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Raising the Bar on Training at Valparaiso University

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ABSTRACT
We have recently overhauled our IT training program that we offer our students, faculty and staff. In the past, the training program consisted of sessions about changes to campus systems or sessions related to very specific software uses such as mail merge or tables. Users can now expect that training will be more than software use and how-to's. We have started looking at ways to enhance our clients overall use of campus technology. As we examined ways to better serve our campus community, we engaged in qualitative observations in many areas. We examined how our graduate students were using technology to collaborate. The faculty were observed by our training staff to see how they were employing campus technology in courses and integrating technology into their assignments given to students. We interviewed our Help Desk Student Consultants to see what they observed as major training goals throughout the campus based on their interactions with clients.

Upon completion of our observations, we outline our course development plans for increasing technology integration and full use of our campus technology offerings to further our mission of enhancing learning, teaching and job function through technology. Our goal is to reach beyond the software functionality and take our clients to the apex of relevance and application.

Categories and Subject Descriptors
K.6.1 [**Management of Computing and Information Systems**]: Project and People Management – *training.*

General Terms
Management, Measurement, Documentation, Performance, Design, Human Factors, Standardization.

Keywords
training, development, qualitative observations, case study, use case, help desk, client services, course development, software, end-user interaction

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1. INTRODUCTION
Valparaiso University is a selective, independent Lutheran institution consisting of over 3,000 undergraduate and 1,100 graduate students. The university employs just over 1,000 administration, faculty and staff.

Valparaiso University offers training to community of end-users through the Office of Information Technology. This service is provided as an extension of our Help Desk in the division of Client Services. Our Client Services staff, consisting of 7 fulltime employees, works with university students and employees to determine need based on formal and informal means. This past year, we restructured our IT Client Services division to match up staffs' skill sets more closely with their position. In this change, the training area was looked at as an outreach arm of the Help Desk. In the past, one person from the Client Services was responsible for the planning and delivery of all training initiatives. In our change, one person leads the team and 5 individuals from the Client Services division assist in the rollout and delivery of the training initiatives.

We really began to explore need informally by observing how students were using technology in class, how staff were using technology in their roles and how faculty were using technology to teach. As Loerzel [2] points out, "Given its importance to the success of any technology implementation, it is imperative to understand the merits of training and how the value of training stands on its own."

2. THE HISTORY
As previously mentioned, training and development in the IT arena has always had focus at Valparaiso University. The program was focused on providing needs-based training for specific software. In this section, we will explore the previous training program, which by standards was running smoothly and met the training needs of most on campus with regard to software.

Classes, or workshops, were only offered via face-to-face delivery methods in a typical computer lab environment. University constituents could also request a one-on-one training to address specific issues. As some members of the team put it, the training program had become "stale." The need for improvements and change were evident in declining numbers of attendees and the course offerings remaining the same for a great amount of time.

3. QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS
To focus our efforts on improving the training offerings on our campus for our end users, we required a needs analysis. This could have been done using a survey metric, but we realized that the development of the metric was going to be time consuming and we were examining metric delivery options for future projects. This would not be a feasible option for our current semester.

We had two options: (1) deliver the former model of software based training whereby we had workshops on a specified Microsoft product, Gmail, etc; or (2) find a new method for measuring what our students, faculty and staff could use. At a training meeting which is comprised of several Client Services staff, we decided to make observations about how students were using the technology and what improvements we could make to learning, teaching and job function. These observations came from several sources outlined below:

3.1 Graduate Case Study

In a recent graduate capstone class, students were assigned a business to prepare a proposal for growth and acquisition of new markets. The students were working in a group of five students. They were preparing a PowerPoint presentation to support their oral presentation to the Board of Directors in attendance that night. The arrived to the class about 2 hours before the start. They were busy going over the presentation and correcting errors.

The students prepared their presentations by emailing the presentation from one person to the other. They spent hours preparing data, but even more time was spent correcting the errors in versions, layout consistency and other variations that arose. Productivity suffered, frustration soared and in the end the grade was impacted.

