

**Converting a Workbook-Based Professional Development
Course for Electronic Delivery:
ED795A Client Project Report for Infinite Possibilities Programs**

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Converting a Workbook-Based Professional Development Course for Electronic Delivery:

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Who couldn't benefit from a little personal coaching to improve communications and express themselves more clearly? Clarissa Moramarco is a motivational speaker and Registered Nurse who leads popular workshops on this and other personal and professional development subjects, many of which are eligible for continuing education credits. But she can only reach so many people on the speaking circuit. How can she share her upbeat message with more people?

This paper describes a semester-long practicum project for ED795A at San Diego State University involving development of an electronic delivery version of Ms. Moramarco's existing paper- and audio-based professional development course for nurses. The existing course, "Communicating and Dealing Effectively with Difficult People & Situations," has been approved for 10 contact hours of credit to satisfy continuing education requirements for nurses. In addition to creating an electronic course, the client wished to broaden the focus of the course materials to be applicable for other fields beyond nursing as well. Due to time limitations, client priorities, and the fact that the existing course content has been "pre-qualified" for credit, the main focus of this project was design and development of the actual online course mechanism. These activities — including a brief research and analysis phase, client interaction, course design, rationale, development, a limited evaluation, and an overview of the deliverables — will be reviewed.

Analysis of Continuing Education for Nurses and Similar Professionals

The existing course consists of a 30-page workbook and a CD with approximately 80-minutes of companion audio lecture material. The client had developed the course originally for live delivery in a workshop format and later converted it to the workbook/CD format so that it could reach more people. Both the live course and workbook have been approved by a third-party organization for 10 contact hours of nursing continuing education credit. Primary distribution of the existing course

has been through sales at Ms. Moramarco's workshops on related professional development topics.

Because the sales are not tracked and tests are sent to a third party for issuance of CEU credit, it was not possible to interview students or otherwise incorporate their feedback into the analysis. While it certainly could have been beneficial (Rossett, 1999), the lack of access to potential learners or even organizations desiring training made even a cursory performance analysis or needs assessment virtually impossible. Essentially the need we agreed upon was the desire of the client to expand access to her course content.

A quick review of literature identified the importance of continuing education to keep up with technology advances as well as deal with sensitive human factors (Nicholson, 2003) in the field of nursing and similar professions. Not, the most technologically oriented group, educational technology and distance education options were initially slow to gain acceptance with this population. However, scheduling issues, increased need for training and other factors have lead to increased acceptance of online options (Nursing, 1999) and many institutions are seeking creative means to acquire content and collaborate to develop various types of training and continuing educations vehicles (Nalle *et al.*, 2001). Content that is primarily theoretical or affective appears to be more suited for the online experience because it is conceptual and does not involve hands-on experiences that do not work as well online (Leski, 2000). Since our course is directed at the affective domain, the quest to create an online version seemed reasonable.

I spoke casually to a few healthcare professionals who acknowledged the need for getting CEU credits, but none were particularly impressed with available online offerings. An Internet search identified more than 20 organizations offering online continuing education opportunities for the general nursing population and similar professions including physical and occupational therapists. It appeared that all of these offerings were limited to delivery of content that was almost entirely text-based with virtually no interactivity, few illustrations and no use of rich media of any type. As part of the project, I captured contact information for these sites along with course writer's

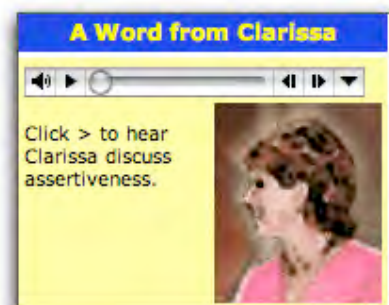
guidelines for those that were seeking submissions. Later review of a report done for the same client two years ago revealed similar findings (Adams *et al.*, 2003).

As a result, the client and I determined that part of the project would involve capturing a “text dump” of whatever course content we created that would meet the general guidelines for submitting courses to this type of content provider. Because this involved little more than transcribing paper- and audio-based content into a text file, we agreed to also develop a more appealing interactive (Keller & Suzuki, 1998), multimedia version of the course that could be delivered either from the client’s website or on a CD.

Designing a Course to Meet These Requirements

Based on this analysis, it was determined that the course design should not be too technically sophisticated or the target population might not have the hardware/software capabilities to access it. However, it should offer enough interactivity along with optional resources to provide a richer alternative to existing text-based courses. With this in mind, the design considerations include:

- Using HTML as the primary medium for maximum flexibility and compatibility for web and CD delivery, multiple operating systems, and minimal use of plug-ins except those required for optional elements.
- Breaking the 30 pages of text and 80 minutes of audio into logical, digestible chunks with subject-defined lessons that are broken down further into sub-lessons that can each be completed in five to 15 minutes. Other than this “chunkalizing,” the overall content was left generally intact as it has already been approved for accreditation by some institutions.
- Editing the audio narration into short segments that can be included as optional assets to be played by those who have the capability of accessing them. Although optional, we determined that these assets are a key to capturing the engaging personality of the instructor that has been instrumental to the success of her live workshops.
- Much of the audio content also consists of storytelling segments that help bring to life the points she makes in the text (Denning, 2004).



