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| Mark Spermon: | Hey everybody, this is Mark Spermon from Upward Online Learning. Thanks for watching for my YouTube channel, where I teach you how to create better E-learning courses with Articulate Storyline. And today I'm talking with Marloes Berkers, one of the owners of the [inaudible 00:00:16] website growcode.nl about building an escape room in Articulate Storyline. Marloes will share her tips and learnings on how to create an engaging escape room game. Hi Marloes, thanks for joining me. |
| Marloes Berkers...: | Thanks for having me. |
| Mark Spermon: | As the first question. Can you tell us a bit more about yourself and why you and Suzanne started GrowCodes? |
| Marloes Berkers...: | Sure. Hi everyone, my name is Marloes, I am a freelance learning consultant and I develop learning materials for organizations like E-Learning modules or blended learnings, stuff like that. But I also love to develop educational games, and that's where I met Suzanne Snel. |
| | She is a freelance storyteller and a text writer, and she had the idea of developing an educational online escape room. And I actually also wanted to create an online escape room, of course also educational, and so that's where we met together, so it became pretty clear that we should work together on this [crosstalk 00:01:28]. |
| Mark Spermon: | Can you tell us a bit more about the story of the escape room that you created? |
| Marloes Berkers...: | Yes. Suzanne already had an idea for the topic because she really believes in a growth mindset, so the growth mindset is actually the main part of the story. She wanted to share the learnings she did with the growth mindset with others, and we wanted to make an escape room because it's an easy way to engage people with this topic. It's not already like a big learning course or something, but just to get to know this subject and learn a bit more about it. |
| | And an escape room is a nice way, I think, to get people engaged in this, especially when it's an introduction in the topic. And I also had some positive experience with the growth mindset myself, so that's why we came to this topic. |
| | And the escape room takes you to the year 2053, this organization, Cortex Unlimited, created a chip that can upgrade skills and knowledge to your brain. So you don't have to learn or practice anything, you just upload it and then you can do it. So in a few minutes, you'll become like a professional football player or an artist or whatever you would like to learn. |
| | This sounds of course amazing. It's only a few minutes, but also a bit too good to be true, but still you are super curious, so you save a lot of money so you can also buy this chip. But when you try to upload the chip you notice that |

something is wrong, and you need to collect the four elements of the growth mindsets to stop Cortex Unlimited and their chips before it's too late.

Mark Spermon: You chose the subject of growth mindset, but why should you choose an escape room as E-learning? Because I guess it's not suitable for all subjects, right?

Marloes Berkers...: No, I think also not for the growth mindset. Like you say, I think it depends on the subject. We thought, especially for an introduction of the topic, I don't think you can... Well, we thought you can just get a bit of an introduction.

Sometimes you have these learning courses where you really need to be able to practice a lot of things or at the end, you have to explain all the... What was a good example? Like first aids, if you want learners in the end to really remember all the theory of the first aids, I think an escape room would not be the way to go, but to introduce people to the subjects, to get people engaged, maybe to realize why it's so important. I think an escape room would be a really fun and low-key way to get people engaged with the topic.

I think that's also what we try to do with the growth mindset, because sometimes people feel like the growth mindset is a topic that they are not too interested in. Also for people who they'll feel an immediate connection with things like the growth mindset, they can still have this really cool experience, and maybe afterwards they are still like, okay, maybe this growth mindset is actually something I would be interested in to learn more about.

Mark Spermon: What is the added value for the learner to play in an escape room, you think, compared to following a normal E-learning?

Marloes Berkers...: I think it's not one or the other. If you really want to learn more about the growth mindset, I think you should also add a course. I think this should be part of a program.

For the growth mindset, we also are thinking about, or maybe creating our own actually course because then you can also learn more about it and also practice with it in your own environment, or maybe we want to see if there are already great courses that we can connect it to.

It's not the goal that at the end you really know how to apply the growth mindset or that you know everything about it, it's just a small, especially to engage people, a more fun way to get to know more about the subjects.

Mark Spermon: That's a great answer. You developed the escape room. Can you tell us a bit more about, for instance, the process of writing a script if you want to develop an escape room? What are the things that you have to keep in mind or what are the steps that you have to take to create a script?

Marloes Berkers...: We started with the learning objectives, and with that, we first thought of the main story because we thought, okay, what does every escape room, if you ever did one, you also have this main story that you go through. So it gives you a motivation to do something. You have some problems to overcome, and you have also exciting ends to that also, how does the story end?

We divided it a bit in these parts as well. So first you have this beginning where you explain the motivation, so it puts you in this state of mind of action. In the escape room itself, and the main part of the story you have these problems to overcome. You have for example, to get to the next room, or you have to get inside or something like that, and that's where the puzzles come in.

