BLENDED LEARNING MODELS IN ACADEMIC FRATERNITY

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Abstract:
Organizations today are looking beyond the automation of traditional training models to new approaches to knowledge transfer and performance support that are better aligned with business goals and deliver measurable results. By focusing on the specific business objective, blended learning techniques were used to deliver learning programs. This re-thinking also allows us to break free from the concept of a “course” and consider approaches that provide a continuous learning process with active participation by the entire organization in sharing, teaching and mentoring mission-critical knowledge. Blended training is one of the leading trends in the training industry today. The term blended learning is used to describe a solution that combines several different delivery methods, such as collaboration software, Web-based courses, EPSS, and knowledge management practices. It is also used to describe learning that mixes various event-based activities, including face-to-face classrooms, live e-learning, and self-paced learning. This article explains the three different models of blended learning in order to improve the learner’s skills.

Key words: Dimensions of Blend, Ingredients of Blend, Benefits of Blend and its Model.

Dimensions of Blend

The top three advantages of blended learning chosen by students pertained to: the flexibility of being able to complete assignments in any place/at any time; the convenience of not having to come to campus as often; the benefits of the online component when job responsibilities and other commitments make it difficult to attend face-to-face classes. A blended learning experience combines offline and online forms of learning where the online learning usually means “over the Internet or intranet,” and offline learning happens in a more traditional classroom setting. This type of blending may include a learning program that provides study materials and research resources over the Web while providing instructor-led, classroom training sessions as the main medium of instruction. Self-paced learning implies solitary, on-demand learning at a pace that is managed or controlled by the learner.

Collaborative learning on the other hand implies a more dynamic communication among many learners that brings about knowledge sharing. Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2005). The blending of self-paced and collaborative learning may include review of important literature on a regulatory change or new product followed by a moderated; live online, peer-to-peer discussion of the material’s application to the learner’s job and customers. Not all forms of learning imply a pre-meditated, structured or formal learning program with
organized content in specific sequence like chapters in a text book. In fact, most learning in the workplace occurs in an unstructured form such as meetings, hallway conversations, and e-mail.

A blended program design may look to capture active conversations and documents from unstructured learning events into knowledge repositories available on-demand, supporting the way knowledge-workers collaborate and work. The true success and effectiveness of learning in organizations is believed to be associated with the paradigm where work (such as business applications) and learning are inseparable, and where learning is embedded in business processes such as hiring, sales, or product development. Work becomes a source of learning content to be shared and more learning content becomes accessible on-demand and in the context of the user’s workplace need.

Ingredients of the Blend

Synchronous physical formats
- Instructor-led Classrooms & Lectures
- Hands-on Labs & Workshops
- Field Trips

Synchronous online formats (Live eLearning)
- e-Meetings
- Virtual Classrooms
- Web Seminars and Broadcasts
- Coaching
- Instant Messaging

Self-paced, asynchronous formats
- Documents & Web Pages
- Web/Computer-Based Training Modules
- Assessments/Tests & Surveys
- Simulations
- Job Aids & Electronic Performance Support Systems (EPSS)
- Recorded live events
- Online Learning Communities and Discussion Forums

Benefits of Blend

- Interactive online opportunities before the employee starts work to introduce them to learning resources and their team, and enable them to be better prepared for success
- A physical classroom kick-off event for acculturation and teambuilding
- A series of self-paced, online tutorials covering the company’s product or service
- An asynchronous, online discussion forum created to allow participants to share customer case studies or scenarios
- A series of live, collaborative coaching sessions where the new employees talk with members of the management team
- An online, Web-based post-test that certifies the competency of new employees
- An online survey that allows participants to provide their feedback about the learning program for future improvements
Beyond the short initial kickoff session, the remainders of these events take place in the employee’s work context over an extended period of time – minimizing the employee’s time-to-productivity while fostering internalization and application of key learning in the job context.

**Skill Driven Models**

Learning specific knowledge and skills requires regular feedback and support from the trainer, facilitator, or peer. Blended learning that's skill-driven mixes interaction with a facilitator through email, discussion forums, and face-to-face meetings with self-paced learning, such as Web-based courses and books. This type of approach is analogous to a chemical reaction, in which interaction with the instructor or facilitator acts as a catalyst to achieve the desired reaction--learning.

**Attitude-Driven Model**

Technology-based techniques like LMS, email push, Simulations and webinar.

Non-technology-based techniques like phone, study groups, face-to-face meetings, Workshops. Content that deals with developing new attitudes and behaviors requires peer-to-peer interaction and a risk-free environment.

**Competency-Driven Model**

To capture and transfer tacit knowledge, learners must interact with and observe experts on the job. The success of knowledge workers depends on how quickly employees make decisions in the work place. While part of the decision-making process is guided by common facts and working principles, people also need tacit knowledge that's often retained by experts. Learning that facilitates the transfer of tacit knowledge requires a competency-driven approach. Because people absorb tacit knowledge by observing and interacting with experts on the job, activities may include a blend of online performance support tools with live mentoring.
CONCLUSION

Practice which promotes achievement of high-quality learning outcomes and positive student learning experiences, with high teacher satisfaction and a reasonable workload that allows staff time for research and scholarship" Just as blended learning affords benefits and presents challenges for students and institutions, as students and institutions meet challenges, they give rise to success. As students learn to manage their expectations and feelings of isolation, universities overcome time and support issues, and students and institutions embrace technology challenges, success emanates. While the concept of blended learning is new to the adult learner the results indicate that persons pursuing higher education in the area of management are open to the idea of integrating technology into course delivery. However, the results show that it is very important for postgraduate students to interact with their peers and engage in classroom discussion. Higher education institutions must understand the needs and preferences of their students in the design of blended learning programmes. The area of students’ motivation in working in the online environment within the context of the Caribbean learner would make for an interesting study. As the pace of technology increases and more and better mediums become available, schools would be able to implement better and more efficient techniques to overcome some of the shortcoming of blended delivery.
References: