

SPRING 2013

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Online *focus*

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CORPORATE TRAINERS IN THEIR QUEST FOR DELIVERING SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTION

A hybrid course is one that consists of up to 80% of instruction delivered in an online environment while the other portion of instruction is conducted in a face-to-face setting. Is this the best format for your audience?

Adult Education

The advantages of distance learning are plentiful including: flexibility, saving time and money for both student and administration, studying at your own pace, convenience and access to fellow students and administration (Abraham, 2012). Corporate training is a great place to incorporate distance education because the audience primarily consists of adult learners who have many commitments and usually a specific goal as to why they are taking the course. Malcolm Knowles was a “lifelong educator in both informal and

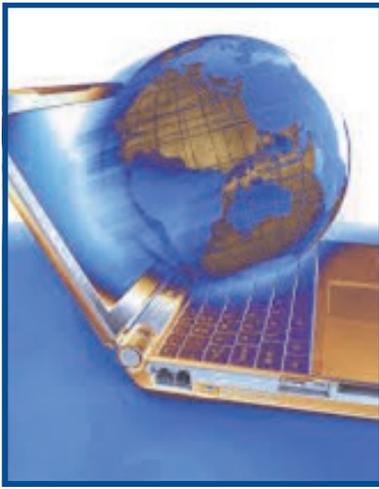
formal settings and is credited as the one who popularized for English language readers the concept of andragogy-the discipline that focuses on the process and science of adult education” (Smith, 1996). Knowles stated, “The motivations, attitudes, inner resources, and skills needed to engage in lifelong learning can be developed and enhanced by participating in well-designed learning situations that give the opportunity to practice them in conscious way” (Knowles, 1975).



Pre-Planning Strategies

Dr. George Piskurich suggests conducting a delivery analysis. “Get a clear picture of the content and learning goals from the SMEs and stakeholders” (Laureate Education, 2009). Then write down all of your delivery options in order of preference. Think through each of your options with the project constraints until you find the one that will best suit your audience (Laureate Education, 2009).

The Learning Technology Center at University of Wisconsin offers ten questions to consider when developing a hybrid course. An instructor should consider things such as: “As you think about learning objectives, which would be better achieved online and which would be best achieved face-to-face? and Hybrid teaching is not just a matter of transferring a portion of your traditional course to the Web. Instead it involves developing challenging and engaging online learning activities that complement your face-to-face activities. What types of learning activities do you think you will be using for the online portion of your course?” (Learning Technology Center, 2005). These questions will help prepare the instructor for obstacles that may occur in the design and development of the hybrid course. The full list of questions to consider can be found at http://www.class.uh.edu/classidt/Tutorials_Help/profs/hybrid/HybridReflective10Questions.pdf.



Communication in the Online Environment

“Student perceptions of community related to increased satisfaction toward online learning” (Ouzts, 2006).

A training manager has been frustrated with the quality of communication among trainees in his face-to-face training session and therefore wants to convert the training to a hybrid format. The main goal is to increase communication; therefore this is the area that needs to be enhanced. Studies have found that “student perceptions of community related to increased satisfaction toward online learning” (Ouzts, 2006). One way to develop a sense of community is through the use of Discussion Forums in the online classroom.

Discussions “allow for reflection time and critical thinking, often resulting in more student involvement than in a face-to-face classroom discussion.

Even introverted students who rarely speak up in a traditional face-to-face class often lead exciting and thought provoking discussions online” (Freeman, 2001).

“Being part of a community of practice while learning encourages students to work together and use each other as resources” (Dueber & Misanchuk, 2001). Other technological modes of communication including email, blogs, online chats, and web conferencing

allow the student and instructor to interact, increase understanding, and provide needed support.

The training manager in this scenario should use activities such as group projects to allow participants to interact in their learning. This increased interactivity will not only provide a greater sense of community within the students

but will also allow the students to share their experiences. Adults bring a “world of experiences related to learning, life, and their profession” (Simonson et al., 2012, p. 220). The more they are able to reflect on these experiences and how their learning will be relevant to their experiences, the more motivated they will be.

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THE TRAINER'S ROLE



The role of the facilitator changes in an online learning environment. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to guide students by offering resources and thought-provoking questions that leads conversation. The online discussion facilitator should “[guide] the discussion, [stimulate] participants and often [offer] intellectual leadership” to create a “supportive online learning environment” (Anderson & Kanuka, 1997). The instructor should be an active participant in the learning but should also allow students to build upon each other's thoughts in order to gain perspective, argue various viewpoints, and in essence teach other through their own experience. The instructor should be aware of the flow of communication and offer new scenarios and questions as needed to ensure active participation.

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