These real-life experiences help to convey concepts and affective learning (Clark, 1999). Portions of the audio that contain significant instructional content will be transcribed and incorporated in the text of the online lessons in a conversational manner designed to welcome the learner.

- Longer text passages will be broken into bulleted statements and highlighted text boxes.
- Each lesson sub-page will include a progress bar to show the learner’s advancement through the lesson and a content table that highlights the current content topic in a different color

Your Progress 1A 1B 1C 1D 1E 1F 1G 1H

Lesson 1: Awareness of Ourselves, Our Rights and Communication Issues

About this Lesson

Lesson 4 points out strategies to approach problematic situations and people.

A. Strategic Tips: Dealing with excuses and helplessness.

B. Handling Complainers: Identifying, understanding, and coping with whiners.

C. Dealing with Hostility: Tips for defusing hostile or aggressive types.

D. What to Do with the Know-It-All: Techniques for working with highly opinionated people.

E. How to Treat Super-Agreeable People: Getting the best from the nice guys.

F. Coping with the Silent Type: Ways to communicate with the uncommunicative.

- To increase reflection and interactivity, several of the existing Workbook lessons include sections where the learner is asked to jot down ideas, reflections, and personal

notes relating to the content. The online implementation incorporates text boxes built from HTML “Form” attributes that allow the learner to type out their

Your Progress 2A 2B 2C 2D 2E 2F

Lesson 2: Assertiveness

E. Why We Don't Assert Ourselves

Now that you've discovered some areas where you might like to set some limits, let's consider what thoughts, feelings, or attitudes might hinder our attempts to assert ourselves. Jot down a few ideas here.

Uncovering Our Fears

Note some fears that may be getting in the way of assertive behavior for you.

Uncovering the Benefits

Can you think of some benefits that may result from asserting yourself?

ideas and print them out for later reference either as a PDF file or on paper.

- Some Lesson segments will be structured as checklists where learners can check the boxes next to topics or tips that resonate with their feelings or plans.

Your Progress 3A 3B 3C 3D

Lesson 3: Criticism, Morale & Reduced Stress

B. Checklist for Constructive Criticism

- Target the behavior you want to criticize.
- Make your criticism as specific as possible.
- Be sure the behavior you are criticizing can be changed. If it cannot, then stop.
- Use "I-statements" and avoid threats and/or accusations.

- To facilitate test-taking, the multiple-choice, open-book test takes the form of a simple page that learners can print out and circle the selected answers as they go through the course. The paper document can then be mailed to the test-scoring and crediting institution for processing. While this may seem primitive, it is actually a method ideally suited for existing infrastructure on the part of both the students and the certifying organizations, many of which do not appear familiar with SCORM or learning management systems.

Development of the Online Course in Two Formats

This was the most problematic part of the project, primarily because the legacy material existed only in printed hard copy and AIFF audio files. In order to avoid typing 30 pages of text and transcribing 80-minutes of audio, I used optical character recognition software Read Iris Pro to scan the workbook into a text file. Since the quality of the text was less than perfect, this took many hours and required numerous corrections. The audio proved even more difficult. Using Via Voice text recognition software, I attempted to transfer the narration directly from the CD, but the software requires “training” to recognize an individual voice and would not recognize the recording. As a result, I actually listened to the software in one ear and read what I heard into another headset/microphone after training the software for my voice. While transcribing the audio, I noted time markers for each Lesson so that I could go back later and match the audio segments to the corresponding text segments.

Once the content was converted into electronic format, the development went fairly smoothly:

- The client had requested the use of blue and gold colors for the web pages. I located a template from TemplatesResources.com that I modified, using Photoshop CS and Dreamweaver MX 2004, to work with the client content.
- With that structured, I placed the content chunks of text material, page-by-page into the template design using the various navigational elements discussed in the design section.
- Then I checked the corresponding audio to see what needed to be included in the text instruction to make sense and ensure continuity and included the transcribed text on each page.

- Next, I identified the most appropriate storytelling nuggets from the remaining audio and used QuickTime Pro to edit and compress the audio into “bite-sized” segments that could be played by those users who had the technology to access audio with either the free Windows Media or QuickTime players.
- As each section was developed, I posted it on my personal website and notified the client who would then go over the material and fax changes.
- Upon posting and review of the entire course, I copied all of the written content into a text file designed to meet the general submission guidelines for previously identified continuing education providers.

