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Elluminate: An interactive online learning program

 Elluminate is an online learning program that was created to meet the needs of the 21st century digital learners. With the development of online learning, tools that combine interactivity with quality learning are essential. Elluminate provides quality learning based on its underlying pedagogy “Unified Learning and Collaboration”. Online learning can take place synchronously as well as asynchronously through this tool. The features provided by this tool including audio and video web conferencing, a shared whiteboard, integrated teleconferencing, chatting, web tours as well as social networking make this tool unique and a new learning experience to me.

 First, I believe that this tool has firm pedagogical grounds that allows for interaction between learners and with the moderator. At the core of online learning is constructive learning since it is learner-centered. This tool allows for constructive learning where the face to face classroom or meeting format is turned into digital. Online learning may be challenging for many online learners like me due to several reasons such as self-regulation, motivation, and lack of face to face interaction. I have found asynchronous online learning to be challenging due to lack of face to face interaction with the professor. With Elluminate Live, I feel that the face to face issue will be resolved for me and I can interact more easily with the professor and my peers.

 As discussed earlier, the tool is designed for the digital learners or millenials. Millennials have different learning styles than previous generations who did not have much exposure to the digital world. They prefer to learn from video, pictures and sounds rather than from texts, prefer interaction, are skilled at teamwork, techno savvy, have a desire for entertainment, and prefer nonlinear learning (Rudestam and Schoenholtz-Read, 2010). With its virtual classrooms and meeting rooms, and all the features that it carries, the learners can be exposed to all the features presented above. Also they can connect with each other through the virtual rooms or through LearnCentral program that is sponsored by Elluminate.

 What I liked about Elluminate is the audio/video recording of the sessions which can be shared with mobile learners later on in different formats using Elluminate Publish. With face to face classrooms, it could be hard sometimes to capture audio and video with high resolution except if the necessary equipment and a specialized person are present. Therefore, with Elluminate, sessions can be recorded in high resolution, and mobile learners could reuse them anytime and anywhere without any difficulty. After all that’s the purpose of online learning; learners can get quality learning anywhere and anytime as well as in real-time when possible.

 Elluminate Plan makes life easier for moderators to organize their presentation ahead of time and time it. Just as in face to face classrooms, the professor needs to be prepared and organized to deliver a session, in online learning and meetings, the moderator needs to be as prepared and even more. In online learning, the moderator depends on the whiteboard to share ideas, documents and presentations. For time constraint purposes, Elluminate Plan makes a useful tool for presenters to organize their documents including quizzes and presentations ahead of time. Elluminate Plan also has forward, preview, and play features that allow the moderator to play the plan without interference or he/she can use a drag and drop feature. With the time scheduled for every point in the plan, the moderator is able to keep track of time.

The whiteboard is one of the features that I found to be most interactive. In addition to displaying the presentations and documents, I liked the editing features which allow the moderator and the participants to write on the whiteboard, erase, and even add emoticons to display feelings about an idea. This allows learners to engage in the discussions as active learners rather than passive learners who listen to a presenter talking to them.

Learner interaction is central to this tool; learners can interact in several ways. Whether through the white board interaction, chat room, or audio participation, learners are active with Elluminate Live. Moreover, this interaction is instant so the learner can ask a question or participate and receive feedback synchronously as opposed to asynchronous participation where the learner cannot receive instant feedback due to several reasons, two of which could be the facilitator’s delay in sending feedback or the learner’s delay in checking the email or discussion boards.

However, I liked the concept of Elluminate Bridges which allows Learning and Course Management systems to integrate Elluminate Live in their course delivery. This method breaks the ice for learners who have difficulty with asynchronous online learning. I am for using Elluminate Live with Blackboard once a month. As an online learner, I think this will give me the chance to learn more from my instructor’s as well as my peers’ expertise in a shorter time frame than in asynchronous learning. Furthermore, it allows me to receive instant feedback on any question that I could have.

Finally, with LearnCentral that is sponsored by Elluminate, learners can create private or public learning communities to share expertise and talk about other issues. It is somehow similar to other social learning networks except that it can be made private, it can be used to host webinars, and it has Elluminate vRoom as additional features. In addition to the social learning experience which is possible outside the online sessions, learners can connect asynchronously. Moreover LearnCentral offers free vRoom for 3 people to meet synchronously when needed. I think this is a great learning tool for a group of professionals or students who have the need to meet synchronously or asynchronously.

 In sum, Elluminate provides all sorts of learning experiences without a need for the learner to leave his/her office or home. It is very convenient to the millenials whose life is very demanding and want to make the best of their time. Furthermore, it is a very efficient learning tool in my opinion that could bring an online classroom and meeting to life. I have never been asked to choose an online learning tool, and I have never used a web conferencing tool before, but if I were to choose one, I would select Elluminate as a full package.

References

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