The issue was related to the way they had incorrectly collaborated using email. In the end the presentation still had major errors when they were presenting. When asked later, the group counted that they had on average 55 emails between them. That is 275 emails and version of the PowerPoint file! A simple online collaboration tool would have eliminated all the different versions that existed and cut down their email count to 3 emails to get started.

This posed an interesting question for future course development. The students were versed in setting up PowerPoint, but they needed assistance working with collaboration tools to make this run smoother for them. They also needed some soft skills training on workflow and project management. Just a couple of suggestions and a good tool to work with.

3.2 Technology Room Use

Throughout campus there are several classrooms that were setup and designed with technology at the center of the design. One room in particular caught our attention in our College of Arts and Sciences. The room is setup using the concept created by Steelcase in a 360° seating arrangement with SMART boards on three walls that can be controlled from the professor workstation or can be used in small collaboration groups with laptops.

We setup some informal observations with professors. When we were called to the room to change settings, we would observe what was happening in the room and how the technology was being employed in the lesson. In many cases, it was not being used to its classroom technology potential. Several professors from the English department were using the room for the large tables for discussion. Even the low-tech features, such as huddle boards, were not being used.

Through discussion with known users in casual conversation, we found that some professors were requesting room changes when they were assigned to this room. Upon further inquiry, we found that it was truly a training issue. The professors were uncomfortable with the new Smart software and the boards. They were never informed about the layout and design of the room.

3.3 Faculty Teaching Observation

All of our training staff have other responsibilities in the Office of Information Technology (IT). Through these responsibilities, we have the opportunity to provide live support in classrooms. This has been a great opportunity for discussion about how faculty are employing the use of technology in classrooms. In contrast, it has proven advantageous in observing classes in which technology could be employed and supported in the classroom.

For example, we have been able to identify ways to streamline uses of YouTube in our Social Work department to eliminate disk media and the codec issues that come from DVD creation. This has also allowed us to create relationships within departments where we can offer small, customized trainings for classes that may benefit and relieve the stress from the professor that is not proficient with the technology.

3.4 Help Desk Interaction

As part of the evaluation process, we met with the Help Desk Student Consultants and overviewed the common issues they face when supporting users. This allowed us to do three things; (1) identify training opportunities, (2) cross-market our training offerings with Web Help Desk, and (3) bring in students to begin training users.

In the initial meeting, we found that the Help Desk was getting questions related to software that was offered by the Career Center. In discussions with the Career Center, we found they were happy to have the training collaborative to reduce their need to support the software.

We also found that users needed basic introduction and overview instructions for IT offerings when they start on our campus. So, at the time of this publication, we are working on an IT welcome video to walk users through the steps of getting started.

The Help Desk is also encouraged to find relevant training offerings for end-users when they are interacting with them and make the gentle suggestion that they might find the benefit in attending the seminars. We are also looking at ways to link this with our campus-wide knowledgebase and our Web Help Desk knowledgebase.

One unexpected outcome during our collaboration with the students was that they were interested in conducting some of the trainings. We found that this would have two advantages; (1) marketing to students and having the Help Desk buy-in to assist in marketing and (2) educational benefits in developing student trainers. Students working at the Help Desk certainly have input in our training program and offerings. They interact with our users more regularly than most of the full-time IT staff.

4. ANALYSIS

After our evaluation process, we noted that several things needed to be done differently. It was clear that we were going to develop an ever-changing, yet high-quality experience for our end-users. We noted that we were working in a team, where others before had been working alone. This was a welcome change. We also noted that there needed to be a process for course development. While it didn't need to be long and tedious, we did need some common threads that all members of the team would be expected to carry out. We needed a shift in thinking and a point of focus. We also needed to work collaboratively with other colleges and universities, because even in a team our ideas would be limited by our history.

4.1 Focus on Need – Not Software

In the past, Valparaiso University's training programs have focused on software rollouts and on software packages. The shift in focus during the development phase to skill needs and practical use needs has proven to be a paradigm shift in delivering high-quality, in-demand training programs.

