

Chapter 11

More Teaching in Less Time: Leveraging Time to Maximize Teaching Presence

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ABSTRACT

There are a plethora of best practices highlighting strategies to personalize the online learning experience, promote interaction and establish teaching presence. Despite this knowledge, a gap remains between online instructors' pedagogical knowledge and teaching behaviors. This discrepancy is largely a function of time. With a wide range of instructional tasks to complete, faculty struggle to balance all the demands of the online classroom. To maximize student success and satisfaction, it is essential that faculty effectively manage their time to engage in instructional behaviors with the greatest impact. This chapter overviews strategies to help online instructors: 1) create an efficient online classroom; 2) manage teaching time more effectively; and 3) prioritize their time investment to promote interaction, presence and participation.

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies show that despite a leveling of the number of students enrolled in online programs, institutions increasingly highlight the importance of online education as an essential component of their strategic vision (Allen & Seaman, 2013). From community colleges to prestigious univer-

sities (Bowen & Lack, 2013; T. Johnson, 2013), online learning has become a mainstay of higher education. Yet, despite growing research on individualized pedagogical approaches relevant to the online classroom, a holistic approach to online teaching has received limited attention (D. Johnson, 2013). Research supports the value and relevance of creating an engaging, personalized,

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interactive online learning experience, yet stops short of providing faculty with a comprehensive understanding of how to create this experience.

The value and importance of establishing a teaching presence, fostering a community of learners and promoting ongoing interaction in the online classroom is well established (Anderson, 2004; Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer, 2001; Aragon, 2003; Garrison & Archer, 2000; Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005; Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Lowenthal & Parscal, 2008; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, Archer, 1999; Salmon, 2000; So, 2005; Swan, 2001; Swan, 2003; Tu, 2000); despite this knowledge, there is a gap between what online instructors *should* do and what online instructors *actually* do. This discrepancy between pedagogical knowledge and instructional behavior is largely a function of time (Cavanaugh, 2005; Conceição, 2006; Easton, 2003; Graham, Cagiltay, Craner, Lim & Duffy, 2000; Mandernach, Gonzales & Garrett, 2006; Mandernach, Hudson & Wise, 2013; Mandernach, 2013; Sheridan, 2006; Van De Vord, Pogue, 2012; Worley & Tesdell, 2009). Regardless of whether an online faculty member is fulltime or adjunct, each individual only has a limited amount of time available to devote to each class. This limited time must be divided between all associated tasks (including course development, technical challenges, interaction, course administration, grading and feedback, etc.); thus, more time spent in one area subtracts available time for other aspects of teaching.

In order to maximize student success and satisfaction in the online classroom, it is essential that online faculty prioritize their time investment to focus on high impact instructional activities that promote interaction, presence and participation (Mandernach, Forrest, Babuzke & Manaker, 2009). To maximize teaching time, faculty must do three things: 1) create an efficient

online classroom; 2) manage teaching time more effectively; and 3) invest available time to the teaching activities with the greatest impact. Put simply, before an online instructor can implement best practice approaches to foster interaction and engagement, he/she must have the necessary time to do so. Once this time becomes available, it is essential to dedicate this time to targeted instructional activities that promote ongoing dialogue and engagement.

CREATING AN EFFICIENT ONLINE CLASSROOM

Online courses are driven by two, relatively distinct, components: course development and course delivery. Course development is typically completed prior to the beginning of an active course and generally involves chunking course content into modules or units along with the development of instructional material (text, videos, links, resources, etc.), interaction activities (discussion questions or group projects), and assignments (papers, projects, quizzes, tests, etc.). Course delivery is the active teaching and facilitation of the online course; this includes posting announcements, adding current material, facilitating discussions, grading assignments and providing feedback. Online course development and delivery may be completed by either the same individual, or online course development may be completed independently by instructors hired to teach existing course content. Regardless of which model is utilized, it is essential that online courses are created and developed with an explicit awareness of the time demands that each instructional design choice entails. With this in mind, the following guidelines are offered to maximize instructional efficiency through online course design:

1. Complete online course development prior to the start of the active course.

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