Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the difference between a virtual presentation and a virtual training session?
A: If you want participants to be able to do something new after the program, you are delivering training. Training is characterized by collaborative interactions among participants, some type of assessment, and potentially work that is to be completed before and after the live event. Make sure that you can test your learning objectives in the environment. For example, if an objective requires that the learner observe a computer engineer install a router, you may not be able to achieve that objective in the virtual classroom. You may need to hold off on that until the learner can observe the engineer in an asynchronous demonstration environment.

If you are sharing information and have no practice or assessment involved, you are delivering a virtual presentation.

Q: How often should we engage participants?
A: Create interactions and have participants do something every three to five minutes. This could mean interactions with people, technology, or a participant workbook. It could also mean thinking or writing! It is important to re-engage your participants as often as possible. While much of this type of interaction should be built into the course design, there will be times when you will need to create interactions on the spot. Doing this keeps participants focused on the program and helps to ensure that your audience is still present.

Q: How does video facilitate interaction?
A: While most virtual classrooms now include the capacity to incorporate live video by using webcams, you need to ask the question, “What does using live video add to the experience?” Strategic use of live video when it adds instructional value will force participants to pay attention to the new engagement opportunity screen but only if you follow the Rules to Go Live By.

Q: What is your recommended maximum learning time in a virtual classroom?
A: While virtual classrooms can accommodate literally hundreds of participants at the same time, it becomes increasingly difficult to be successful, especially in a culture new to virtual training. A recommended maximum learning time is four hours, with two hours for the virtual classroom time and two hours for cover-up time.

Q: What is the recommended number of participants to include in a session?
A: If you want participants to be able to do something new after the program, you are delivering training. Training is characterized by collaborative interactions among participants, some type of assessment, and potentially work that is to be completed before and after the live event. Make sure that you can test your learning objectives in the environment. For example, if an objective requires that the learner observe a computer engineer install a router, you may not be able to achieve that objective in the virtual classroom. You may need to hold off on that until the learner can observe the engineer in an asynchronous demonstration environment.

Q: What is the role of the producer? Is there an advantage to using multiple presenters?
A: The producer assists the facilitator by acting as an extra pair of hands during a synchronous event. The producer does not need to be in the same physical location as the facilitator. In addition to handling training responsibilities, the producer handles technical support so the trainer can focus on the instruction. Using a producer practically eliminates the need for live event technical support.

Q: What is the recommended maximum learning time in a virtual classroom?
A: We recommend that you keep content-heavy sessions to 45 minutes absolute maximum, with 30 minutes being ideal. The producer does not need to be in the same physical location as the facilitator. In addition to handling training responsibilities, the producer handles technical support so the trainer can focus on the instruction.

Q: Why do you recommend maximum learning time in virtual classrooms?
A: While virtual classrooms can accommodate literally hundreds of participants at the same time, it becomes increasingly difficult to be successful, especially in a culture new to virtual training.

Q: Any best practices for conducting the action planning phase of a program? Do you ask people to do that on a whiteboard? Other techniques to ensure learners do it and benefit

A: There are many best practices that have been developed for designing for the virtual classroom. We have recently published a series of design techniques to our blog. I suggest you start with Basecamp Training on Design Basics: A Virtual Engagement Primer and then explore all of the interesting virtual classroom tools including webcams, application sharing, whiteboards, breakout rooms, synchronized web browsing, and survey and feedback tools.

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