E-Learning Today

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ASTD, Radisson Hotel
March 27, 2007

Your Background & Interests

• When you think of E-Learning, what comes to mind?
• What have been your experiences with E-Learning?
• What do you most want to know about E-Learning?
Overview

- What is E-Learning?
- Why consider E-Learning?
- When is E-Learning appropriate?
- Why choose E-Learning over F2F? (benefits)
- Why not choose (potential barriers)
- Time-saving tips
- Testing approaches
- Point to ponder
- Your questions?

Example: Audio Learning

[Image source: http://www.sarathomsen.com/choirsongs.htm]
Example: Self Paced Content

Example: Breaking Task Into Parts
What is E-Learning?

- Education in any electronic form
- Typically over the Internet, intranet, stand-alone computer, or other electronic delivery method (e.g. MP3 player)
- Many tools: course management systems (CMS), blogs, wikis, podcasting, audio & video conferencing, online discussion forums, virtual worlds, photo sharing, social networking, online assessment & grading tools

Course/Learning Management Systems e.g. Moodle, WebCT

- Discussion forum
- Synchronous chat
- Quizzes, tests
- Drop box for assignments
- Course calendar
- Grades
- Monitoring learner participation
- Copy course over from semester

- Customization
- Uploading files (e.g. Word docs, PowerPoint, audio files)
- Linking to external web sites (e.g. syllabus on instructor’s site; library)
- Restricted access
Discussion Forum

Written, asynchronous online discussion:

• Photo (or avatar) of participant next to post

• Entire discussion can be read (all posts visible), with indents to show threads/nested view

Chat (synchronous)

Moodle chat has basic text chat functions, plus photos/avatars; also can save chat transcript for later viewing

WebCT chat has basics plus: white board, raise hand, view & print chat log.
Video Chat (synchronous)

Multi-Media Synchronous: Breeze
Multi-Media Synchronous: Elluminate

Why Consider E-Learning?

• Changing demands:
  – Learners
  – Instructors
  – Education institutions
  – Employers
  – Market competition & collaboration
  – Global society
• It is now possible technologically
  – Internet
  – Hardware & software advances
  – Availability of computers
When is E-Learning appropriate?

If E-Learning is:
• Better than or equal to face-to-face (f2f) and/or
• If f2f is less feasible

Why Choose E-Learning Over F2F?
• Study & teach any time, anywhere
• Flexible pacing, sequencing, style of learning
• Easy and anytime access (resources, library, instructors)
• Increased accessibility for students with disabilities & speakers of other languages
• Interaction with and among students from diverse backgrounds and regions (state, national, global)
• Students not pre-judged by each other on their physical characteristics
• Geared to lifelong learning
Why Choose (Continued)

- Greater potential for interaction among students & between students & instructor
- Constructivist approach enhanced because of ease of responding to individual student interests & needs (customize delivery, resources)
- If blended/hybrid, class time can then be used for critical analysis of what students have learned online (rather than using class time for providing info)
- Archiving of student responses electronically enables easier assessment of student work (and of instructor teaching)

Why Not Choose? Potential Barriers

- Acceptance as viable alternative
- Cost of development
- Concern about loss of interaction, contact
- Access to technology & to the Internet
- Self-discipline & online skills needed
- Time consuming:
  - Learning new skills (tech & teaching)
  - Redesigning old or creating new courses
- Concern about compromising existing high standards & reputation of institution
Time Saving Tips

Identify up front:

- what needs to be accomplished (& do those things first)
- skill & knowledge level (instructors & learners) --> plan with these in mind (e.g. training, support)
- time available to work on task and then stick to this timeline.
- what delivery options are available --> then which are quickest, easiest & still accomplish goals
- what has already been done & can be used? (don’t reinvent wheel). Google is your friend!
- who can help: share ideas & skills (divide up work)

Testing Approaches

- Formative? Summative?
- Computer scored
- Written: open ended, discussion forums, glossary
- Journal, blog, wiki
- Work sample sharing (e.g. Moodle Workshop), E-Portfolios
Points to Consider

• Being an effective teacher F2F does not guarantee online teaching success
• Prepare students & instructors for their roles
• Need to have system to support technology, instructors & students
• One size doesn’t fit all: consider context (desired learner outcomes; appropriate match with students, instructor, and DE support system).
• Even simple online tools, used correctly, can be highly effective

Points to Consider (Cont)

• Use online technology to go beyond rather than merely try to replicate F2F strategies
• Be realistic, adopt new techniques in manageable chunks
  – Design for sustainability after initial euphoria has worn off
• Hold ourselves accountable to high standards (as we would for F2F)
• Technology is not the point: learning is (or: technology is merely a tool to enhance teaching & learning, and not an end in and of itself)
• No model dictates rigor, support, accessibility and quality. The institution, instructors & learners in the program determine this.
Resources