
2003 Excellence in Practice Citation

Workplace Learning & Development



Hewlett-Packard Company

Littleton, Massachusetts

Introduction to Discipline and Methodology - A Blended Distance Learning Experience

SUMMARY

The practice centers on the successful use of a live, instructor-led distance learning program to insure a competent workforce when economic conditions prevented the use of a traditional in-person class. The results are so positive that the new blended learning program has become the standard offering in the Americas, and practitioners in Europe have requested implementation.

“Introduction to Discipline and Methodology” is a four-day course used as the development foundation for practitioners in one of the division’s Professions, a global peer-driven community with 800 members. Prior to 2003, senior members in the community delivered this course as a workshop.

In 2003, business conditions presented a challenge: devise a program to allow members of the community to develop their role-specific competencies without incurring travel and living expenses (or incrementing delivery expenses).

The solution: senior field practitioners deliver a five-day blended, live virtual classroom course. Interaction among participants is maintained by integrating virtual classroom sessions with small group project work. A shared workspace application is used for accessing materials and class sessions, posting project work, networking and sharing information.

Results are extremely positive. All participants from three offerings have scored the overall program as good to excellent, and the business has saved an average of \$27,000 per offering. . Additionally, this practice directly supports the “Total Employee Experience” initiative of the Human Resources organization.

Results have been shared throughout the Workforce Development organization to help others implement similar development solutions.

BACKGROUND

What was the original purpose of this practice? Have the goals of this practice changed from its original purposes? How?

The target audience and client for this practice is a “Profession” within a division of a large, global company. A Profession is a peer-driven community of practitioners with similar roles, sometimes led by a Profession Office. The original business purpose of this practice was to provide field practitioners in this Profession with a method to build critical business competencies without incurring travel and living expenses. This has not changed. The virtual classroom delivery is so successful that the client has incremented the original competencies addressed by this program, with new content being added.

“Introduction to Discipline and Methodology” is a conversion of a very successful class taught by senior members of the Profession as an interactive workshop. In designing the virtual classroom program, the major instructional design goal was to maintain the interactive and collaborative nature of the face-to-face course. Based upon participant and instructor feedback, this goal has been accomplished.

At what stage of implementation is this practice? Is this practice still in use? If no, why? Do you have plans to revise this practice? If multiple phases or stages have been or will be involved, please estimate the timeframes of each.

The design of this practice began in November, 2002, and the first delivery occurred in March, 2003. Since that time, two additional deliveries have been completed, and one is scheduled for September. Additionally, 16 sessions have been budgeted for the next fiscal year (beginning in November) due to the growth of members in this Profession. In fiscal year 2004, the use of this practice will be expanded from the Americas to Europe ... and possibly Asia-Pacific.

Where is the practice implemented? Please note if it has been or will be expanded to other locations. The location may be a single office, a plant or facility, a business unit, or organization wide.

The practice has been implemented in one global Profession in the Americas. However, participants have resided in the USA, Argentina, Austria, Mexico, Brazil, Canada, and New Zealand. To date, the instructors have resided in the USA. Participants and instructors participate in this practice from their own workspace. Virtual classroom tools, team/collaboration applications, and telephone communications are used to keep participants and instructors “together” for class sessions and small group project work. Use of this practice will begin in Europe for this Profession in the fiscal year starting in November.

Please describe the employees served by this practice. Indicate the number of employees, what percentage of total employees they represent, and what levels or job classifications are targeted.

The Profession is global and consists of approximately 800 members located throughout the world. They are classified as technical consultants and business consultants and represent about 1% of the company's employees.

Resources committed. Please indicate the number and level of employees involved at various stages of this practice (needs assessment, design, delivery, evaluation, etc.), as well as the cost incurred over the lifetime (past and future) of this practice.

This practice is the result of a team effort by the Profession Office, senior members of the Profession, and Workforce Development.

- ✓ One instructional designer/course developer – assessment, design, and development of course content; background in instructional design and classroom teaching
- ✓ One instructional designer/virtual classroom consultant - responsible for all tasks related to the use of virtual classroom and other online learning technologies for course delivery
- ✓ One content expert – leader of Profession Office and responsible for methodology
- ✓ One Virtual Classroom facilitator – manages virtual classroom interface during the course
- ✓ Two Instructors – senior members of the Profession and practitioners of the methodology
- ✓ One Learning Program Manager – overall responsibility for the course and client relationship with the Profession and Profession Office

Development of this practice costs \$40,000 and each delivery costs approximately \$12,000. To date approximately \$76,000 has been spent on this practice. Based upon planned deliveries, a minimum of \$156,000 will be spent over the next year.

