

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

The effectiveness of vehicles promoting eLearning professional development

A research thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Communication Management, at Massey University, Manawatu

Duncan O'Hara
2010

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my family for their support and patience throughout this journey.

Special thanks to my son Miller and my wife Justine for allowing me the space when I wanted it and love when I needed it.

Thanks also to Heather Kavan for being a friend and an outstanding supervisor. Her unconditional support made all the difference.

Finally I need to acknowledge my work colleagues. I am fortunate to have been surrounded by supportive and understanding people who wanted to see me succeed.

Abstract

The influence of vehicles, such as email, websites, and newsletters, to promote eLearning professional development is an area of study that is marked by a lack of research. The aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of the role that the vehicles used to promote formal eLearning professional development opportunities play in influencing staff awareness of academic development programmes.

Using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, seven groups of Massey University staff were asked to recall and assess the effectiveness of the vehicles used to promote eLearning professional development. The research also drew on web metrics data to provide an observational assessment of the popularity of the University eLearning professional development webpage.

The results suggest that motivation plays a key part in staff awareness of formal eLearning professional development opportunities and the vehicles used to promote them. Further, motivation and institutional factors, such as an institutional eLearning strategy, are interrelated. Therefore the vehicles used to promote eLearning professional development need to be varied and focused on the strengths of each vehicle. There is also potential to use eLearning professional development courses themselves as effective means of promoting other eLearning opportunities. Additionally, the findings suggest that technology-reliant vehicles, such as email and websites, help in converting staff interest in eLearning into action in the form of enrolment into professional development courses. For staff who are less interested in eLearning, a strategy that involves

developing relationships within key personnel within departments is likely to be highly effective in changing perceptions and encouraging engagement.

It is hoped that the findings will assist academic development units to strategically promote their eLearning professional development to a wider academic audience

Table of contents

Abstract.....	i
Chapter 1: Introduction and background	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background.....	3
1.3 A brief history of eLearning PD and support at Massey.....	4
1.4 Barriers to eLearning professional development offered by TDU.....	8
1.5 The history of eLearning PD promotion	11
1.6 Institutional changes and their impact on eLearning PD	12
1.7 The influence of strategy	15
1.8 Domestic factors affecting eLearning	18
1.9 Summary.....	20
Chapter 2: Literature review	23
Chapter 3: Methodology	35
3.1 Position of the researcher.....	37
3.2 Changes to PD activities.....	40
3.3 Participants and procedures	41
3.3.1 Questionnaires.....	45
3.3.2 Interviews.....	50
3.3.3 Web metrics.....	52
3.3.4 Ethical considerations.....	52
Chapter 4: Findings.....	57
4.1 Findings from Group One.....	57
4.2 Findings from Group Two	61
4.3 Findings from Group Three	64
4.4 Findings from Group Four.....	67

4.5 Findings from Group Five	70
4.6 Findings from Group Six	78
4.7 Findings from Group Seven.....	82
4.8 Summary.....	86
Chapter 5: Discussion	91
5.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	91
5.2 Intrinsic motivation.....	92
5.3 Extrinsic motivation.....	99
5.4 Institutional factors	103
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	111
6.1 Intrinsic motivation.....	111
6.2 Extrinsic motivation.....	112
6.3 Institutional factors	113
6.4 Future research.....	114
6.5 Recommendations.....	115
References.....	117
Appendix A: Questions used in the pre-course and post-course questionnaires – Group One.....	123
Appendix B: Questions used in the WebCT Experience feedback questionnaire – Group Three	125
Appendix C: Questions used in the semi-structured interviews - Group Two	127
Appendix D - Questions used in the semi-structured interviews - Group Four.....	128
Appendix E: Ministry of Education funded project questionnaire – Group Six.....	129
Appendix F - Interview questions used in the Ministry of Education funded project – Group Six	143

List of Figures

Figure 1. Methods used to obtain researcher contact details	68
Figure 2. Awareness of eLearning PD courses at Massey	71
Figure 3. I believe my institution views PD for its staff as important	72
Figure 4. I believe PD is an important part of my job	72
Figure 5. Effectiveness of eLearning PD	74
Figure 6. Reasons for lack of engagement in eLearning PD	75
Figure 7. Constraints affecting eLearning PD	76
Figure 8. Visitor numbers to the Online Learning and Teaching web page	83
Figure 9. The relationship between vehicles used to promote eLearning PD and Profile One	93
Figure 10. Vehicles used to promote eLearning PD and Profile Two	94
Figure 11. The factors that contribute to an eLearning PD course as a vehicle that has the potential to encourage staff engagement in other eLearning PD	96
Figure 12. Profile Two extended to encompass eLearning PD delivered online	98
Figure 13. Ryan and Deci's taxonomy of motivation	102

List of Tables

Table 1 Respondent Group Number, Composition and Procedures	41
Table 2 Summary of question one, ways in which participants came to hear of the Introduction to eLearning module: Pre-course questionnaire	58

Table 3 Summary of question two, reasons why participants decided to engage in the Introduction to eLearning module: Pre-course questionnaire.....	59
Table 4 Summary of question three, preferred methods to keep participants informed about support and training for online learning at Massey: Post-course questionnaire	59
Table 5 Summary of ways in which participants came to hear of the WebCT Experience course: Feedback questionnaire	64
Table 6 Summary of preferred methods to keep participants informed about support and training for online learning at Massey: Feedback questionnaire.	65
Table 7 Summary of the forms of PD that respondents had engaged with at Massey. ...	73