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Adapting for flexible delivery; the team

By Phil Garing

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For many years, the trainer or lecturer was seen as a largely autonomous person who was responsible for all aspects of training delivery. Within their job specification was:

- Identifying the training needs
- Setting the goals/objectives for training
- Providing the expertise needed for the subject
- Developing the resources to be used
- Delivering the training
- Evaluating and adapting materials

Many organisations strive to include new technologies and systems in their training, but don't pay adequate attention to the implications for those charged with incorporating them. Moving to in-house online/Intranet solutions for example often means big changes to the way training takes place:

- The role of the presenter changes significantly, as do the skills they need
- The expertise in the head of the presenter often needs to be incorporated in new resources
- The tools that are used demand new skills
- Contact between learners is reduced
- The scale of training changes, from small groups to asynchronous large groups
- The learning resources are more complex and time consuming to develop

What this often means is that it is no longer possible for 'the trainer' to do all things, no matter how competent they are. If a strategic decision is made to develop flexible/online training systems, it needs to be accompanied by a decision to put in place development and support roles that ensure the training will work. This usually necessitates the introduction of a team.

Critics of such a move often point to soaring overheads as being prohibitive. However these additional development costs need to be balanced against the following sorts of financial savings and qualitative outcomes:

- Less travel/accommodation/'unproductive' time spent by learners
- The ability of learners to blend training into their work days

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- Economies of scale inherent in one set of resources being used across whole organisations
- The potential to generate a revenue stream from the training materials developed by capitalising on the intellectual capital of the organisation

Successful teams will often incorporate the following skillsets:

- Project manager
- Subject expertise
- Educational designer
- Resource developers including
 - Print (Desktop publishing)
 - Web (HTML/flash/ASP)
 - Multimedia (authoring in Director or Authorware)

- Graphic Design

Not all skillsets will necessarily be needed for all projects. Note that these are particular skillsets, not individuals. One person may take on more than one role, though one person should never do both educational design work and act as a subject expert. Many of these skillsets can also be contracted in for particular projects, there doesn't have to be a permanent team. What's critical is that all of the relevant skillsets are available to the project. Many projects have floundered because of an assumption that someone can pick up the skills along the way. Possibly a useful staff development exercise, but unlikely to result in quality materials being developed on time.

What's clear is that a mindshift from a cost-driven mentality to an investment mentality is needed. Where the development of training materials is seen as a cost to be minimised, it's unlikely that the potential of the technologies will be utilised. Where training materials development is seen as an investment in the intellectual capital of the organisation, it will pay dividends in terms of real learning, changed work practices and learner capabilities.

Phil has worked in Australia and New Zealand as an instructional designer and project manager. He has been involved in a number of projects in the field of flexible delivery, both research based and product-based. He also works as a staff development consultant.<http://www.toucanhouse.co.nz>

Winning Texas Holdem Poker Strategy

By Adel Awwad

In any type of game, strategy is an important part of winning. Adapting to the differences in each game, understanding the importance of position and realizing that knowledge is essential are three main parts of Texas Holdem strategy. There are many different approaches to strategy, but if a player uses these three key parts, then they should discover they have a winning strategic approach.

Adapting to the differences in the game is an important part of strategy. Not every approach works in every situation. A player that finds, during the course of the game, that another player is picking up on

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their strategy may need to change their style a little to throw the other player off. Being able to make quick decisions and being flexible with game play is also part of adapting. Adapting is relevant in every game, every time Texas Holdem is played. A player who does not adapt will find keeping up a winning strategy is difficult.

Understanding the importance of position is most relevant to the game of Texas Holdem than any other poker game. Texas Holdem is based on the fact that the position a player is in has great influence over that player's game. Position is based on literally where a player sits during the game. The ideal position is to have a player on the right side that bets often and high. On the left side a player wants someone who does not win often. This ideal position sets the player up to win big more often. It is also a good position to be the last player to act. This allows the player an advantage of seeing the other players' actions and the ability to get basic information about their hands. Position can often times mean the difference between a bad game and a good game.

The biggest advantage to a winning strategy is information. A player who keeps themselves informed throughout the game will have the best odds of winning. A strategy that includes observation and the gathering of information sets a player up to be able to determine other players' actions and bet accordingly. Texas Holdem is all about information and how a player uses it. A player should aim to get as much information as possible while giving little information to other players. Strategies differ from player to player and from game to game. The idea behind a winning strategy is to be able to make it work in any game. This means being able to adapt it to the situation of the game, having a good position and gathering information. A strategy may change or be altered throughout a game of Texas Holdem. The basic structure of a winning strategy, though, is made up of the three key parts regardless of its implementation.

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