Online orientation to successful online learning

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Project Description and Goal Analysis

Currently, I work as an instructional designer for the department of Learning Design Solutions at Company A. Before starting this new career; I worked as a student advisor and retention coordinator. Because of my experience working in distance education and student advisor, I know that the main reason students drop out of an online course is frequently due to being unprepared for online learning. Most students’ drop out of online program because they don’t understand the nature of online education and don’t have realistic expectations about the type and amount of work involved. Preparing students for the online experience will allow them to have a better transition from their familiar traditional learning format to the online learning experience.

This instructional opportunity arose from the lack of online orientation and proper delivery to familiarize students with the challenges, technology, commitment, and uniqueness of the online format. Also, I know, from my student and professional experience that each learning management system is different and is not as intuitive as we might think. Therefore, providing an opportunity to get familiarized and to practice is important. Success in online learning requires “both initial preparation plus follow-up that includes continued practice and reinforcement across the curriculum” (Bowman, 2012). Through ongoing practice and reinforcement of these strategies, students can develop and maintain “self-directed learning habits that will enhance their current and future academic work.” (Bowman, 2012).

The instructional opportunity proposed would be conducted through CourseSite. “CourseSite provides every instructor with the most powerful tools to extend their classroom online, increase productivity and efficiency, and raise student engagement and achievement.”
Using CourseSite would allow students to practice, familiarize, and communicate with each other, share ideas while also learning the skills and strategies needed to be a successful online student. (A Comevo White Paper, 2014). The proposed plan for this course is for it to contain approximately four to five modules in which each student will gain the skills, needed to be a successful online student. Besides the technology aspect of an online education, there are other components that should be addressed to new online students. Those other components are a self-directed learning behaviors, and good time management skills which are necessary to be a successful online student. Another component and possibly the most important is communication. Students must be proficient at communicating effectively in writing. Because online courses have lower completion rates than face-to-face format, I believe the online orientations can close those gaps and improve retention. As more colleges and universities are offering online programs, it is important for them to offer online orientation to get students comfortable with the online format.

For this course, each module will focus on different elements of the online environment, such as technology, discussion board, assignments, LMS, resources, support, organization, and communication. The online orientation would be a two-hour session that is designed for a first time online students as well as continuing and returning students. The benefit of an online orientation course is that it helps student overcome challenges and to get exposure to the online platform upfront and before they consider taking online courses. The online student orientation is designed to help with retention and success rate of those students seeking online education. The goals for this online orientation are as follow:

1. To familiarize students with “Course Site,” the Learning Management System for this course, and to guide them through navigating the online classroom.
2. To give students time to familiarize themselves with the tools and resources they will use throughout the program/course.

3. Identify the characteristics and habits associated with success in online learners.

4. To prepared and help students be successful in an online course.

5. To act as a resource of helpful information that will remain accessible throughout the program/course.

**Learner Analysis**

Classifying the needs and the interests of the learners is necessary to the “planning, entry point, selection of topics, and sequencing of information” (Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2013, p.56). Because “learners carry their own unique cultural and educational background, as well as their own set of learning prerequisites or abilities”, (Pappas, 2014). It is important to understand who our target audience is. Online education is opening the doors of higher learning for a diversity of students with different needs and lifestyles than the traditional students. According to Education today, the average online learners is 34, the gender make-up is 53% female and 47% male and the racial identification of students is: 46.6% white, 24.8% black, 29.8% Hispanic, 3.2% Asian, and 4.6% others. (Online Universities, 2016).

They typically work full-time and want the ability to balance work, family and schooling. (College Atlas, 2015). However, this online orientation is intended for anyone interested in taking an online course. Their age can range from 25 to 50. Just as their education experiences vary from undergraduate degree to graduate level, so does their career experience. Students who wish to take the online orientation must have basic computer knowledge such as
how to use word document, use email and know how to save and retrieved files. In addition, they need to have access to a laptop or a desktop with internet access.

The online learning environment will allow for students to self-pace their learning. The majority of adult learners is goal oriented, self-directed, and are typically interested in learning about subjects that have an immediate effect to their career or personal life. (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003). Therefore it is important to let the adult learner know that their time is valued and that they are able to immediately apply the knowledge learned. (Ormrod, Schunk, & Gredler, 2009). This course will combine an adult learner approach and constructivist approach. Because adult learners have a diverse set of needs, the content presented will be beneficial to them, and include interactive presentations in which the students engage with the content by clicking to reveal information, watch video demonstrations, completing practice exercises, and take self-assessments. Students also will engage in practice activities, discussion and group board that would replicate their online course.

