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Learning

DESIGNING TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTED SOLUTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING



As an instructional designer and Chief Learning Officer, I know a thing or two about facilitating learning in a corporate environment. And I wouldn't be able to execute it without the use of technology—both web-based and synchronous. I have developed games, simulations, software demonstrations, built communities of practice and worked with instructional videographers. I've coached and guided subject matter experts through item bank building for certification programs. And I've come to realize some of the fundamental issues learning & development professionals (myself included) fail to recognize: **the emotional reaction of the learner.**

A related article which recently caught my eye is an op-ed piece by Elliott Masie, Chairman of *Chief Learning Officer*, titled "[Stop Taking Employees Back to School.](#)" The piece outlines some of the issues instructional designers face with the use of technology-supported learning. Mr. Masie believes our learning brands are often too closely aligned with images from school—from elementary all the way through university. He talks about learning program buzzwords like "Corporate Universities," "Classrooms" and "Instructional Modules," which all take the learner too deeply into the world of curriculum design, subliminally **asking them to act like students.**

"In a nutshell, learners do not really want to 'return to school' as often as we want them to be in learning mode at work. Lifelong and continuous learning will be essential as the speed of business accelerates, and as the need for non-stop knowledge/skill acquisition and mastery grows. Our learners rarely turn to their families or friends with excitement about going to 'class.' They are, however, excited to master new skills, access new roles, or take part in transformational experiences."

Mr. Masie believes our employees and leaders can expand their skills and increase their talent without trying on the brand of students in a classroom. And I think it's crucial to recognize the **need for a paradigm shift.**

Creating a Positive Learning Experience

One of the key technologies instructional designers use to support learning is the **Learning Management System** (e.g. Canvas, Blackboard, Saba, Moodle, etc.). Its fundamental purpose is to deliver learning in a way that mimics a classroom. In a traditional academic environment, (albeit this is changing), you are taught a skill and expected to use it in a future job or your next course. This is how we've traditionally built learning. And in corporations, we model the curriculum after behavior we already know.

Yet we find ourselves with **online education completion rates at an all-time low.** Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) **report dismal results**, with completion rates at about 10%.

Still, these numbers don't faze me. They merely support my premise that, as an adult learner, I am probably negotiating a **MOOC** to emphasize the specific skills I need to enhance my career. For example, when I was engaged in a MOOC called *Learning xAPI*, I demonstrated a 60% completion rate for all the activities. Why? Because I cherry picked areas that interested me and could improve my personal and professional skills. And I left the rest on the branch

For this reason, what could be considered a sub par completion rate was, in actuality, a positive learning experience. This is where **the need for learning analytics** comes into play.

New Use of Technology

There are several exciting developments in technology-supported learning today, and one that warrants special attention is the use of **Experience Academic Performance Index (xAPI)** to measure results.

xAPI is a brand new specification for learning technology that makes it possible to collect data about the wide range of experiences a person has (online and offline). This API captures data in a consistent format about a person or group's activities from many technologies. Very different systems are able to securely communicate by capturing and sharing this stream of activities using xAPI's simple vocabulary. In a traditional LMS technology, we can only measure grades and completion rates.

With the use of xAPI, organizations will be able to measure the effectiveness of learning in three areas: **(1) engagement, (2) learning; and, (3) performance**. It will also allow an organization to measure informal types of learning.

What a refreshing change of pace.

Learners: wave goodbye to the days of chalk boards and dunce caps. And say hello to a new age of learning. One that embraces the amplification of skills and talent, a positive learning experience and results that can be measured holistically and in the best interest of the individual and, ultimately, the organization.



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