STATUS QUO BLENDED LEARNING. WHAT DO WE BLEND?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, blended learning could be defined as a teaching and learning approach which united traditional classroom training and e-learning activities. E-learning activities were digitally delivered trainings which the learners completed asynchronously, i.e., at their own pace and time.

The post COVID-19 definition of the term "blended learning" has undergone some changes to signify a learning solution that employs various delivery methods, including live e-learning, self-paced and face-to-face learning. In other words, synchronous and asynchronous methods.

> Synchronous learning refers to the method of content delivery when a group of learners is involved in learning at the same time (sometimes, but not always at the same place).

> Asynchronous learning denotes the type of learning which is self-paced. This means the learner gets engaged in the learning at the place and time most convenient for them.

Apart from asynchronous and synchronous forms of learning, blended learning can be seen as an umbrella term that is used to describe the combination of different instructional methods, technologies, pedagogical approaches used to deliver the learning goals. On the following pages, you will learn how to select the appropriate learning formats for synchronous and asynchronous learning based on the learning objective.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THE PAGES AHEAD:

1.   SELECTING DELIVERY METHOD: LEARNING GOAL ALIGNMENT

Learning goals vary significantly and it is rather unlikely that the use of a single method of content delivery to offers learners enough involvement, motivation, relevance, and context to allow them to reach the goal. For this reason, we at U4I tend to select the delivery methods (formats) based on the learning goals. To better identify the learning goals and the delivery methods to meet them, we first look into the knowledge, skills, and abilities learners should gain.

2.   KSA-MODEL: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES

Knowledge Skills and Attitudes (KSA) are considered the three domains of learning activities that constitute a competency in varying proportions. The KSA model serves as a basis for addressing the competencies learners will need to develop to reach the learning goal. When selecting blended learning formats, we should have a clear-cut idea which of the three domains is the primary goal. Apart from the domain itself, the choice of the delivery method should also greatly rely on the following questions:

- ⊘ **Which resources do you have in the L&D department (time & money)?**
- ⊘ **What can learners afford? Can they learn synchronously or asynchronously? How much time can they dedicate to learning?**
- ⊘ **How motivated are learners before the training?**
- ⊘ **What kind of motivation have learners?**
- ⊘ **What prior knowledge do learners have?**
- ⊘ **Is the prior knowledge sufficient for them to take the training or is an additional intervention required?**

By analyzing the needs of learners, you can determine which of the three domains needs the most development. Most likely, you will need to address knowledge first.

2.1 Knowledge Development

The acquisition of knowledge forms the basis for certain skills that learners need to accomplish a task or change an attitude. For instance, to employ secure design principles in the product development you first need to gain the understanding of what these principles are.

> A learning goal for knowledge advancement would be: "After the training you will know what the secure design principles are."

This goal aims to raise the learners´ awareness of a certain topic (secure design principles), so that they would be able to remember, recall and further apply the knowledge of the concepts. Formats which could be used are:

SYNCHRONOUS:

Sessions with an expert giving a presentation on the topic followed by group work where participants contextualize and reflect on what they have learned.

ASYNCHRONOUS:

Self-paced learning materials conveying the learning content, e.g., videos, reading, slides etc.

2.2 Skills Development

Skills development denotes the ability to perform a task or an activity, e.g., fix a car engine.

> A learning goal to advance a skill would be: "After this training you will be able to fix the car engine."

The ability to perform this task requires practical experience and regular feedback, in addition to understanding and remembering the key concepts of the knowledge area (e.g., parts of the car engine). For this reason, skill development requires the support of the instructor, facilitator, or peer. The most suitable formats to employ would be:

SYNCHRONOUS:

Instructor-led online and offline sessions, where participants learn how to perform a particular and the try it out for themselves.

ASYNCHRONOUS:

Self-paced learning materials (videos, slides, screencasts, digital labs) that give learners an overview of how a process/procedure works.

2.3 Attitude Change

Modifying the learner´s attitude means adjusting the way a learner thinks or feels about someone or something.

> A learning goal to develop or change a certain attitude would be: "After the training the learners will be more motivated to apply OT security principles at the workplace."

Attitude and behaviors are the hardest to alter. Therefore, first and foremost, it is crucial to make it clear to learners why what they are doing is important to them long term and the short-term. Regular affirmation of the learners´ effort plays a key role as well. In terms of the formats to be used, the desired learning outcome requires the utilization of collaborative learning, which can be both synchronous and asynchronous:

SYNCHRONOUS:

Collaborative activities to allow learners to try out the new behavior in a risk-free, safe environment with their peers. Role-playing and online discussions could be a great solution for this.

ASYNCHRONOUS:

Interactive videos, discussion forums, group projects – any kind of space and incentive that encourages experience sharing among learners and lively discussions.

3. OVERVIEW TABLE ON THE USE OF THE LEARNING FORMATS

KSA-MODELL	BLENDED LEARNING	
	Synchronous learning	Asynchronous learning
Knowledge Development	Expert Lecture Session Group Discussion	Expert Videos Readings Summary Slides
Skills Development	Instructor-Led Sessions Hands-On Experiences	Use Case Videos Summary Slides Screencasts Digital Labs
Attitude Change	Collaborative Activities, i.e. Role-Plays, Online Debates	Readings Interactive Videos Discussion Forums Group Projects
Coaching can be used in all areas, but pursues different goals.		

Do you want to learn more about learning method selection and share ideas with our instructional design experts? Email us at info@university4industry.com!

Interesting sources on this topic:
- Competency Training in Collaborative Supply Chain Using KSA Model
- Building Effective Blended Learning Programs

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