

Roles and Responsibilities in the Transition into Online Learning



By MC Raffa

Without inspiration the best powers of the mind remain dormant. There is a fuel in us which needs to be ignited with sparks.

Johann Gottfried Von Herder



The differences in the roles and responsibilities that instructors have in traditional verses online learning environments.

Traditional

- Instructors must teach students in person and normally a large amount for hours at a time.
- Instructors must plan activities every day in a classroom and observe the students working.
- Instructors must control bad behaviors and watch over the students while they are in their care.

Online

- Instructors must be educated in technology, as well as Education.
- Instructors must design and organize their website.
- Instructors have to encourage participation while all the students are in various locations.
- Instructors must be flexible.
- Instructors need to move from a teacher-centered perspective to a student-centered perspective.

Preparing the Soil

The first step in online instruction occurs long before the seeds are planted. As Brewer, DeJonge, and Stout (2001) suggest, it takes significant planning and preparation. The design of an online course “*can either facilitate or impede the learning process*” (p. 12). “Much of this groundwork centers on designing the course syllabus. Preparation of the syllabus enriches the soil, providing a fertile and prepared environment for learning to occur” (Shelton, K. & Saltsman, G., 2004).

Roles and Responsibilities of the Student

Traditional

- Students must attend class at the appointed time and be punctual.
- Students must behave properly in a classroom setting.
- Students are made to take an active role in class and interact with other students in person.
- Students are controlled by a Teacher and do not have much independence and freedom.

Online

- Students need to be self motivators.
- Students need to be more aware of specific logistical details for their online classes.
- Students must become more of an active learner and take ownership.
- Students need to be more mature and responsible to be successful.

Challenges that Instructors and Students Face

- Offering a quality education online can be a challenge
- Fighting procrastination
- Preventing plagiarism
- Providing substantial interaction between students
- Keeping the students motivated to participate
- Planning and protecting the academic integrity of courses offered
- Maintaining flexibility
- Staying motivated to complete assignments on time
- Giving up

Goals are the fuel in the furnace of achievement.

Brian Tracy, *Eat that Frog*



Techniques for Students

- *The ability to concentrate and to use your time well is everything if you want to succeed in business--or almost anywhere else for that matter.*

Lee Iacocca

- Set achievable goals for yourself
- Get organized
- Take ownership of your learning and take an active role
- Participate and DO NOT procrastinate

Techniques for Instructors to Aide in the Transition

- Set goals for yourself
 - Set goals for your class
 - Be organized
- Use an instructor resource guide as a starting point
- Comprehensive instructor resource guides may contain full lesson plans and suggestions for enrichment activities, plus additional discussion topics...
- If you need specific technology requirements to deliver course material effectively, then this needs to be communicated by the distance learning department. If this information is not provided, then you must find it to ensure successful delivery of your course.

Sowing the Seeds

- The second step for successful online teaching is opening the course and the initiation of instruction. An enthusiastic and engaging opening week of class is a great way to start the course. This time of seed germination is a fragile period; disruptions or unnecessary interferences may set a tone that stifles learning during the remainder of the course. It is important to create an initial impression that will stimulate development of the learning community and nurture the students to maturity. Open the course by sending a welcoming email and announcement, initiating class-wide introductions, encouraging students to read the syllabus, and establishing a tone of excellence. (Moore, Winograd & Lange, 2001)

Nurture the Growth – Nurturing the Learning Community

The third step of teaching online is to nurture the learning community. The learning community must be established and then become self-sufficient. The learning community, like a garden, must be cultivated. This cultivation occurs when an instructor provides ample communication, facilitates the discussion board, treats each student as an individual, adds emotion and belonging, responds quickly to questions, models required behavior, creates appropriately sized groups, and clearly outlines expectations for group activities. (Shelton, K. & Saltsman, G. 2004)



- *Four stages are necessary for successful gardening and four stages are necessary for successful online teaching. A good gardener will prepare the soil for planting early; sow the seed; nurture the seedling to maturity, then harvest the crop reflecting on a productive season. A good online instructor will follow the same basic path: develop and structure the learning environment, introduce the material, encourage academic and intellectual growth, and finally, evaluate the effectiveness as he/she watches the students depart with an understanding and appreciation of the subject that will hopefully remain with them for a lifetime. (Shelton, K. & Saltsman, G., 2004)*

References

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- Moore, G., Winograd, K., & Lange, D. (2001). *You can teach online*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education
- Tips and Tricks for Teaching Online: How to Teach Like a Pro! (Oct. 2004 Index), by Kaye Shelton and George Saltsman. Retrieved on 7-13-15 from: http://itdl.org/Journal/Oct_04/article04.htm