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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

In my current position as the manager in charge of training development and administration, I am tasked with developing training strategy and content for our customer base as well as helping our subject matter experts (mostly engineers) develop content and deliver training effectively.

The biggest challenges for training our customers are [limited] resources, [mixed] audience, and highly technical content.

Resources. Like many organizations, we operate as lean as possible with many of our employees serving in several roles. Our subject matter experts also work in sales, technical support, research, and software development positions. Training is not their main focus and for most, is not even part of their job descriptions. Another unique aspect of our training program is that our subject matter experts are also the trainers – and they serve as trainers on many topics, not only their own areas. How does this affect my teaching philosophy? To leverage and most efficiently use our resources, I focus on the strengths that each of our subject matter experts can provide. If their strength is in content review, not delivery, then that's how we use their talents. For those that deliver (and develop) training, we use their expert knowledge to distill and best deliver the message we hope to achieve. These effort result in a balanced approach for our content development and delivery as well as the amount of time spent on each project. Our training program is for our customer base, but we strive to make it a meaningful experience for all of those involved by maintaining a balance of talents and tasks.

Audience. Probably the most significant aspect of training in my current company is identifying who the audience is intended to be and making adjustments to meet training objectives. Even though we clearly describe who should attend particular training options, we consistently get our courses. We strive to provide a balance in make sure that all our attendees are engaged them.

Highly technical content. Our training program proprietary research methods and software only interested in the results our software interested in the answers as well as the answers. In either case, we strive for balance in audience, providing context, and adapting as Above all, we want the customers to take what workplaces and apply it.

The overarching purpose of the training customer base. If customers cannot understand our technology or how to use our software, then we have failed. At the conclusion of each training course, we conduct formal evaluations to help determine how we did. Were the instructors prepared? Did they communicate well? Did they encourage interaction? We review the responses after each training event to make sure that we continue to evolve the program and quality of our materials and instructors. We routinely conduct pilot sessions for our new training content and observe the instructors, as well.



a mix of novice to expert end-users in the content and approach to training to and learn what we are trying to teach

is focused on providing training on our implementations. Some customers are provides. Some customers are methodology used to obtain those our training content, reading the we proceed through our courses. they have learned and go back to their

program is to grow and retain our

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RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

In my current position as the manager in charge of training development and administration, I do not actively conduct research, but I do work with our research and development team by reviewing and editing technical reports and presentations, regularly participating in research meetings, and by communicating ongoing research initiatives and results in our training courses. Our customers help us define the research projects that we will pursue on an annual basis and therefore have a vested interest in the research process. We have an obligation to communicate the process and findings to them. Most projects are to improve existing methods and technologies, while some are more development in nature – exploring a new technology.

Impact of Research

While I do not currently conduct research or make decisions about the research projects that we pursue, I do ensure that we provide context and practical application for research-related content in our training materials. I often encourage the researchers to answer these questions: “What should the customer be able to do with this information when they go back to their office and need to apply it? How does it affect their day-to-day operations and design decisions?”

How Past Research Intersects with Current Responsibilities

My Ph.D. research, which focused on learner-learner interaction in online classes, was finalized in 2003. Obviously, technology options and instructional approaches have changed significantly since then. One of the conclusions that my research supported is that it is important for course designers to consider flexible discussion environments and opportunities for better time management. Today’s technology provides this flexibility by offering many different means of interacting – memes, instructional graphics, text, video, podcasts, etc. – that can be pursued and/or accessed at any time. My research supported that “distant” learners were moving through the technology fairly seamlessly in a formal learning environment. Today’s learners are learning, even though it may be informally, all of the time and even more seamlessly than before. What research can be conducted to better understand how this approach should be used in industry to help customers and employees learn?

Research Possibilities

If I could conduct research in my current position, I would be interested in the differences between internal (employees) versus external (customer) training in relation to expectations, technology use, engagement, and interactions. In our particular industry, the use of social media (internal and external) is slow to be integrated into learning applications; how can it be used for microlearning, interaction, and effective (and measurable) instruction? Also, is our industry (primarily oil and gas) different in adopting interactive technologies and instructional approaches than others? If so, why?

Why does this matter? Well, simply put, learners in this industry are changing dramatically. We have observed an influx of younger, more technology and social-media-oriented engineers entering the workforce. The older generations are retiring and leaving behind a major knowledge gap. How is the needed knowledge transfer going to take place? Furthermore, oil and gas companies are restructuring their workforce to eliminate specialist positions and are instead using generalists. How do we provide specialist knowledge in a way that is consumable by the generalists? We will have to rely on engineers to teach each other in less formal, less “officially” documented manners. In a highly proprietary, trade-secret based industry, this sharing of knowledge is difficult, especially in open forums like social media provides.