How does this practice add to the state of the art, or exemplify an excellent application of sound learning and performance improvement? What sets this practice apart from other similar practices?

The course was developed as a model and proof of concept of a highly interactive form of virtual knowledge sharing and collaboration. The learning process consists of course pre-work, interactive virtual classroom presentations/exercises/discussions led by field practitioners (instructors) using the company's intranet, small group project work on actual cases threaded between virtual classroom sessions, and a shared workspace using a team/collaboration application for pre-course, in-course, and post-course access to resources, people networking, and knowledge sharing.

The course design is based on leading best practices for virtual classroom delivery. It uses a variety of tools and techniques for creating a fully engaging learning experience including brainstorming, surveys, voting, quiet reflection, oral and written questions, web tours and treasure hunts, matching exercises, jigsaw puzzles, team presentations, annotating and adding to content. The virtual classroom application includes a

proprietary tool that lets the class simulate activities done in the in-person workshop with index cards and whiteboard. The online class improves on the in-person class by creating logs and archives of all activities, as well as recordings, available to everyone. To our knowledge, it is the first and only course of its kind offered inside the company.

As the course continues to be offered, more techniques will be tried and added to the model, as they prove successful with instructors and target audience. As this model is extremely successful, it will be used for the other courses in the curriculum that focus on skill development.

DOCUMENTATION

Needs Identification

1. *Describe the problem or need for which this practice is designed and implemented. How was this problem identified, and how was it determined that this practice is an appropriate response?*

One division of a large, global company has organized Professions as a development strategy for practitioners in critical roles. Each Profession is a peer-driven community of practitioners with similar roles, and, within the context of a structured development framework, is focused on enhancing the capability of members in terms of career, competency, and contribution to community. One of these Professions is the target audience for this practice.

The Profession is worldwide in scope and has approximately 800 members. These individuals are best classified as technology consultants and business consultants; they work on large customer engagements. A Profession Office (program office) is used to organize and lead the Profession.

One of the foundation courses for these practitioners is “Introduction to Discipline and Methodology”, a four-day class taught as an in-person workshop by two senior members of the Profession (each offering requires two instructors). This baseline course covers business principles and technology concepts within the context of the prescribed methodology for delivering a successful solution during a customer engagement. The workshop uses lecture, individual and group exercises, and small-group project work in a highly interactive and collaborative format. It is viewed as an excellent training program by members of the Profession.

In mid 2002 the problem began to emerge, as scheduled courses were cancelled due to lack of enrollment. Calls to practitioners and stake-holders revealed that travel costs and living expenses incurred by practitioners to attend the course were prohibiting participation. This was particularly evident in the Americas.

The Profession Office, several senior practitioners of the Profession, and Workforce Development joined forces to solve this problem. This design team recommended the development and implementation of a blended learning solution using a virtual classroom and distance learning techniques. It was planned to cover the same content as the in-person course.

During the planning stage, members of the Profession (the practitioners who use this practice) were skeptical as to the ability to replace the social interaction, people networking, and building of rapport that took place in the traditional face-to-face class with an online learning solution. Therefore, in addition to the business requirements, a design requirement for individual interaction was established.

In summary, the practice is required to

- ✓ Provide participants with the opportunity to achieve the same level of content knowledge that the traditional lecture course offered.
- ✓ Eliminate the travel costs and living expenses of participants, without incrementing the cost of delivery.
- ✓ Retain as much of the interaction and collaboration from the in-person course as feasible.

The design team believed that the requirements above could be achieved with minimal risk relative to practitioner acceptance. The company already had in place a full-featured virtual classroom application, along with the infrastructure to support it. A plan to move forward with the design, development, pilot, and evaluation of the practice was approved by the Profession Office (client).

Design Values

2. *Please describe how this practice takes into account the best interests of both the organization and the employees targeted.*

The Profession needs competent practitioners to deliver business results as well as contribute to company-wide initiatives and demonstrate continuous improvement. This practice

- ✓ Improves the capability of the practitioners
- ✓ Contributes to the bottom line as a result of cost savings
- ✓ Assists in growing the number of practitioners with this critical skill-set
- ✓ Provides a means for the Profession to contribute to the company-wide initiative on the “Total Employee Experience”
- ✓ Responds to a major issue raised by employees on the company-wide Voice of the Workforce survey regarding workload and time expectations. The inconvenience

and time for travel to a central training site are eliminated for both instructors and participants.

