Sheridan College
Instructional Resources for BBA Business Communication (COMM10000D)
TLA 3- 2015

Project Leader

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Description of the Project

This project involved the creation of six new and innovative learning resources for Sheridan's students studying business writing: two Slidedocs and four instructional videos. These materials are intended primarily for the BBA Bus Comm class (COMM10000D), but are also designed to be usable for diploma Bus Comm and Reports and Presentations (RAP) students as well.

The Slidedocs replace existing MSWord guide documents that I had created some time ago. According to Nancy Duarte's "Learn" Slidedoc (2014), "Slidedocs are visual documents, developed in presentation software, that are intended to be read and referenced instead of projected. ... Slidedocs allow communicators to break complex ideas into small chunks of information and give readers the time to absorb the information at their own pace" (Slide 20). The Slidedocs are designed to be more visually engaging and user-friendly than Word documents; hyperlinks and tables of contents make them easy to use as reference materials. "Neither dense documents nor sparse slides contain the right balance of detail and scan-ability .... Slidedocs combine the strengths of documents and presentations while minimizing their weaknesses" (Duarte, 2014, Slide 19). Students in all three courses will have access to these guides on letter and memo writing. They will use them to become aware of what rules exist, and then as reference documents while completing assignments.

Four instructional videos were created to enhance the online learning during the hybrid, flipped classroom portion of the BBA Bus Comm course. In their review of research done on the effectiveness of video in online instruction, Rudd & Rudd II (2014), conclude that "students perceive effectiveness in streaming video as a component of web conferencing/virtual training. Students also found using video to personalize the classroom experience helped to bridge the gap between traditional forms of instruction and online instruction" (p. 6). These videos are directly tied to the Formal Report assignment in the BBA Bus Comm and RAP classes.

In the past, students have been challenged to fully grasp core concepts related to report writing through just the textbook and PowerPoint slidedecks. In-class time that should have been spent on application and practice was being spent explaining and providing examples, which can now be done as pre-work through these videos.

In a study conducted at the University of Columbia School of Continuing Education published by Melanie Hibbert (2014), it was found that the best instructional videos are those that have a direct connection to course assignments, and that "best practices" included "instructor presence ... creating faculty presence in an online environment" ("Instructor Presence", para. 1). The students also talked about the value of audio-visual interest in the videos, and were looking for value beyond simply reading a transcript (Hibbert, 2014). Narrated by me, the videos are designed to use as much "SmartArt" as possible, along with content-related animations and transitions. Callouts, animation, and music have also been added in Camtasia. PowerPoint version will be available, though, to ensure the greatest accessibility possible.
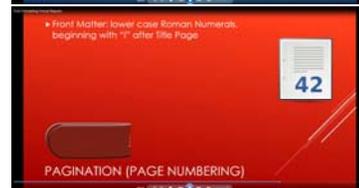
These videos will also be invaluable tools in related classes which sometime experience compressed semesters; they will allow what class time remains to be allocated to application and practice, rather than concept introduction.

Findings

Slidedoc Screen Captures:
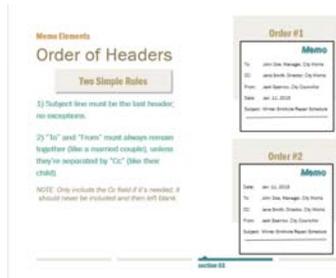
Video Screen Captures:

Innovation

These resources are innovative in the "new-to-me" sense, as well as being a new and creative way to disseminate and reinforce knowledge within the three courses.

Quality Impact

Students are likely to be more motivated to access learning resources because they are visually engaging and easily cross-referenced, and because they create a sense of "instructor presence" in an online environment. Those students will be likely to develop stronger skills and knowledge bases, which should result in higher performance on assignments, and increased success in future courses and careers.

Sustainability

In the evolution of this project, the end result has become usable across three courses, and will be shared with colleagues who teach those courses. The documents and videos are editable, so future adjustments to reflect changes in the industry or in the course focus are possible.

The Slidedocs will be especially sustainable, as students could use them as reference material when on-the-job in the future.

References

Duarte, N. (2014). Slidedocs: Spread ideas with effective visual documents. *Duarte*. Retrieved August 19, 2015 from http://www.duarte.com/slidedocs/#learn

Hibbert, M. (2014, April 7). What makes an online instructional video compelling? *Educause Review*. Retrieved August 19, 2015 from http://er.educause.edu/articles/2014/4/what-makes-an-online-instructional-video-compelling

Rudd, D. P., & Rudd II, D. P. (2014, February). The value of video in online instruction. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 13, 1-7. Retrieved from http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/131760.pdf