How to be a Good Learner

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Memories of North Bay

- ***<u>Pinewood Park Hotel</u> – and burning it down**

- ***<u>Canadian University Press</u> – and the Agents of Social Awareness**

  - The primacy of points of view

  - The principle of autonomy

Three Principles of Effective E-Learning:

- *<u>Interaction</u>* – participation in a learning community (aka a community of practice)

- *<u>Usability</u>* – simplicity and consistency

- *<u>Relevance</u>* – aka salience, that is, learning that is relevant to you, now

Interaction:

- "… the capacity to communicate with other people interested in the same topic or using the same online resource. "

- *Why do we want it?*

    – **Human contact …** *talk to me…*

    – **Human content …** *teach me…*

Interaction: How to Get It

- **You cannot depend on traditional learning for interactivity…**

    – Most learning based on the broadcast model

    – Most interactivity separated from learning

- **Built your own interaction network**

    – Place *yourself*, not the content, at the centre

Interaction: Your Personal Network

- **Email and mailing lists – eg., DEOS, wwwedu, ITForum, IFETS, online-news, RSS-DEV…**

- **Weblogging – reading your subscriptions, leaving comments, longer responses in your own blog**

- **Personal communication – instant messaging, Skype**

- **Online Forums – Using, eg., Elluminate, Centra – examples, CIDER, Net*Working**

Interaction: Principles

- **<u>Pull</u> is better than <u>push</u>…**

- **Speak in your own (genuine) voice (and listen for authenticity)**

- **Share**

  - Your knowledge, your experiences, your opinions

- **Make it a habit and a priority**

Interaction: Guerilla Tactics

- **If interaction isn't provided, create it…**

  - Eg., if you are at a lecture like this, blog it

- **If your software doesn't support interaction, add it**

  - Eg., embed Javascript comment, RSS in LMS pages

- **Use back-channels**

  - Private lists, Gmail accounts, Flickr, IM, more…

Usability:

- "… probably the greatest usability experts are found in the design labs of Google and Yahoo! "

- ***Elements of Usability***

  – **Consistency …** *I know what to expect…*

  – **Simplicity …** *I can understand how it works…*

Consistency? As a Learner?

- **Yes! <u>Take charge</u> of your learning…**

- **Clarify first principles…**

  – for example, how do <u>you</u> understand learning theory? Eg. Five Instructional Design Principles Worth Revisiting
  <u>http://www.ispi-frc.org/newsletter/features/featurearticle_brenda.htm</u>

- **Organize your knowledge**

  – For example, build your own CMS (using, say, Drupal)

Simplify the Message

- **Summarize, summarize, summarize**

  - (and then put it into your own knowledge base)

- **Use your own vocabulary, examples**

  - You own your language – don't let academics and (especially) vendors tell you what jargon to use

- **Don't compartmentalize (needlessly)**

Principles of Usability

- **Usability is Social: Learn from the masters (no, not Jakob Nielsen)**

  – Can you search your own learning?

  – Do you represent similar things in similar ways?

- **Usability is Personal: Listen to yourself**

  – Be reflective – eg., is your desktop working for you?

Usability: Guerilla Tactics

- **<u>Important</u>: your institutional CMS is almost certainly dysfunctional – create your own *distributed* knowledge management system…**

  - Create a blog on Blogger, just to take notes

  - Store photos on Flickr

  - Create a GMail account and forward important emails to yourself (and take advantage of Google's search)

  - (Maybe) use Google desktop search

Relevance:

- "… learners should get what they want, when they want it, and where they want it "

- ***Generating Relevance***

    – **Content …** *getting what you want*

    – **Location, location, location***…*

Getting What You Want

- <u>Step One</u>: maximize your sources – today's best bet is RSS – go to Bloglines, set up an account, and search for topics of interest

- <u>Step Two</u>: filter ruthlessly – if you don't need it now, delete it (it will be online somewhere should you need it later)

- <u>*Important*</u>: Don't let someone else dictate your information priorities – only <u>you</u> know what speaks to you

Getting It Where (and When) You Want

- **Shun formal classes and sessions in favour of informal activities**

- **_Do_ connect to your work at home (and even on vacation) – _but_ – feel free to sleep at the office**

  - Most work environments are dysfunctional

  - Your best time might not be 9 to 5 …

  - Ideas (and learning) happen when they happen

Principles of Relevance

- **Information is a <u>flow</u>, not a collection of objects**

  - Don't worry about remembering, worry about <u>repeated exposure</u> to good information

- **Relevance is defined by <u>function</u>, not topic or category**

- **Information is relevant only if it is available <u>where it is needed</u>**

Relevance: Guerilla Tactics

- **Develop unofficial channels of information (and disregard most of the official ones)**

    – For example, I scan, then delete, almost all institutional emails (and <u>everything</u> from the director)

- **Create 'project pages' on your wiki (you have a wiki, right?) with links to templates, forms, etc.**

- **Demand access**

What I'm _Really_ Saying Here…

1. You are at the centre of your own _personal learning network_

2. To gain from self-directed learning you must _be self-directed_

3. These principles should guide _how we teach_ as well as how we learn

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