

Chapter 6.11

A Strategy to Expand the University Education Paradigm: Selling Online Class Resources

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ABSTRACT

To date most online content and experiences have been packaged in a traditional “class” format and delivered using a web site posted on a provider’s server. This chapter suggests a slight deviation from this approach for packaging and delivering Internet education. It suggests a look beyond the “class” delivery approach. The premise for this strategy is the belief that the greatest strength of the Internet for education may lie in delivery of class “components,” not classes, themselves. These online components can be used to supplement and add value to the traditional class experience, not replace it. The strategy proposes that the university provide, sponsor, administer and maintain an automated online portal to post and sell faculty-created material. An “e-store” selling products developed by the university’s faculty

members. It is hoped that universities will explore this idea to develop new ways of packaging and delivering education that better reward the faculty developer, help pay for the service and also add “value” to the education experience.

MOVING BEYOND THE FIRST PHASE

The Internet is maturing as a delivery medium for university education. The previous phase entailed developing a presence. It was the push to “have a web site.” It is hoped that we have moved beyond this necessary step into the next phase. It is also hoped that this current phase will bring exploration of ways for university education developers and users to harness and optimize the emerging capabilities of the Internet to add “value” to the

education experience. New ways of packaging, selling and delivering education hopefully will be explored. "Online instruction can offer new challenges and opportunities to both students and instructors. Most students do not view online instruction as replacement for traditional classroom instruction. However, with the right subject matter, with the right instructor or facilitator, and for the right student, Internet or online classes can provide an effective educational environment and offer a viable alternative to traditional classroom instruction" (Cooper, 2001).

Today there are great opportunities for creating enriched classes combining traditional and online resources. Traditional methods of presenting information in the classroom are very limited when compared to what can be done today in an online interactive, automated format using the Internet. The potential for online experiences to supplement, replace or exceed traditional classroom experiences becomes more apparent as technology advances and new efforts are placed online. Advanced web development and online database capabilities combined with adequate bandwidth, provide greater opportunity to optimize interactive Internet capabilities. Instructional design of online learning and assessment can incorporate database capabilities to deliver and administer information or exercises, automatically assess performance, track the results and provide immediate feedback to the user and/or Instructor. This online model is very efficient for performance-based learning and assessment.

To date most online content and experiences have been packaged in a traditional "class" format and delivered using a web site posted on a provider's server. Server space, the input format and operation of the web site, is provided typically by a university or commercial portal. Purchase (if required), access and delivery are traditional, except for the anywhere/anytime advantage of the Internet. In many cases universities provide this service to their students using a courseware "shell."

This chapter suggests a slight deviation from this approach for packaging and delivering Internet education. The idea represents a shift in the existing online education paradigm. Instead of just substantiating "why we should shift," this chapter suggests a model to look beyond the "class" delivery approach. The premise for this strategy is the belief that the greatest strength of the Internet for education may lie in delivery of class "components," not classes. The online components can be used to supplement and add value to the traditional class experience, not replace it. The Internet provides new opportunities to do things that can't be done in the traditional classroom setting. It provides access to resources that otherwise could not be explored and used. The strategy suggested in this chapter raises many questions about existing education delivery. Many of the answers involve decisions about cost and payment and the job description of educators. It should be noted that the suggested strategy is intended to complement existing traditional and online education with the hope of making the experience better. "For the university, the transition to an Internet-based learning environment requires a restatement of institutional missions and priorities, a revision of conventional structures. For the instructor and student, online courses represent a shift in educational philosophy and instructional design as the emphasis moves from 'teaching' to 'learning', leading to a student-centered, rather than instructor-based system. The challenge for higher education is to find the best way to adjust to this paradigm" (Onay, 2002).

The strategy discussed in this chapter proposes that the university provide, sponsor, administer and maintain an automated online portal to post and sell faculty-created material. An "e-store," selling products developed by the university's faculty members. The web site could be organized like the university's bookstore. The university would act as the "publisher" for the faculty. This approach would also maintain the traditional university's territorial position and claim to resources.

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