LEVERAGING
online learning

Traditional learning has historically been based within a physical classroom environment where groups of people can learn in real-time together. There are many benefits to this type of learning environment which is why it has persisted for so long. However, it is certainly not the only way to support the learning process.

Primary Needs

Over the last decade, education has witnessed an unprecedented shift towards the use of virtual learning environments. As technology and software has improved, broadband speeds have increased, and mobile 4G / 5G data has become affordable, it has opened a whole new world of learning possibilities on par with the physical classroom and in many situations may even surpass the in-person learning experience. The recent impact of Coronavirus on the globe has highlighted another important aspect of online education, the learning journey and home study experience remains uninterrupted when travel restrictions or other geographical limitations are in place.

There are 3 primary needs that must be addressed within any successful virtual learning operation:

1. The provision of an effective content delivery system
2. Software to provide essential student-tutor communication
3. A method of providing secure, confidential assessment and grading

Content Delivery

Even if a business has not yet ventured into the use of online learning, there are a range of relatively simple tools and options available to get started.

- Free online learning software is already available to access on the internet. The following options are listed in order of difficulty to use, from easiest, first, to most difficult, last:
  - Google Classroom (completely free)
  - Padlet (free and paid options)
  - Moodle (free and paid options)
- Video hosting software such as YouTube and Vimeo are available globally and provide sufficient security to ensure only the students intended will have access to learning content.
  - Early time investment to ensure video quality, lighting, and sound are of good quality is well worth it

Student-Tutor Communication

In almost all cases students want to have, and will benefit from, tutor support during their online learning journey. It is essential that this service is provided for. Consider the following:

- Formal contact points (by email, audio, or video) during the life of a course e.g. course orientation, mid-course, before assessment support, after assessment feedback.
- Utilise online group communication options such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, GoToWebinar etc.
- Informal contact options easily accessible to the learner e.g. Closed Facebook group, Secure messenger systems such as Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, or built-in e-learning forums or direct messaging services.

Secure Assessment

Online methods for student assessment can vary from simple to complex. Consider the following:

- Determine what type of assessment is fit for purpose and effectively evaluates the knowledge or the skills that need to be demonstrated.
- Use assessment methods available within e-learning software, such as those built into Google Classroom, Padlet, or Moodle.
- Use secure cloud-based document sharing systems e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox, WeTransfer etc. to send organise and manage assessment documentation to and from students

Article courtesy of;

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