- ✓ Directly links practitioners to a vast repository of information and tools related to their profession
- ✓ Provides a successful strategy to improve other existing development programs as well as address future development needs

The practitioners benefit from

- ✓ Having a first-class program to acquire the competencies
- ✓ Networking with their peers
- ✓ Acquiring information on knowledge sharing tools/process/websites to help make their job easier
- ✓ Participating without the time-drain and inconvenience of travel for development programs.

This last point is significant, as employee feedback on the annual company-wide Voice of the Workforce survey identified the amount of work/time expected of employees as currently one of the most significant issues that the company needs to address.

The practitioners (both the participants and the senior level instructors) wanted an interactive learning environment. Based upon the results, this requirement was satisfied by the use of

- ✓ Live sessions via a virtual classroom intranet application
- ✓ Interactive exercises used in the instructor presentations/discussions
- ✓ A common workspace using team/collaboration software
- ✓ Small group project work threaded through the course

Workforce Development, the organization responsible for the development and training of the employees,

- ✓ Has a proof-point to show it can help the company become more efficient (cost and time savings) in employee development
- ✓ Is benefiting (learning) as the techniques used in this practice are transferable to many other employee development situations. (Time and effort went into documenting

this practice for knowledge sharing purposes in Workforce Development. The evaluation of this practice using Kirkpatrick's four level model is ongoing, and results will continue to be shared in Workforce Development)

- ✓ Has improved utilization of the original investment in virtual classroom tools
- ✓ Can demonstrate the way by which Workforce Development contributes to the company's worldwide initiatives such as the "Total Employee Experience" by providing employees with more convenient and accessible development programs

Alignment

3. *How is this practice in alignment with the performance identified, as described in your answer to question 1?*

This practice is aligned with both the business and program design requirements identified in the response to question 1.

- ✓ The competencies addressed in the in-person course are addressed in the virtual classroom program. In fact, this design/development effort provided a much-needed update and expansion of the content and materials. The new course will have greater content value at the next offering than the original course.
- ✓ Participants and instructors no longer travel to a training site. In the pilot of this practice, participants were located in USA (many different states), Mexico, and New Zealand; while the instructors were in Boston, MA. Savings to date have averaged \$27,000 per offering.
- ✓ Although classroom facilities are not required in this practice, an additional resource is needed - a virtual classroom facilitator who acts as course coordinator. Costs associated with these resources balance one another, so cost of delivery is approximately equal for both this practice and the original course. Additionally, we have slowly ramped up the number of participants per class from 12 to 20. Therefore, in the long term, this increased class size will result in improved delivery efficiency metrics along with increased savings in travel and living expenses per offering.
- ✓ Collaboration is a critical requirement. Beyond the interactive exercises and activities during class sessions, group projects enable participants to work together outside of class session to construct a team case throughout the course, building on concepts and principles learned in class. Teams have access to virtual classroom, shared workspace, and other collaborative tools all day; instructors can visit breakouts for consultations. Each team member has opportunities to present the case and receive feedback from instructors and peers. This level of collaboration and leadership is rarely found in virtual classroom courses today.
- ✓ Social interaction, networking, and building rapport are an important part of this course. In addition to introductions, class discussions, banter, and group project work, the following activities contribute to building community during the course.
 - Personal/professional and contact information of instructors and learners on web site
 - Photographs posted with biographic information on the web site and displayed in the virtual classroom when each person talks
 - Pre-session and in-class whiteboard and web-based activities
 - Guest presenters from the field who share their experiences

The web site remains available to participants after the course ends. They can use it to play recorded sessions for remediation and review, network with participants in their

class and other classes, share materials and discussions, and provide support to classes currently underway.

Overall, participants receive the equivalent or expanded content in less time (5-6 hours/day), with fewer hours away from their jobs. They are able to stay at their desks, with less disruption to their daily work. Some practitioners even participated in the course from their customer's site.

