

Too Much to Do...Too Little Time – Breaking the Boundaries of Leadership Development Access

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Leadership development is not solved through a "quick fix" solution, but instead develops through small changes. Today's leaders need to have opportunities for development beyond traditional workshops. The information needs to be available in many different formats and whenever the window of opportunity is available. Members of the Ohio State University Extension Training and Development team have created a website that offers access to learning and development 24-hours a day. This website connects users with resources and ideas for gaining more control of how they use time in their life. Offering leadership development opportunities through distance learning, is another way to break traditional boundaries

Background

To remain viable in today's high touch informational society, formal and non-formal teaching must incorporate computer-based instruction. Educators must keep up with the technological revolution that has restructured how people access knowledge. With the Internet, leaders have access to information, when, where and how they want it. To meet the requirements of leaders, educators must strive to create a learning environment that is accessible 24-hours a day. With every passing year many learners arrive with more and more high tech literacy. The younger generations in the workforce are described as "cyber literate" and "techno savvy" (Salopek, 2000). Training programs and learning experiences must catch the attention of those who grew up with the glitz and glamour of videos, MTV, computer games, and learning from high tech/interactive toys.

Dunerstadt (1999) would say that if we are not ready, we had better get ready! In Katz's book, *Dancing with the Devil*, Dunerstadt says:

The classroom itself may soon be replaced by more appropriate and efficient learning experiences. Indeed, such a paradigm shift may be forced on faculty by the students themselves. Today's students are members of the "digital generation." They have spent their early lives surrounded by robust, visual, electronic media... Unlike those of us who were raised in an era of passive, broadcast media such as radio and television, today's students expect—indeed demand—interaction. They approach learning as a "plug-and-play" experience...inclined to plunge in and learn through participation and experimentation. Although this type of learning is far different from the sequential, pyramidal approach of traditional college or university curriculum, it may be far more effective for this generation, particularly when provided through a media-rich environment (p. 12).

The quality of teaching and learning cannot be compromised when using computer-based training. Teaching and learning principles and theories are just as critical in high tech dissemination of information as they are in high touch learning environments. According to Knowles (1980), adults are generally motivated to learn due to internal or intrinsic factors rather than external or extrinsic factors. Research has shown that the majority of adults participate in learning because of a trigger event in their lives such as marriage or divorce, addition of a child, job change, etc. (Aslanian and Bricknell, 1980). With the emphasis upon workplace learning today, the majority of adults participate in learning related to a job or vocation (Apps, 1991). Based on this knowledge, a website on the topic of Time Management was developed.

Staff Development Opportunities through Distance Education

The Ohio State University Extension Training and Development Team which is a collaborative working environment of the Employee Development Network and the OSU Leadership Center strives to meet the needs of Extension employees in Ohio. Traditionally, workshops have been offered as face-to-face learning opportunities on campus or in county offices. In order to meet the needs of our employees, OSU Extension has developed a continuum of learning opportunities that now include: one-on-one coaching, traditional workshops, teleconferencing, educational e-mail messages, websites and multi-media training packages. In order to provide up-to-date leadership development training, the Training and Development Team created a website that offers access to learning and development 24-hours a day. This website connects users with resources and ideas for gaining more control of how they use time in their life.

The Time Management website, located at: <http://edn.ag.ohio-state.edu/TimeManagement/index.htm>, offers the opportunity to browse through six topics: *Creating Balance*, *Making Decisions*, *Dealing with Interruptions*, *Organizing*, *Managing Procrastination*, and *Setting Priorities*. This educational website offers a multi-dimensional approach to learning. Each section contains a self-assessment, general information on the topic, as well as helpful tips. A very important aspect of this website is the connection to additional resources that are available on loan for the participant's personal or professional development.

Offering leadership development via the Internet allows users the opportunity to access information that is normally offered only via face-to-face workshops. As educators, this allows us to reach potential audiences that we may miss due to the time constraints of today's learner. Also, some learners are more comfortable being anonymous and are more likely to seek development opportunities using computer-based technology. By providing information on six different aspects of Time Management via the website, the development team has made an effort to allow learners to access information with a specific focus, at the teachable moment.

Summary

The ***Too Much to Do... Too Little Time*** website has been available since May 8, 2002. In the first month, 239 users had utilized this website for leadership development in a 24/7 world. Future plans of the development team include efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of the website material, as well as the use of the web as a training tool. There are plans to examine the number of Time Management resources borrowed from the Leadership Center, in comparison to a similar time period prior to the availability of the website. Users of these materials will be contacted by random sample to assess their use of the website and of the resource materials, and the impact on the time management skills. In addition, users will be asked to compare the usefulness of this teaching method to more traditional formats.

As OSU Extension continues to stretch the boundaries of leadership development, creative training methods will be offered in a variety of formats whenever the window of opportunity is available.

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