And in the end you want this exciting end that you will actually solve the problem basically. When you know these parts, we actually divided it in these parts. We also thought about, okay, which information do you get where? Because you don't want to get away all the information in the beginning.

But during the game, during the story, you receive more and more parts of information, so in the end, you know this is really important to solve. In the end part, you have some actions to solve the problem.

We started big with this main idea, divided it in parts, and then started to fill in the details during the way. We started with this big brainstorming session, and then we sketched a lot and then we made a storyboard. From this concept, you get a more clear idea every step on the way. I think that's how we manage to do this.

Mark Spermon: It's great tips for people that also want to create an escape room to start with the learning objectives, what is a large goal, and then to divide it in into parts. You have to create puzzles in the games. Where did you find the inspiration for the puzzles that are in your escape room?

Marloes Berkers...: Well, we did our share of escape rooms ourselves. We really like escape rooms, but the main inspiration we took from the learning objectives, actually. It weren't just puzzles, we really wanted this puzzles to connect with the learning objectives.

So for example, one of the elements of the growth mindset is that you have to practice, you have to repeat your goal to actually create a pattern. So if you want to be a more sportive person, you have to go jogging or walking a few times, and you have to repeat this to actually become this more sportive person.

It creates these connections in your brain, and every time you repeat it, these connections get stronger. So to put this idea into puzzles, we thought of puzzles where you also have to repeat things where you... Puzzles about patterns,

puzzles that you have to connect one thing to the other. So that actually was a big inspiration for us to create these puzzles.

And also what we thought was really important is that there is a lot of variety in the puzzles. We didn't want to only have puzzles that you have to read a lot, but also that you sometimes have to listen or sometimes you have to find something, or sometimes you have to click on things.

So we really wanted to make these different kinds of puzzles, and that helped to come up with a lot of ideas, but we had just plenty of ideas. We were really enthusiastic about this project, so we had a bit too many ideas actually.

But this helped to create some more options, because sometimes it's easy if you think of a puzzle that you have to click on something that you also think another puzzle that you have to click on something.

But because of this variety, we were like, "Oh no, we already have this one, maybe we can also have a listening puzzle or something like that." That helps to create different puzzles.

Mark Spermon:      And the next phase, you have created a script and where you've told us where you get the inspiration for puzzles. But the next step is to build the actual escape room that you chose Articulate Storyline. Why did you choose Articulate Storyline for the escape room? Was there a particular reason for it?

Marloes Berkers...:      Yes, there was. Actually Articulate Storyline for me was an option because I know it very well, so I already saw a lot of possibilities with Storyline. We also thought of other programs. We did some online escape rooms ourselves. Sometimes people use, for example PDF files or let you go from one webpage to another, which is also really nice, but then sometimes it's a bit linear.

You see this room, you find a letter, you read the letter and then you fill in an answer, and you go to the next part. And we thought with Storyline, you can create these different rooms where you can walk around freely.

We thought in Storyline, we can build... you still have some parts of course in the escape room, but you can also go into the one room, find something there, go back, have another look at another room. So we thought that was a really nice way to really feel like you're inside a building.

That's actually why we thought Articulate Storyline was a great program, and also because in Articulate Storyline, you can create these interactive elements. You have the knobs that you can turn, or you can actually click on something and then something happens.

We thought that was also a really cool way to have different interactions. So not only that you have to find the answer and submit it to continue, but really do

something, really click on things and stuff like that. Or if you find this number lock that you actually can click on the numbers and then the door opens, stuff like that.

We thought Articulate Storyline was a really great program to build this, and we are also really happy with the results with Storyline.

Mark Spermon:     Now, what are the things that you really run into when building a game in Articulate Storyline that you didn't thought of before building it, or challenges that you have to solve in Storyline? Or was it a more affluent process?

Marloes Berkers...:     It sometimes was difficult. I figured it before that it would be sometimes challenging, but it was the many, many, many, many variables. Sometimes I just got lost in them because the variables give you a lot of options, so then you can find something in one room, it shows in your inventory, you can walk to the other rooms, but to make sure that all these variables were correct and didn't cancel each other out or somethings like that, that was sometimes really tricky.

So sometimes at the end of the day, I was just sitting here looking at these variables and I just couldn't see it anymore. And sometimes that meant that I had to rebuild a slide or just start over. That was a tricky part of it, I think that was sometimes difficult.

But in the end I always knew like, okay, no, it should be possible. So in the end, we managed to make everything work. And another part what was difficult, luckily, we also thought of it before, so saved a lot of stress, but it was the sounds. We really wanted to engage a lot of sounds in this escape room so that you really feel like you're inside the place.

But because we also wanted to use the timer, we have this countdown timer from 60 minutes. So you know okay, you have one hour to solve the escape room. I created this timer actually the same way... I saw that you have this tutorial to create a timer that counts down. I actually built it the same way, but that means that you can't use layers because on the master slides, you set a timer.

I don't use layers, and we wanted on the background that there was this sound or music, but if you click on something, you would go to another slide. So then you have this cut in the music. We made more this background ambience so when you are outside, you just sometimes hear a bird, or sometimes you hear the winds through the leaves or something like that, so you have this basic sound in the background.

And sometimes with these little sounds if you go from one slide to another, you don't have this obvious cut in music of the background. That's how we solved this problem. But it took some testing before so that it would still work

correctly. I think those were the two main problems, the difficulties we thought with Articulate Storyline.

Mark Spermon: So if someone wants to build her own or his own escape room, what do you think is the best advice that you can give someone for the learning purposes to start building an escape room?

Marloes Berkers...: I think it's best to start with clear learning objectives. We did that to make sure that we wouldn't lose it out of sight, I think, and also to really think about what kind of learning objectives you can reach with an escape room.

So for us, it was also not the case that at the end that people can tell all about the growth mindset. Now it was just that they can explain a bit in their own words what it is about. I think that's a really important part.

I think it's difficult if you first create a story and afterwards, the learning objectives, then I think it's difficult to combine these two. So if you start with the learning objectives, you can also create a story that actually engages these learning objectives.

I think that will be my advice and also to start with a good plan on paper. Before you build anything, first think it through. Think like, okay, what is logical? So you have just this plan.

Sometimes with some puzzles, we were a bit in doubt if we could manage to create it in Storyline. So for all the puzzles we first made this small part of it, just to see like, okay, do I think it's possible to actually create this in Storyline and make it work properly? And then we continued so we wouldn't waste too much time on building something incredibly difficult if there was also another solution. That would be my advice.

Mark Spermon: And you've told in your advice that one of the [inaudible 00:22:27] objectives for the people was that they could tell a bit in their own words about growth mindset. Do we think it's possible... Having Bloom's taxonomy in my head of a learning objective on a high layer, for instance, not only to explain it in their own words but more?

Marloes Berkers...: That's a good question. I think if it is possible for some subjects to go to a higher level, it depends on the subject and also on what target audience you have. If they have already a lot of knowledge about it, maybe you can also create puzzles that you can actually practice things so in the end you are able to become better at it.

I think there are a lot of possibilities. I think it's only important that... Because the game is really also... People get really engaged in the game. They get engaged, they get excited, and they have this time limit. I'm not sure how much content... I think it's important to think about these conditions.

If you want to put too much learning objectives in the escape room, maybe there is a possibility that it takes away a bit of the fun. So if you want to create an escape room, but you only have to learn like only to read and fill in the correct answers and the story is not as engaging, then you can imagine.... then I think you should consider if an escape room is the best way to do this.

I think there is a lot of possibilities, also a lot of possibilities for different kind of learning objectives, but I think it's good to think it through and what you want to accomplish.

Actually it's for everything, but all the learning. Everything you have to learn, you have to think of the right form in which the learning objectives actually work. I think it's possible, but have a good look at it, and think it through.

Mark Spermon:             I think that's a good advice for people that they must not forget that an escape group is also meant as a game, and it has to be engaging so you can not put too much difficulties or learning elements in it. You have to balance it out for learners to make it a great experience. We've talked about your escape room, but are you planning on creating an English version of the escape room? Because the growth mindset is a popular topic nowadays.

Marloes Berkers...:        Yeah, we would love to do that. It is on our planning, but first we just launched this escape room, so we first want to fine tune this and expand this Dutch escape room before we start with translation. Hopefully soon we will also be able to make an English version of it.

Mark Spermon:             And the last question. If people want to know more about your escape room, where can viewers connect with you online?

Marloes Berkers...:        You can find the escape room on growthcode.nl and you connect can connect with me or with Suzanne Snel on LinkedIn.

Mark Spermon:             Now, this last question brings us to the end of the episode about escape rooms. Now, thanks Marloes for joining me on this topic and sharing your really valuable expertise with us.

At the links that Marloes mentioned, plus an extra link to a free puzzle that you can try for yourself are in the description below this video. I hope you found the knowledge that Marloes shared was useful to you and gave you enough inspiration to create your own escape room in your next online project.

Now, if you found this video useful, then feel free to hit the like button below, and don't forget to hit the subscribe button and the bell notification icon so you won't miss any of my upcoming videos. Bye.

Marloes Berkers...:        Thank you. Bye-bye.