4. *Please describe how this practice integrates other training, learning, and performance improvement practices, and aligns itself with organizational goals to achieve the desired outcomes.*
- ✓ As noted above, this practice supports the division-wide initiative "Total Employee Experience" (TEE) as well as those concerning feedback received on the Voice of the Workforce survey.
 - One of the key items in the TEE initiative is the ability of employees to keep current in terms of role-required skills and knowledge. "Introduction to Discipline and Methodology" is a development program designed to accomplish this for members of this Profession as well as internal employees not currently in the Profession, but investigating a career change.
 - This practice clearly supports initiatives dealing with "workload/time expectations" from feedback on the Voice of the Workforce survey. First, the inconvenience of travel to a training site by participants and instructors is eliminated. Second, since the program begins mid-afternoon on Monday and ends by noon on Friday, practitioners have this time (normally used for travel) to apply to their customer-focused workload.
 - ✓ The practice supports Workforce Development's efforts to continually improve the quality and cost effectiveness of development programs. Of particular emphasis is the application of technology in this endeavor. This practice is clearly in line with these objectives and provides Workforce Development with a "proof point" in this area.
 - ✓ As noted earlier, the Profession is a peer-driven community and practitioners are expected to teach one another through mentoring as well as serve as instructors of formal training. To support this objective the practice includes preparing field practitioners to instruct this virtual classroom experience. A variety of resources are available to support new instructors, including the course web site and recorded sessions.
 - ✓ "Introduction to Discipline and Methodology" This course is a prerequisite to follow-on activities in the curriculum maintained by Workforce Development. Content is aligned with the Job Description maintained in Human Resources Systems, and this learning solution is identified in the division-wide development planning system maintained by Workforce Planning. Additionally, the company-wide learning management system is used to enroll in these offerings.
 - ✓ The course provides many opportunities for active learning. Practitioners learn the methodology through the use of a hypothetical case used to illustrate the concepts

and principles throughout the class, and by applying those concepts and principles as the class continues to actual cases submitted as prework. By doing so, they not only further the work of the case “owner,” they practice a new way to conceptualize and present customer situations that will improve their own work. They practice leadership skills within project teams and in their class presentations.

5. What evidence is there of partnerships within and outside the organization (e.g. with senior management, frontline supervisors, unions, external training suppliers, consortia)?

There are many partnerships involved in the practice during design and development as well as delivery.

- ✓ The Profession office and Workforce Development (the Global Development Group) teamed for the assessment, design, and development of this practice.
- ✓ Senior practitioners from the global Profession served as reviewers during the design and development stage as well as serve as the instructors for “Introduction to Discipline and Methodology” during the delivery stage.
- ✓ Customer Education, a separate business group, supplied the virtual classroom resources as well as a virtual classroom coordinator.
- ✓ Workforce Development has delivery organizations set up by geographic region. These organizations both fund and schedule delivery. The Americas region and the European region are actively engaged.
- ✓ Externally, several conference call companies have been used during delivery.
- ✓ Results of this practice have been shared with the leaders of the organizations cited above.

Evaluation Strategy

6. *How is this practice evaluated? What factors are included in your calculations (e.g. time, costs, staff count, lost phone calls, customer satisfaction)? Are the financial costs of this practice calculated? If so, how? How often is this practice evaluated?*

The basis for the evaluation of this practice is Kirkpatrick’s four level model. This practice is the base-level course in the curriculum; as such it focuses on knowledge rather than skills. The follow-on courses and development activities focus on specific skills related to service delivery. An evaluation strategy was developed to address the effectiveness of the entire curriculum over time.

Because this course is the conceptual foundation of the curriculum, application of content (level 3) and business and financial results (level 4) for the practitioner is not included in course objectives as they are with the skills-related courses. However, level 3 and 4 results can be measured in other ways. Behavior can be assessed in terms of the way practitioners think about and do their jobs differently after the course, and whether they pursue additional courses and development activities in the Profession.

Results can be measured in terms of cost savings attributable to the new form of training. Highlights are presented in the table below.

To date, the savings per delivery have been calculated using an estimated travel cost and living expense totaling \$1500 per participant per course offering. Additional savings might be calculated by factoring in the time practitioners remained at work and are able to continue job tasks between class sessions. For example, some participants attended project and customer meetings and continued phone and email communication on class days; some listened to the audio portion of the sessions on their mobile phones on the way to meetings. These “opportunity cost savings” are not included in this assessment.

Although the initial intent was to evaluate the change from the traditional lecture class to distance learning using a blended learning program, this was not possible due to the lack of historical data. Therefore, the evaluation of this course is based on the impact of the blended learning solution.

