The New Virtual Classroom: Make it Active – Ann Kwinn, Ph.D. – August 3, 2006

Meaning Making vs Meaning Taking

Instruction should provide frequent opportunities for learners to construct their knowledge through active engagement with the content. Reliance on long lectures assumes that learners can take meaning from information provided. This is the “sponge approach” to learning – which assumes that the learner can absorb content poured onto them, which is risky. Training programs that put the learner at the center of the experience can offer opportunities for meaning making through active building of new knowledge and skills.

Advanced Interaction Techniques

Encourage meaning making through advanced interaction techniques such as:

- Lead in questions
- Inductive interactions
- Projects/Outside assignments
- Inclusive response features
- Close ended questions
- Breakout rooms
- Paired activities
**Topic Lead In Questions**

You can start each lesson or lesson topic with one or two *lead in questions*. These are designed to stimulate interest in the topic, activate the participants’ prior knowledge in the topic area, and help focus their attention on the lesson objectives.

---

**Inductive Events**

Another way to provide a more learner-centric experience is to increase the amount of time students rather than the instructor are engaged. This could be called the instructor-student participation ratio.

In traditional training, the instructor presents content, gives examples, then asks questions or provides other opportunity for practice. You can convert this “Tell-Ask” design, in which the instructor is active for about 2/3 of the time and participants for about 1/3 into *inductive learning* events by reversing the ratios to 2/3 participant activity and 1/3 instructor facilitation.

---

**How to Design Inductive Events**

Begin an inductive sequence by providing some carefully selected examples and/or non-examples that illustrate the main lesson concepts or guidelines. Ask participants to study these examples and derive the definitions, rules, or guidelines.

---

**When to Use Inductive Learning**

You will need more time to facilitate an inductive event than to present a traditional ‘show and tell’ lesson. Participants will also need time to review the examples, reflect, and articulate the features of the examples. Therefore, decide which topics in your lesson are most important and should be taught inductively and you can recoup some of the lost time by assigning review and analysis of more complex samples as an offline activity.

---

**Reading and Research Assignments**

If you have a large amount of content, you can assign readings – either on paper or electronically. To make sure the assignment is completed, attach a worksheet or other deliverable that must be emailed to the instructor or brought to the virtual classroom. Make use of that assignment in the virtual classroom session.
Project Assignments
Transfer of learning is promoted when participants practice on a work-related task.
Since this takes time and reflection:
- Assign students to work on this task outside of the virtual classroom.
- For group projects, provide a project room, website or discussion board for group work and
- Provide a place to post finished projects.

Virtual Classroom Course
Clark Training & Consulting offers a course, How to Leverage the Virtual Classroom, with the following objectives.
You will learn to:
- Determine when it’s appropriate to use the virtual classroom to achieve your instructional goals
- Plan blended training events that incorporate synchronous and asynchronous work
- Develop virtual classroom sessions that keep your participants engaged and learning
- Select and develop visuals that promote learning
- Explain your visuals effectively with text and with audio
- Embed frequent and engaging interactions into your presentations
- Use application sharing to teach software skills
- Promote collaborative activities.
Virtual Classroom Course

The course will use the following Clark DVEP model for the virtual classroom.

---

Course Options:
For individual participants: Take a public session that meets virtually once a week for a month. For groups: Schedule your own session in either a two-day instructor led onsite class or via four virtual classroom sessions. Please see our website for more details: www.clarktraining.com or call (602) 230-9190.

The next public session will be held via two-hour sessions on September 7, 14, 21, and 28.

---

The New Virtual Classroom