Chapter 6
Improving Performance, Self-Efficacy, and Motivation:
Structured Online Training and Authentic Learning

Victoria Lynn Lowell

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0300-5304
Purdue University, USA

George Orren Hanshaw
Azusa Pacific University, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Suzy Whitman, an experienced instructional designer and program manager, was hired to coordinate a new online graduate program at a large university. It was Suzy's responsibility to identify and implement solutions to the rapidly growing program's needs. Identifying problems, evaluating the need, thinking through a modification and implementation process, and considering the potential impact of change, are all important steps. In this case study, Suzy needed to identify the problems, determine a solution, and then implement that solution. After speaking with her new supervisor, Suzy determined additional instructors needed to be hired to meet the growing program's needs. Although Suzy did briefly analyze the situation and provide a potential solution, the solution Suzy implemented needed further development to ensure it was implemented in an effective manner.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Spector University is a large university in the United States that has provided quality education for hundreds of thousands of students. Established in the early 1900s, the university is located in a quiet area of the Southwest and has a history of excellence in education. The Learning Design and Technology (LDT) program at Spector University had traditional face-to-face graduate programs (masters and doctoral) for nearly four decades. Run by a small team of six faculty, the LDT program had seen strong success for many years but was seeing a decrease in enrollments with many students citing the location of the university as a factor in their choice to decline enrollment. Although the enrollments were decreasing, the growth in the field of instructional design (ID) was significantly increased with many positions remaining vacant due to a need for employees with ID skills. The LDT program faculty wanted to increase student enrollments by providing opportunities for students to attend from different geographical locations. Therefore, they started an online graduate program in LDT.

The new online masters-level program quickly emerged as one of the United States' top instructional design graduate programs. The program was marketed well and students enrolled in the program from across the world with a new cohort of students starting each semester. Program growth occurred rapidly as program enrollments escalated in the first year and continued to grow. They started with 15 students in the first cohort, 38 students in the second cohort, and by the third semester of the new program, 45 students planned to start with a total enrollment of the online program was nearly 100 students. Further, program advisors who assisted with recruiting students forecasted approximately 45 students would start each of the semesters in the second year. Because of the rapid growth, the program faculty struggled with meeting instructional staffing needs at each of the six faculty members already taught several face-to-face and online courses each semester.

INITIAL PLAN

To increase student enrollments, the LDT program faculty started an online master's program in LDT. The faculty decided to use the instructional content included in many of the face-to-face courses for the online versions of those courses and also create additional courses for the new online program. The faculty would be able to choose which courses they wanted to create, lead, and teach. The faculty also decided the online program would run year-round, using a cohort model, offering two 8-week sessions each semester, with students completing the entire program

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