

LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In charge of a project? Try applying the four stages. The four stages to a project are:

DEFINE

PLAN

MONITOR &
CONTROL

TRANSITION



When setting up your project remember the first steps are to define the project. Defining tasks are:

1. Identify project objectives
2. Determine who are your Stakeholders
3. Ask the question, what will be different as a result of this project
4. Finalize a statement of work (SOW) and have your stakeholders sign off

After you have clearly define your project determine the tasks required to meet your goals. Create the plan by:

1. Brainstorming the tasks required
2. Determine the duration of each task
3. Determine the task sequence

4. Identify who is responsible for each task
5. Seek plan approval to trigger the start of work

You now have a project plan, remember to create an issues list to track all items that cannot be turned into a task

Next monitor and control your work

1. Conduct project update meetings
2. Communicate project progress
3. Track changes and report on the impact of each change.

Once your project is completed, transition by holding a close out meeting to determine:

1. A punch list of outstanding items
2. Lessons Learned
3. Celebrate your success

Your project will be successful if you manage the four project stages.

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Got Skills?

Top Five Interview Skills

- Customer Service
- Critical Thinking
- Technology Proficiency
- Ability to Improve Productivity
- Team-Building and Motivation

From The Chicago Herald

Introduction to Blended Learning

A few years ago, blended learning was about - you know, combining different teaching methods within the traditional classroom

Good old-fashioned text books, cassettes containing interviews, lectures and a video clip.

In coming to terms with blended learning, it's helpful to start with what it is not. First of all, it is not providing learners with choices of how to undergo a piece of training - you can have e-learning or, if you prefer, the classroom.

Cynics also claim that blended learning is just a re-branding exercise, carried out by e-learning vendors who have hit upon hard times after the bursting of the dotcom bubble. Again, there is something to be said for this view. Most companies who claim to be in the blended learning business used to be - you guessed it e-learning companies, not classroom trainers. They even tried to make the term blended learning their own, referring to it as a mix of 'e-learning and traditional methods'.

Even the most optimistic forecasts for e-learning don't see it overtaking the classroom as a training method.

Handling objections

One of the most common objections to the razzmatazz about blended learning is that it's nothing new - blending is something we have always done. There is obviously some truth in this, all of us can think of some examples of training interventions that have successfully combined a variety of media. But to maintain that this has been in any way the norm is clearly wide of the mark.

Blending has been (and still is) very much the exception, not the rule. That's not surprising because blending is a hassle, it takes more planning and more co-ordination.

Another objection to blended learning is for how it is often applied in practice, i.e. use the classroom for anything that involves people and computers for the boring stuff. In his book *Lessons in Learning, e-Learning and Training*, Roger Schank laments that "the part that is assigned to e-learning is the facts followed by the answers. That stuff doesn't stick, and for the most part trainees hate it. When you hear the word 'blended', run." Now Roger may be right but what he says is really an argument for blending more effectively.

Blended Learning Defined

Blended learning as an approach to the design of learning interventions which mixes learning media and methods appropriately, to achieve solutions which are both effective and efficient. If you're not sensitive to these differences, then chances are you'll come up with the same familiar solution all the time, one that you are comfortable with but that doesn't necessarily deliver for learners.

A good example is the classic 'classroom sandwich', in which a classroom course begins and ends with a little e-learning. This may be the right method in some situations; in others it could just be the SOP for the classroom trainer.

Blended Learning in Practice

A blended solution is not a way of combining a number of very similar elements, say books, videos and CD-ROMs. The learner gets some variety but that is as far as it goes.

A successful blended solution is like a balanced meal, combining a range of ingredients, each of which has a unique purpose. Self-study, virtual classrooms, discussion forums, chat rooms and email support. To offer a truly blended approach there must be a support structure for learner and not just some take away job aids.

It's easy to create blends that are effective, if you throw enough resources at the job.

Similarly, it's easy to be inefficient if you conserve resources and let quality go down. The challenge for the designer is to create solutions that are both effective and practical, given the inevitable resource limitations that we all work under.

Make sure your training does the following when using a blended approach.

1. Takes into account differences in learning objectives, awareness versus usage.
2. Consider the preferences of the learners; what have I done for the driver versus the analytical?
3. The practicalities of the particular situation.
4. What support will be offered? How often and how will the learner what to have this accomplished?

Blended learning is more than different delivery tactics it connects the learner to hosts of learning opportunities connected to helping them improve their job performance.

Contributing to this article are excerpts from 'The Blended Learning Cook Book' written by Clive Shepherd.