Chapter 5
Learning and Performance Innovation

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ABSTRACT

Great changes are occurring in learning and performance programs. Learner demographics are evolving, fiscal concerns are rising, and technological developments are increasing to impact current programs. As information and communication increase, organizations continue to rethink and review learning and performance objectives. Social and collaborative online resources are rapidly emerging to enhance and connect learners. Emerging technologies in the last five to eight years, such as wikis, blogs, digital media, social networking, open source, and mobile applications have created a different dynamic for learning performance beyond the traditional educational experience. Shifting technological trends have altered how these learning and performance opportunities will occur, and how to best engage individuals in both content and experience. Learning and performance leaders are strongly encouraged to embrace these new challenges and to produce best practices for learning and performance innovation.

Innovations in learning and performance possess the ability to enhance academic programs which encourage educators, businesses, and other stakeholders to reach their objectives. This chapter will address the subject of learning and performance innovation as it directly relates to educators, training personnel, performance specialists, and leaders. Further, this chapter will broaden the definition of innovation to include the utilization of theory, system, processes, and tools that advance society by improving skill sets, promoting global and local connectivity, and increasing productivity and knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging technologies, such as wikis, blogs, digital media, social networking, open source and mobile applications, have created a different dynamic for learning and performance beyond the traditional educational experience. Referred to as forms of learning innovation and performance innovation, new approaches have allowed the enhancement of teaching, training, learning, and assessment to accommodate most learners. These learning and performance innovations provide a cooperative and collaborative venue that contrasts with the traditional classroom-lecture setting.

The term *Learning Innovation* encompasses creative, replicable and effective strategies, techniques, tools, or systems used to efficiently enhance the knowledge acquisition process of learners. Conversely, the term *Performance Innovation* encompasses creative, replicable and effective strategies geared towards reaching desired goals through human behavioral change and the measurement of this change. When implemented appropriately, these constructs collectively possess the potential to drastically enhance academic or training programs, and encourage educators, businesses and other stakeholders to efficiently reach their objectives.

This chapter will address the subject of learning and performance innovation as it directly relates to educators, trainers, performance specialists and leaders. Further, the authors seek to widen the definition of *innovation* to include the utilization of theory, system, processes, and tools that advance society by improving skill sets, promoting global and local connectivity, and increasing the productivity and knowledge of a society.

Definitions for Understanding

To best discuss the areas of learning and performance innovation, it is necessary to define a few terms that the authors will be utilizing throughout this chapter. For both performance and learning there might be specific terms; however for commonality and referencing we will define the terms used in this chapter. The *Learner* is an individual who gains knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study. The *Learning Facilitator* is an individual responsible for assessing the skill level of learners, planning the learning experience, implementing the learning plan, and evaluating the acquisition of knowledge after the plan is executed. Examples include, but are not limited to, teachers, instructors and trainers.

The term *Distance Education* encompasses formal learning in which the learning group (learners, resources, and facilitators) is physically separated, but virtually connected through the use of interactive telecommunication systems. Whereas, *Interactivity* is the degree to which technology supports and enables human collaboration. Finally, *Emerging Technologies* are the digital tools and online resources which comprise cutting-edge developments and represent contemporary advances and innovation around the 21st century in various fields of technology (e.g., social networks, mobile computing devices, social media, and open education resources, etc.).

Background: The Evolution and Trends for Learning and Performance Innovation

Over the past ten years, Internet accessibility, the nature of the web, and contexts for learning have all been transformed, along with the need of technological competencies for learners, teachers, and administrators (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009). Because this digital evolution is occurring during the second decade of the World Wide Web, these new uses of the web have been termed 'Web 2.0' (Shelly, G. & Frydenberg, M., 2011). Internet connectivity and digital ability have become a necessity for learners, and a critical requirement to excel in learning and performance. Learners now have the ability to connect and interact with knowledge, materials and peers around the world.

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