We focus on the best use of software and train from a perspective of lighting the fire of continued learning and experimentation with technology. We know that software will continually change, especially with the shift to cloud-based software services. This shift will be less about the software itself; but more about the usability and the skills in continued learning and skill building as the software and delivery methods continue to evolve.

This shift in thinking requires trainers to be ready to answer questions related to applicability and to cater a standup training immediately on the spot. Trainers must be dynamic speakers, quick thinkers, and stakeholders in the university. They must understand many of the job functions and learning functions throughout the university. All trainings are offered, free of charge, to the entire university community of students, faculty, staff and alumni. Understanding each role and program in the university is key to the success of the trainer.

4.2 Course Development

Prior to the evaluation of our training program, our Director made a choice to restructure our department based on the match of skills. As a result, our training program inherited an individual with teaching experience and pedagogical training. This was critical in developing the process by which courses would be developed.

Each course requires a few items which are outlined below:

4.2.1 Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are developed using the revised Bloom's Taxonomy Verbs developed in the 1990's for educational practices of the 21st century[1]. All objectives start with a measurable outcome that users should be able to perform if asked. Of course, we don't assess our users after the training, but we do ask them to evaluate the training itself against the objectives and other measures.

4.2.2 Overview/Course Description

The overview is used as the course description that should give a summary of what the users should expect. This is the marketing piece, but also informative about what users can expect to learn at the seminar.

4.2.3 Handout

Each participant can expect to receive a branded, full-color handout that has important information about the training. This is designed so that the users can get back to their residence halls or offices and replicate the training procedures. This sometimes has step-by-step instructions about common or obscure procedures, or it has underpinning observations about how to overcome issue using the particular topics training steps. It may also host a variable myriad of both.

4.2.4 Content Outline

The content outline provides the speaking topics of what the training will cover. This serves to standardize our practices between trainers. This is a working document that can vary a little between trainers and presentations; but serves to make sure that the content is presented using the same topics and methods.

4.2.5 Reference to Other Trainings and Lynda.com

We cross-market our programs and refer others to do follow-up work with lynda.com. We also encourage the attendees to continue to explore other related or similar topics that are being offered.

4.3 Collaboration with Duke University

Prior to rollout and after the initial evaluation, we reached out and did a video conference call to Christine Vucinich and one of her student trainers, Patrick Royal, at Duke University. They walked us through their experiences as trainers and allowed us to ask questions of their experiences. This was a critical step that allowed us to move forward more quickly to learn from the experiences of others. During this meeting, we began to put our pre-conceived concepts to the test. We learned that email marketing of the program was and proved to be the most cost-effective and beneficial way to market the program. We also took away some great advice for increasing attendance through an online reservation system. We are so grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with others. We look forward to growing such relationships.

5. ROLLOUT

Rollout of the program continues. We started in the Spring 2013 semester with face-to-face, classroom style trainings. However, we are continuing adding other training options that we will discuss in section 5.6.

5.1 Summary of Results

In our initial rollout, in the Spring 2013 semester, we hosted 21 pre-scheduled, hour-long technology training seminars. We had a total of 130 registrations for all events listed on our booking web site at bookwhen.com/Valpo. As a result, we received 4 requests for one-on-one trainings. We were also invited to offer an evening event to our Greek Life organization officers on collaboration tools. We experienced the highest attendance from our staff on campus with faculty in second place. Students were in the lowest attendance, so our shift has been to entice more students by diversifying our offerings and the times we offer these events. We are working with our Integrated Marketing and Communications (IMC) division to assist in bolstering the student attendance.

We have used the trainings to further market our lynda.com training program and have seen an increase in the usability of this offering. We are finding that the training seminars spark interest and that the users find more details on specific functions utilizing the lynda.com Online Training Library®.