**Contextual Analysis**

Cognitive Science research has found that presenting instruction in a familiar context enriches both student achievement and student attitudes. Therefore, context plays a key role in the design and development of a problem base learning. (Morrison, et al, 2013). The student’s goal is to learn how to navigate an online course and acquire the skills and strategies to be successful. The convenience, flexible pacing for completing a program, work schedule and program requirements or distance from campus are the reason students chosen online education. The students will learn how to use the tools, resources and complete activities independently. The student may take the course before enrolling in an online program or are interested in
determining if an online course will fit in with their not so flexible schedule. Because the course will be offered in an online format, the students are responsible for completing the online course and, participating in asynchronous discussion board as well as group assignments. This format allows the students to work at their own pace, when their schedule allows within the set deadlines for assignment and participation. The learner will need a desktop or laptop with internet access, and Microsoft Word. The learner must want to share ideas with others in an online platform and have a dedicate schedule to regularly post and complete assignments. They must be proficient in reading and writing and be able to engage a wide range of followers. The student will be able to use the tools, resources to gain knowledge and understanding of the online environment.

**Task Analysis**

The task analysis begins with the needs derived from the definition of the instructional problem; these needs provide an initial definition of the breadth of the project and provide a focus. (Morrison, et, all, 2003). The eLearning environment will provide an asynchronous learning approach with learning activities that are both formal and informal. The students participating in this course have little or no experience in taking an online course. The students will acquire the skills to confidently maneuver through CourseSite. Students will learn how to navigate an online course, learn how to use all of the important tools and resource available in the orientation course. The following is an outline list that provides the facts and concepts in the orientation course.

I. Welcome
   a. Getting Started
b. Syllabus
c. Program Overview
d. Program Readiness

II. Navigating Your Online Classroom

a. Navigate CourseSite via interactive Image links
b. Student Quick Start Guide
c. Asynchronous vs. Asynchronous
d. Blog
e. VoiceThread
f. Online Readiness Assessment

III. Participate in Online Discussion

a. Access discussion forum
b. Access post
c. Post a response to a thread
d. Attach a file to a discussion forum

IV. Manage course assignments and quizzes

a. Submit assignments on time
   a. Assignment 01: How to Recognize Plagiarism
   b. Assignment 02: Get to Know Your Classmates
b. Quizzes
   a. Quiz 01: Are You Ready?

V. Resources

a. Technical Support
b. Strategies for Learning Online
c. Communicating Online
d. Netiquette

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Analysis:</th>
<th>Applied Strategy:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome:</td>
<td>Welcome:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: The welcome purpose is to welcome students to the orientation course and to help them understand the orientation purpose. The “Orienting context” helps students understand the intent and the reason for being in the course. Smaldino, et al. (2015), p. 133.</td>
<td>Design considerations: The design consideration taken was to ensure the technology use is fairly easy to use and navigate and that the layout is clear to the students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome page outline:

I. Welcome
   a. Getting Started
   b. Program Overview
   c. Program Ready Checklist

**Overview:**
Purpose:
The overview purpose is to get the students acclimate to the course structure. The overview section will be called “course overview”

**Theory considerations:**
- Independent study theory – Place the responsibility on the students, and provide choices such as formats and methodologies. To mix media and methods. References used: (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015.)
- Andragogy Theory – Course plan includes course description, learning objectives, resources and timelines of events. References used: Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015.

**Design considerations:**
A good design course integrates videos, and visual presentation content with audio.

Purpose: Module 1 purpose is to introduce the technology tools and assist students to become familiarized with the tools they will use in the online program.

Content organization:
- The first heading is “Getting around your course” Which will have an explanation text of the course on what the student can expect to learn and a YouTube video showing the tools. The guidelines are used to organize the ones presented in Simonson, et al 2015).

Content outline:
- Getting started will introduce students to CourseSite.
- Overview: Explains module desire outcome and objectives
- Instructor introduction and how to contact the

**Theory considerations:**
To engage students with the learning environment and to help them acquire new skills and new knowledge. Also, help them become comfortable with the new environment.

Instructions will make use of media as opposed to frequently text and organized into topics. (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015).

Two-way dialog through discussions boards.

Students are responsible for their
instruction is provided in this section, so students know who to reach their instructor with questions.

- Introduction to, and tutorials on announcement, calendar, course resources, how to access discussion forums and tech support.
- Introduce the technology tools:
  - Blog
  - VoiceThread
  - Discussion board
  - Upload assignments
  - Quizzes

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### Resources and Technology

**Purpose:** The purpose of this module is to provide the learners with tutorials for the technical tools presented in the course.

