

## Best Practice Guide

### Converting to a Distance Learning Format

Training Scenario: A training manager has been frustrated with the quality of communication among trainees in his face-to-face training sessions and wants to try something new. With his supervisor's permission, the trainer plans to convert all current training modules to a blended format, which would provide trainees and trainers the opportunity to interact with each other and learn the material in both a face-to-face and online environment. In addition, he is considering putting all of his training materials on a server so that the trainees have access to resources and assignments at all times.

#### **Pre-Planning Strategies to Consider for Conversion:**

1. **Start planning early.** The planning process of the design and conversion is critical to complete in advance.
2. **Determine what learners need to know.** Keep in mind that courses previously taught in traditional classrooms may need to be retooled. Decide what objectives can be learned online or face-to-face.
3. **Create a storyboard layout.** Key to any type of asynchronous course and should be planned very carefully to be effective. Plan what you will say and what you will do.
4. **Seek help.** Take time to talk to other instructors who have taught blended courses on similar topics and discuss your ideas. If a design team is available, ask for help and work with them.
5. **Choose the technology to be used.** After objectives have been written and approved, select an instructional technology that will deliver content and that students will use to access content, which will maximize efficiency and make available more resources for other learning experiences. Make sure you have the technology with access for both the facilitator and students
  - Consider student capabilities and preparedness to use
  - Become familiar with hardware and software chosen
    - o Course Management System
    - o Learning Management System
    - o Wiki

**6. Determine instructional method to be used.** The chosen instructional method should be based on the characteristics of the instructor, students, content and delivery system and at the same time match the type of learning outcomes defined in the objectives.

**7. Course information and organization for students.**

Class schedules for both face-to-face and distance learning dates

Syllabus - Instructional Plan and primary communication with learners

- Traditional class sessions
- Distance class sessions
- Student role
- Structure of course
- Expectations: student responsibilities and rubric
- Guidelines for assignments and activities
- Assessment process
- Instructor contact information
- Technical difficulties: Resources and alternatives

Resources

- Equipment for student use
- Software and technical resource staff
- Communication resources for student access
- Library and course resources
- Means for distribution and collection of coursework materials

### **Aspects of Original Training Program Enhanced in Distance Learning Format**

1. **From teacher-center to student-centered learning.** Students become active participants engaged in the learning process as self-directed learners.
2. **Active learning community.** Involves active participation of both instructor and students. Cultural awareness,

responsibilities to be courteous, well-mannered, and appropriate use of language

3. **Student interaction with online content, instructor-student interaction and student-student interaction.** Facilitated by active learning practices:

#### **New Role as the Trainer**

1. Create learning environment to encourage student interactivity that is supportive, open and respectful.
2. Provide a detailed syllabus that clearly defines expectations for course and specific guidelines.
3. Create Q&A discussion area for students to posts their questions and instructor posts answers frequently.
4. Timely response to questions contributes to supportive learning environment and encourages interactivity.
5. Communicate frequently with students to show instructor cares.
6. Facilitator of active learning
  - Participate in all synchronous and asynchronous discussions
  - Case analysis
  - Q&A discussion forum
  - Structured Discussion or debate
  - Virtual field trip

#### **Steps to Take to Encourage Trainees to Communicate Online:**

1. Icebreaker -Sessions where students get to know each other in order to build a community of learners and humanizes learning experience
2. Establish Q&A discussion forum in which students can post their questions, which should be answered in a timely, supportive manner.
3. Build learning community that include:
4. Discussion
  - Guideline for posts and responses
  - Active participation by both instructor and students

## Technology Resources

| <b>Course Management Systems</b> |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 15 Desks                         | <a href="http://www.15desks.com/index.php">http://www.15desks.com/index.php</a>                 |
| Ectolearn                        | <a href="http://www.ectolearning.com/default.aspx">http://www.ectolearning.com/default.aspx</a> |
| Edu2.0                           | <a href="http://www.edu20.org">http://www.edu20.org</a>   |
| Moodle                           | <a href="http://www.moodle.org">http://www.moodle.org</a>                                       |
| RCampus                          | <a href="http://www.rcampus.com">http://www.rcampus.com</a>                                     |
| School Rack                      | <a href="http://www.schoolrack.com">http://www.schoolrack.com</a>                               |

| <b>Wikis - Free</b> |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Blogger             | <a href="http://www.blogger.com">http://www.blogger.com</a>       |
| Blogspot            | <a href="http://www.blogspot.com">http://www.blogspot.com</a>     |
| Wikispaces          | <a href="http://www.wikispaces.com">http://www.wikispaces.com</a> |

## Pre-Planning Checklist

- Storyboard complete
  
- Management System chosen
  
- Comfortable knowledge of software
  - Class Schedule
  - Calendar
  - Syllabus
  - Videos
  - Podcasts
  - Presentations
  - Course Materials
  - Discussion
  - 
  - Miscellaneous

## References

Durrington, V., Berryhill, A., & Swafford, J. (2006). Strategies for enhancing student interactivity in an online environment. *College Teaching* 54(1), 190-193. Retrieved from [http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/433631/strategies\\_for\\_enhancing\\_student\\_interactivity\\_in\\_an\\_online\\_environment](http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/433631/strategies_for_enhancing_student_interactivity_in_an_online_environment)

Piskurich, G. (2010). Planning and designing online courses. Retrieved from <http://sylvan.live.college.com/ec/crs/default.learn?CourseID=474467&Survey=1&47=6469849&ClientNodeID=984650&coursenav=1&bhco-1>.

Simonson, M., Smaldino, S., Albright, M., & Zvacek. S. (2009). *Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education* (4th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.