5.2 Marketing the Program

Marketing the program has been grassroots style. We have several methods that we attempted. By far, our most successful marketing comes from email blasts to our users. This delivers a link to the registration system where they can sign up. We reach out to departments and cross-market through many other means. We poster the campus, place cards in the dining halls, and we schedule overviews with our constituents in the international office and admissions. We work throughout new student orientations to get the word out.

We work with our marketing department to create different means of reaching our users.

5.3 Initial Offerings

Our initial offerings are listed below with their course descriptions:

5.3.1 Unlocking the Potential of YouTube

Need to host a video to share with only a few friends, only those you share the link, or the general public? YouTube is a great way to get the message out! YouTube is full of features for creating embedded videos on your own websites, creating your own channel for subscribers, or just hosting your video. Did you know that YouTube has lifted the 15-minute restriction on videos? Attend this session to look, in-depth, at the many learning and project options you can use in your classes (faculty, student and staff, alike) to communicate using video.

5.3.2 Online Collaborative Workspaces

Collaborative work is not going away anytime soon. Attend this training session to learn about many of the tools that allow you to work within a team using things like Google Docs, wikis, blogs and other apps to share information in the cloud and work together at a distance and on your own time. Asynchronous, cloud-based tasks are becoming the norm. Get a jump on the competition today!

5.3.3 Getting Started with Google Sites

Come to this session to learn how to get started creating a personal web site using your Valpo account on Google Sites. Your online presence is important! What do you want future teammates, colleagues and employers to know about your work and skills? This training session will focus on developing a personal online identity and brand for you. Bring some sample work and digital pictures with you to be able to work alongside others on your sites.

5.3.4 Quick & Easy Promotional Materials with Microsoft Publisher

Planning an event? Need to create a brochure or flier and just don't know where to get started? This seminar will review the basics to get you started creating publications including exploring and modifying available templates, modifying themes, colors and more...

5.3.5 Navigating Excel (Secrets & Formulas) – Intermediate to Advanced Users

You know the basics of Excel but might need a quick review. This session will review the basics, special formatting (autofill, paste special, etc.) as well as printing. We'll then cover more advanced topics: conditional formatting, freeze panes, autofilter, v-lookups, pivot tables and more.

5.3.6 Creating Better Presentations

Public speaking and presentation skills are a critical component of success. Audiences have become accustomed to visual representations through multimedia tools. This session will be broken into two parts. The first part will be the skills related to giving a great presentation. This will give way to the second half of the session related to the technology tools. Topics include: body language, verbal communication, and multimedia tools to include fonts and colors, master pages, fill effects, drawing diagrams, appropriate animation and some tricks for running shows smoothly. This session will also review several of the presentation software available today including PowerPoint, Keynote and Prezi.

5.3.7 Introduction to Prezi

Prezi puts a new spin on your presentation. It deviates from the traditional PowerPoint (slideshow) model and focuses a lot on design. If you are new to Prezi or want to know more about creating more visually appealing presentations using Prezi, this is the workshop for you!

5.3.8 Using the lynda.com Training Library (Self-training using video lessons)

Learn about the lynda.com Online Training Library® as a campus wide resource. This training will provide an overview of Lynda Campus: Using the Home Page, Advanced search & time stamped search of transcripts, content curation, Teaching and training methodologies, Player options, Sharing your "favorites", plus accessibility, usability, queues, certificate of completions, and mobile devices. Time will be available for Q&A.

5.3.9 Optimal Resume

Are you looking for that first job? Internship? Summer job? Have you developed your resume? This workshop will maximize your potential for locating and landing the interview. The session will focus on the use of the Optimum Resume tool offered through the Career Center. This should be the first step in preparing yourself to get the interview.

5.3.10 Cleaning Up Your Digital Footprint

Did you know that two-fifths of all employers will Google your name before even calling for an interview? How do you improve your chances of having your profiles show? Have you cleaned up all of your old profiles? This workshop will focus on helping you consider all these and more! Attend to make sure that your best digital foot is forward when seeking employment.

5.3.11 Web Security & Privacy: What we should watch for when we use the Web

We will go over some typical attacks and tricks that hackers use to compromise your computer redirecting you to malicious websites. And we will talk about ways to protect ourselves from those attacks.