Implementation of the Course

Although implementation of the course is beyond the scope of this project, my discussions with the client revealed that she had not implemented a previous project of a similar nature. As a result, I took special care to include additional resources, submission guidelines, and instructions designed to aid in that process.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

The lack of access to the learners that was an impediment to the analysis phase also makes evaluation difficult. cursory evaluation involved asking a few people to go through the first few pages of the prototype site to ensure that it made sense and flowed logically. This was much more an evaluation of the website and its navigation than the content. Ultimately, market forces will measure the motivation of people to take the course while repeat customers will determine learner satisfaction outcomes. Because of the affective nature of the desired outcomes and the removal from the learners in this type of arrangement, it will not be possible to evaluate transfer.

Conclusion

It took awhile for the project to build momentum, partly due to lack of access to learners and organizations that had specific learning objectives or goals for the course, and partly because of the extensive content transcription effort required to get started. Once we got past those hurdles and into the design and development phases, I believe that both the client and I began to enjoy the process and derived satisfaction from the outcome – even if we went a bit beyond the scope and spent considerably more time than anticipated.

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Appendices

Contract

Meeting Minutes

Time Log

Infinite Possibilities Consulting Contract

March 28, 2005

The following document establishes a contract between Infinite Possibilities (client) and the consultant Susan Connell. This contract defines responsibilities, deliverables and compensation for the "Communicating and Dealing Effectively with Difficult People & Situations" Continuing Education project. The project is to be completed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the graduate class "Seminar in Instructional Design" at San Diego State University.

Parties

Susan Connell, the consultant, will provide services outlined below for the client, Infinite Possibilities. Clarissa Moramarco, R.N. will represent Infinite Possibilities and serve as contact person for the project.

Timeframe

The services outlined within this contract will commence February 2005 and conclude with the final product and documentation presented to the client by May 15, 2005.

The Project

Infinite Possibilities currently provides a home-study course, "Communicating and Dealing Effectively with Difficult People & Situations," which is paper-based with an accompanying CD. The client would like to add a new delivery method by transforming the existing course for electronic delivery. The consultant will be retained to design and develop a computer-based media for Infinite Possibilities' existing course. The specific product developed will be determined through information gained during the analysis and approved by the client.

Services

The consultants will conduct an analysis of the current paper-based course, current skill level of users with regard to computer preferences, and the learning strategies surrounding computer-based education. Data acquired from the analysis will provide the foundation for the recommended design and delivery of the product to be proposed by the consulting team and approved by the client. The consultants will then design and develop the agreed upon product.

Roles and Deliverables

The consultant will provide to the client:

- Proposal detailing the analysis findings and the recommended product
- Complete product based upon the analysis findings, designed to meet the needs of the client and the users, and developed using the instructional delivery method(s) identified in the analysis

The client will provide to the consulting team:

- Original course content
- Access to material needed to perform the analysis
- Timely approval of documents for project development
- Reimbursement for project related expenses to be approved in advance by the client

Payment

In return for services, the consultant will receive payment of \$100.00, 1 % royalty fee, and name recognition on the product. Payment will be due when the deliverables outlined above have been completed and turned over to the client.

Both parties enter into this contract on March 28, 2005.

Meeting Minutes

Meeting called by: Susan Connell

Attendees: Clarissa Moramarco
Susan Connell

Date: 2/17/05

Location: Clarissa's Home'

Discussion: Introductions Clarissa described her vision of project and gave course materials to Susan Susan described assignment requirements & formalities Susan asked for electronic files and Clarissa said she would try to find		
Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:
Review material	Susan	March 3
See if electronic files can be located	Clarissa	March 1

Meeting called by: Susan Connell

Attendees: Clarissa Moramarco
Susan Connell

Date: 3/28/05

Location: Starbucks Hillcrest

Discussion: Reviewed content options, what to do with audio, requirements for continuing ed content submissions Reviewed options for transcribing text Determined we would do both raw text for submission & web/CD-based version Clarissa defined preferred color palette Clarissa described previous project		
Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:
Capture written material and audio to text files	Susan	April 15
Begin site design	Susan	April 20
Locate previous project or provide contact info for previous consulting team	Clarissa	April 10

Meeting called by: Susan Connell

Attendees: Clarissa Moramarco
Susan Connell

Date: 5/9/05

Location: Gelato Vera

Discussion: Reviewed prototype and scheduling Discussed changes to text and title & how to best convey additional change information		
Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:
Finish web site	Susan	May 15
Create text for third-party providers	Susan	May 20
Provide project report/instructions for use	Susan	May 15
Provide replacement photo for web site	Clarissa	May 10

Project Time Log

Description	Week of:														Total	
	2/7/05	2/14/05	2/21/05	2/28/05	3/7/05	3/14/05	3/21/05	3/28/05	4/4/05	4/11/05	4/18/05	4/25/05	5/2/05	5/9/05		5/16/05
Administrative Tasks	1		1					1				1		1	2	7
Client Meetings		1						1					1		1	4
Research		1	4													5
Content Transcription							2	6	10	12	3					33
Analysis				3	4											7
Design									2	6	8					16
Development											2	10	12	15	7	46
Project Report													2	5	4	11
TOTAL	1	2	5	3	4	0	2	8	12	18	13	11	15	21	14	129