Level	Focus	Method/Measure
4	Business Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Savings per course delivery based on elimination of travel and living expenses ✓ Improved efficiency based upon larger class size
3	Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Post course on-line survey conducted 3 months after course completion ✓ Post course interviews (follow-up to post-course survey)
2	Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Small group work evaluated in report-outs by instructors and peers ✓ In-class exercises, self quizzes, and end of module reviews ✓ A pre-/post-test is being developed and will be added in the future.
1	Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ End-of-course Participant Opinion Forms ✓ End of course debrief of instructors and support personal (with participation of Profession Office Lead, the client, if available) ✓ In-class polls using virtual classroom tools ✓ In-class end of day participant critique ✓ During pilot, daily web-based feedback form

Results

7. *What specific participant behaviors are observed as a result of this practice, and how do these behaviors contribute to the goals of the practice? Are the impacts of these behaviors short-term or long-term? How do these behaviors differ from the results of previous practices?*

Behaviors desired are: (a) participants will express acceptance and enthusiasm for the learning experience; (b) they will begin using the concepts and principles of the methodology to conceptualize the way they do their work and communicate with their customers; (c) they will demonstrate motivation to continue their development as part of the Profession; (d) both participants and instructors will adopt the blended learning model as a valid and effective one for accomplishing professional development.

The most significant change in behavior measured and observed is in the field practitioners -- members of the Profession and users of this blended learning program. During the original architecture of the solution, this target audience was extremely skeptical of the distance learning solution, particularly in light of the success of the original course. Implementation of this practice and associated results has changed their perception of the effectiveness of distance learning using blended learning techniques.

- ✓ In 2002, courses were cancelled due to lack of enrollments. Today, a “wait list” exists to capture practitioners in excess of scheduled capacity. This is clearly a change in behavior of the target audience and their management, an expected long-term change. (Even with a late start in 2003, a minimum of 4 courses will be delivered in comparison to 6 courses for the entire year of 2002. For 2004 16 courses are budgeted)
- ✓ Both practitioners and the regional Workforce Development organization in Europe have requested assistance in launching this practice.
- ✓ Formal requests for participation from South Africa and the Philippines have been received.

In terms of participant opinion of this practice (Level 1), results exceed expectations and are displayed in the chart below. This data was obtained during the first 3 offerings with 48 participants.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This learning experience has been worth my time away from my job				24%	76%
This training will increase my effectiveness on the job				35%	65%
I would recommend this learning experience to my peers		2%		16%	82%
The skills/concepts are highly relevant to my job				27%	73%
I believe the program achieved its stated objectives			2%	24%	74%
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Overall, I would rate this program			13%	24%	63%

Comments on evaluations include

“An excellent course....”

“The technology is working quite well.”

“The group sessions are very useful...”

“The examples... were very good.”

“The exercises were very helpful.”

“Having experts on the call...was really good.”

“The material was ideal for virtual training.”

“Excellent presentations with many interactive sessions to stop the wandering off syndrome...”

“Activities... were timed well and... were very effective.”

“The interactive parts were very good – almost like being in a classroom.”

“I was originally very reluctant, but now I know that it works well!!!”

“The [instructors for]...my first virtual class...have set the standards high.”

“Great course. The presenters used the [virtual classroom] medium to the best effect I have seen so far.”

“I can apply much of the material right away. That is great.”

“With budget constraints this method...delivered what I needed the best possible way.”

Participants were asked at the end of the course how they planned to use what they learned. Over half of the respondents expected to begin using the framework and many of the concepts in planning and doing their work – even before learning the details of service delivery. Two-thirds of respondents to the Level 3 follow-up survey indicated that they had, in fact, begun using it to better understand customer problems and communicate with them more effectively.

The level 1 data show that our audience found the blended, virtual classroom solution very acceptable ... a distinct change in perceptions from those prior to the pilot delivery. Given the remote and distributed nature of online classes, the responsiveness and dedication of participants was remarkable. Although several people had to drop out before each class was run due to illness or customer priorities, once the class began, all participants remained actively engaged throughout, completing all assignments and the course, including the final session on Friday.

Feedback from the Level 3 (Application) post-course online survey is just starting to come in. Examples from the survey include:

After completing the course, I was able to use the information I learned	
Immediately	33%
Within one month	22%
Have not used it yet	44%

The knowledge I gained has helped me do my job more effectively

Strongly agree	22%
Agree	66%
Disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	0%

These responses will be used to generate the questionnaire used for post-course interviews that are planned to begin in October.

First-time virtual classroom instructors, who were initially skeptical about the effectiveness of the medium, were not only surprised by the capabilities of the application, but also expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the classes. There are, of course, still challenges to be addressed and participants who did not find the experience to their liking. But the general enthusiasm expressed by instructors and participants has generated ideas for building on the success of the practice.

The Level 4 evaluation - financial savings per delivery of \$27,000 - have caught the attention of management in Workforce Development, the Profession, and the division. It contributes directly to cost saving initiatives. This practice is currently being used as a "proof-point" by Workforce Development to demonstrate value added to the company. These types of positive reinforcement, of course, promote the continued use of this practice and are a motivational factor for the design team involved.

As noted previously, class size has increased from 12 to 20 participants per class, and use of this practice improves the utilization of the company's investment in on-line learning tools.

8. What was the impact of the practice on your organization? Are the impacts of these behaviors short-term or long-term?

- ✓ The success of this practice has greatly improved the reputation of Workforce Development in the eyes of our customer, the Profession Office, and members of the Profession. This has created a much more synergetic relationship between these parties. It is definitely long-term and will be reinforced through on-going development projects.
- ✓ Due to the very successful results, this practice received a lot of attention at all levels in the Workforce Development organization. This, no doubt, had a significant influence on next year's budget (fiscal year begins November 1st), and this design team currently has a budget increase (year-over-year) for learning solution design and development.
- ✓ The success of this practice also gave members of the design team increased visibility in Workforce Development, and the Profession Office an enhanced reputation with members of the Profession. This form of recognition is certainly motivational, but typically short-term. However, based upon anticipated results of on-going projects, it is anticipated this design team will experience a series of repeated short-term successes, creating a long-term impact.
- ✓ A major report on this practice was prepared and circulated throughout Workforce Development. This was followed up with a number of presentations to other development groups. Given the number and nature of inquiries that resulted, it is anticipated that more blended learning solutions will result from this activity. This is a long-term impact.
- ✓ In the Americas, 6 programs were run in 2002 (face-to-face), 4 virtual classroom programs during half of 2003, and 16 virtual classroom programs are budgeted/forecasted for 2004. This increase is significant and has caused the Americas Workforce Development Group a major problem to solve - the preparation of a sufficient supply of field practitioners to be instructors. Due to the design of the Profession and the focus on contribution to the community by members, this problem will be resolved in the short-term.
- ✓ The success of the live, instructor-led blended learning experience has influenced the Profession and the Profession Office to consider this type of distance learning for future training programs in support of new development offerings. Although in-person workshops remain the preferred method of facilitating this type of learning if economic considerations were not an issue, most stakeholders agree that the level of interaction achieved in this course was reasonable and met participant expectations. Therefore, more cost-saving programs using this model will be used in the curriculum. This shift in plans has resulted from an objective comparison of requirements to the capability demonstrated by this practice. This is a long-term change.

Shared Learning

9. *What have been some of the specific lessons learned from designing and implementing this practice for the purposes of continuous internal improvement? Please discuss whether and how this practice might be transferred and replicated both internally and external to your organization.*

The make-up of the design team for a live, instructor-led, blended learning program using a virtual classroom is critical. In this case, a major effort was made to identify an instructional designer with extensive classroom teaching experience and another with extensive virtual classroom experience.

Several specific learnings (really recommendations) for the delivery of live, instructor-led blended learning programs using a virtual classroom include

- ✓ Identify a dedicated, experienced virtual classroom facilitator who will become familiar with content and objectives, instructor's style and approach, and play an active role during the course.
- ✓ Ensure sufficient time for instructor preparation, practice, and rehearsal ... this includes time to learn how to use the virtual classroom application as well as the course design and teaching plan.
- ✓ Have contingency/backup plans for everything: virtual classroom sessions, phone connections, course web site (shared workspace).
- ✓ Consider various ways to use the shared workspace before, during, and after the course – this reinforces continuity and knowledge sharing. Encourage collaboration among former and current participants.
- ✓ Provide information in various ways -- such as web documents, virtual classroom handouts, chat messages -- for redundancy, different kinds of access, and learning preferences.

It is a “must” to put together an evaluation plan during the initial planning of the program, executing that evaluation plan, documenting and “marketing” the results. This is essential for sharing of information and convincing others in the organization to take some level of risk and move forward with potential improvements.

Team with your client as much as possible. The positive short-term and long-term benefits of this partnership are critical for success and continued growth.

The items noted above are transferable to both internal and external organizations.

Contact

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