FRAZZLED ABOUT DEVELOPING AN ON-LINE LEADERSHIP COURSE?
COME CHECK THIS OUT!

Association of Leadership Educations
2005 Annual Conference
July 11-14, 2005
Wilmington, NC

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Presentation Track: Practice

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Instructional design of any course can be stressful and frustrating for many instructors; however, if a course is not designed correctly the learner may become frustrated as well. The previous statement is heightened even more for distant delivered courses and on-line learners. Therefore, it is important to creatively design an on-line course that is interactive, fun, and engaging for the learner. One way to do this is to incorporate several hands-on experiences for the students enrolled in the course.

The hands-on experiences for an on-line leadership course consist of popular multimedia, discussion forums, on-line textbooks, service learning projects, and developing newsletters to showcase leadership experiences. Once you incorporate active teaching tools into your on-line course, essentially students become leaders of their learning.
**Introduction**

In teaching leadership or leadership skills, university faculty members essentially value the importance of face-to-face interaction with their students. However, this is not always possible with university faculty teaching graduate courses. With the increased responsibility at work and home, many graduate students do not have the opportunity to pursue a graduate degree in the traditional format: on-campus. Thus, it has become important to help meet the educational need of graduate students by providing quality courses in the curriculum via distance education (Pilcher & Miller, 2000). One graduate course that comes to mind is leadership education.

At the conclusion of this workshop, participants will be able to develop an on-line leadership course that utilizes on-line textbooks, concept maps, discussion forums, on-line tools for assessing leadership development, popular multimedia sources, case studies, service learning projects, and newsletter creations.

**Background/How it works**

The scariest thing about teaching an on-line leadership course is that you never truly get to interact with the students face-to-face; therefore, it forces the educator to become “creative” with their delivery methods. Although creativity is in the eye of the beholder, it does mean more than displaying Powerpoint® presentations and talking through your materials on each slide. Once you realize you need to deliver an effective leadership course on-line, the fun begins.
You must have a friendly and compatible software package like Camtasia Studio. Once the educator is trained to utilize the software, there are many content options to incorporate in the course.

One piece of material that becomes essential in a course is utilizing concept maps. It is beneficial for students to create a preliminary concept of what they think leadership is. This gives the educator a basis in which to work from. In addition, creating a final concept map at the end of the course can provide the educator with an outline of what the student has learned.

Several key components of an online leadership course become essential for active learning to take place. Some of those key components are: utilizing online text books, designing a discussion forum, utilizing multimedia (songs and movies) as case studies, creating service-learning teams to “practice leadership”, and developing a newsletter to showcase the leadership performed by students.

**Results to Date**

Teachers and students may like the face-to-face interaction that a traditional classroom employs but teaching and delivering an online leadership course can be just as successful. Let’s take a closer look at how key components of a leadership course were utilized to make it more effective.

An online textbook was identified to guide the course. The textbook that was chosen was one written by Kouzes and Posner (1999) called *Encouraging the heart: A leader’s guide to rewarding and recognizing others*. This was an easy and applicable
textbook for students to follow. Plus, it provided them with some basic principles of effective leadership.

In conjunction with the textbook, Powerpoint® presentations were utilized (no more than 30 minutes) and discussion forums were created. The Powerpoint® presentations highlighted the basic information for that particular week and the discussion forums provided opportunities for students to express their ideas, concerns, or feelings related to the chosen topic for that week.

After the basic components of the course were developed (textbook, presentations, and communication networks), more innovative teaching tools were utilized. Multimedia sources (songs and movies) were incorporated to effectively engage students in the teaching material. During the motivation section related to leadership, several songs were played on-line and students answered a series of questions related to leadership. Some questions were “How did the song make you feel?” and “How does this song relate to leadership?” Remember the Titans and Patch Adams were required movies for students to watch. These movies were treated as case studies and the focus was on how leadership is portrayed and developed.

Service-learning projects served as the capstone tool for the course. Students were divided into service-learning teams and were given their own discussion forum in which to communicate. Once assigned to a team, students collectively created and presented a proposal to the instructor describing the service-learning project they would engage in. Each team member carried out the service learning project, reflected daily about the project, and evaluated the effectiveness of the project. Newsletters were
created by each service learning team and were displayed on the discussion forum for other members of the class to see.

**Conclusions and Future Implications**

With the increase demand to offer distance delivered courses, university faculty members may want to consider innovative and fun ways to deliver those courses. By utilizing several different types of teaching tools, students can be actively engaged in their learning and never come to campus. Furthermore, faculty will not have to get frazzled about designing an on-line delivered course but rather get excited about the opportunities that await them.

**References**
