to his needs and all the other colleagues were pretty much impressed what he did. So

Lorna Richards: [00:20:41] Yeah?

Johanna Wittig: [00:20:42] And I think that's a very, very beautiful thing. And I think, as I said in the beginning, this surprise with, you know, finding your skills and developing your skills is very much a motivation for me and also a motivation, it could be a motivation for you to start this sketching course and assign yourself to this to this course and also, you know, raise your skills and sketching and feel more confident whenever you need to sketch something.

Lorna Richards: [00:21:21] Oh, that was so well said. I can't recommend this course enough. If you're interested, do go to openSAP.com and enroll in the next edition of "Be Visual! Sketching Basics for IT Business" which is starting in the middle of June. Johanna, thank you so much for joining us today and talking about your course.

Johanna Wittig: [00:21:44] Thank you, Lorna, for having me. It was a very nice conversation and I hope all of you will join the course and in the end benefit from it.

Lorna Richards: [00:21:56] Thank you for listening to openSAP Invites. If you enjoyed this episode, please share, and leave a review and don't miss your next invite. Subscribe now.

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