**Content organization:** In the module there will be a folder for each technological tool and it will provide introductions and information related to each tool.

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### Design considerations:

The design consideration will follow Simonson, et al. (2015) in that videos are crucial to successful course design. Also by using a combination of text and videos I would provide the material in different means as suggested by (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015).

**Theory considerations:**

- Andragogy suggests active participation, such as group work or study teams. (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015).
- The orientation will prepare learners to use the software and tools required in the online course.
Instructional Objectives

Instructional objectives help the students identify exactly what they will learn upon completion of the course. It's also an important function for the instructional designer, because they offer a means for the instructional designer to design appropriate instructions specifically “selects and organizes instructional activities and resources that facilitate effective learning”. (Morrison, et al., 2013, p. 100). The instructional objectives for the online orientation are:

Objectives should align to goals.

1. Identify the features, functions, and tools of the online classroom

2. Implement effective strategies for managing your online learning experience.

3. Identify communication skills needed to be successful in an online course

4. Complete online assignment as well as quizzes.

5. Described the characteristics of a successful online learner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Objectives</th>
<th>Objective Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Goal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instructional Objectives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To familiarize students with “Course Site,” the Learning Management System for this course, and to guide them through navigating the online classroom.</td>
<td><strong>The learner will be able to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify the features, functions, and tools of the online classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assess personal knowledge, skills, and readiness in navigating the online classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learner will successfully navigate CourseSite by identifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding Applying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To give students time to familiarize themselves with the tools and resources they will use throughout the program/course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The learner will be able to:</th>
<th>Understanding Applying</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Implement effective strategies for managing your online learning experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate the knowledge of participating in asynchronous discussion forum and completing assessments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess personal ability to use tools available in the online classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identify the characteristics and habits associated with success in online learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The learner will be able to:</th>
<th>Understanding Applying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify communication skills needed to be successful in an online course</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Described the characteristics of a successful online learner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implement effective strategies for managing your online learning experience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To prepared and help students be successful in an online course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The learner will be able to:</th>
<th>Understanding Applying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Complete online assignment as well as quizzes. Identify the features, functions, and tools of the online classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify communication skills needed to be successful in an online course</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Instructional Sequencing and Strategies

“Sequencing is the efficient ordering of content in such a way as to help the learner achieve the objectives in an efficient and effective manner” (Morrison, et al., 2013, p. 122). The design
should activate the existing knowledge and then help the learner to transfer the new knowledge (Morrison, et al., 2013). It is important to consider the learner prior knowledge when sequencing instruction. To be able to determine the correct sequencing you must identify the skills that are dependent upon one another (Morrison, et al, 2013). The learning-related sequencing allows for the student to build dependent skills upon one another (Morrison, et al., 2013).

The sequencing steps and corresponding instructional objectives for the successful online learning are as follows:

Table 1.2: Sequence of instructional tasks for the online orientation for successful online learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strategies/Activities</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>o Use of Media/Videos to introduce students to distance learning. o Interactive images to learn how to navigate CourseSite. o Program readiness assessment</td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Getting Started</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Program Overview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Program Readiness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Navigating your online course</td>
<td>o Learners will download and read the student quick starter guide. o Review interactive video that described the difference between asynchronous vs synchronous interaction. o The learner will watch a media presentation on What is a blog? o Video Presentation on What is VoiceThreading?</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Student quick start guide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Asynchronous vs. synchronous</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Blog</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o VoiceThread</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Online Readiness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Learner will create and post to a blog.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Manage course assignments and quizzes</td>
<td>o Learner will participate in asynchronous discussion board o Learner will access discussion post o Learner will practice how to upload an assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,2,3 and 4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Access discussion forum o Access post o Post a response to a thread o Attach a file to a discussion forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Submit assignments on time</td>
<td>o The learner will go to this website to access the How to Recognize Plagiarism tutorial: <a href="http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/">http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/</a> and once the completed they will save the certificate and submit. o Learner will participate in an “icebreaker” discussion board where they will meet their classmates. o The learner will complete a Self-assessment quizzes</td>
<td>1,2,3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Assignment 01: How to Recognize Plagiarism o Assignment 02: Get to Know Your Classmates</td>
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<td>Quizzes o Quiz 01: Are You Ready?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>o GoAnimate presentation highlighting the attributes of successful online learners. o Text page going over strategies for learning online. o Communicating Online text page that explains the differences Between Online and Traditional Classrooms</td>
<td>1,2,3,4, and 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Technical Support o Strategies for Learning Online o Communicating Online o Netiquette</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Additional resources will be provided.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
References


Appendix

Visual Presentation for task outline