5.4 QR Code Trainings

In our previous example in 3.2 on Technology Room use, we could have designed a traditional training about the room and taken 30-60 minutes to go over the features, this would have been overwhelming. So we created a small card of five 5-minute videos with QR codes that users could view at their leisure. The videos took a day to create over the winter break and have been gaining popularity based on viewing statistics on YouTube. The videos are listed below for convenience:

Getting Started - This tutorial video will cover the basic operations of starting the SMART Boards in the Arts & Sciences Building (ASB) room 234n and Valparaiso University.

Duration: 3 min. 15 sec. - http://youtu.be/t0YfwsDqS3k

Basic Software Training - This tutorial video will cover the basic operations of projecting and using PowerPoint presentations on the SMART Boards in the Arts & Sciences Building (ASB) room 234n and Valparaiso University. Duration: 2 min. 22 sec. - http://youtu.be/JBLj7swMPSc

SMART Meeting Software Training - This tutorial video will cover more advanced features embedded in the SMART Meeting software on the SMART Boards in the Arts & Sciences Building (ASB) room 234n and Valparaiso University. Duration: 3 min. 2 sec. - http://youtu.be/4QieXcqDK24

Collaborative Room Space and Technology Setups - This tutorial will cover the use of laptop computers to work in independent groups using the SMART Boards in the Arts & Sciences Building (ASB) room 234 at Valparaiso University. The tutorial also covers the use of the low-tech huddle boards found in the room. Duration: 4 min. 10 sec. - http://youtu.be/B46euT2mMZI

Room layout concept - This video overviews the design concepts behind ASB 234, and how the classroom can be used to enhance students' learning experience. Duration: 4 min. 1 sec. - http://youtu.be/r2rwBjarMSs

5.5 Eyes to the Future

One of the first things we noted when we started evaluating our program was that this could be very overwhelming. So, we started simple and knew that we would keep innovating and changing based on feedback from our end users. We end our meetings with the development of the "percolator" where we discuss future endeavors. Some of our ideas and rollouts in progress are outlined below:

5.5.1 Microsoft IT Academy

For the 2013-2014 school year, we will be doing a soft rollout of the Microsoft IT Academy online teaching program. We are working to simplify the process of assigning learning plans through the system for the testing on which our users will want to focus their studies. We are also working with Prometric to become a testing center so that our participants have a one-stop shop for Microsoft certification.

5.5.2 INdorsed Indiana General Studies Courses

We have courses in software proficiency that we will be offering for elective credit. We have combined a great deal of our courses and matched them with the Indorsed Indiana objectives for career development for our students to be able to get credit for their offerings. Our first course will be "Software Survival Toolkit" which focuses transition software use from academic to professional use. This will be a one-credit, seven week class that will allow students to get credit for our IT training offerings.

5.5.3 Training Library Integrated with Knowledgebase

We are working to tie our training library to our knowledgebase and Web Help Desk ticketing system. Combining efforts and working with other divisions simplifies the end-user experience and raises the potential for all stakeholders.

5.5.4 Video Training in Addition to lynda.com

We are working with our Human Resources Services and Faculty Development Office to combine our training efforts into one place where students, faculty and staff can go for online, on-demand training. We envision one place that would house all of our training tapes that we could have linked handouts and supplemental materials for all of users.

6. SUMMARY

Our IT training staff is making great strides to reach our end-users and enhance their technology experience. This has led to a rough development of our mission statement for the training division. While it is a work in progress, it is a start in developing our core values for training. In the rough draft it reads, "The mission of the IT Training Department is to provide timely and structured learning experiences, operational training and career development programs to the entire Valparaiso University community to improve learning, teaching and job performance with regard to technology and its function to an individual's role within the university."

7. REFERENCES

[1] Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center. 2009. Teaching with the revised bloom's taxonomy. Northern Illinois University. http://www.niu.edu/facdev/programs/handouts/blooms.shtml

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