

## Chapter 12

# Marketing to and Developing Faculty Members to Create High Quality, Highly Interactive Online Courses

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### ABSTRACT

*In this paper, the author shares a detailed process for soliciting and securing exemplar faculty members, who are ready to redesign and offer their course in a high quality online environment. The goal is to help faculty create highly engaging online learning opportunities as good as or better than their current face to face classes. Interested faculty members submitted a competitive proposal, and were selected to interact in a highly dynamic three day short course. The course introduced and applied learning theories as a mechanism to help faculty develop their materials, so that learners could attend, process, retain and use meaningful conceptually-based material. The outcome of the program was targeted, high quality online courses; word of mouth support and requests for short courses from our law and dental schools.*

### INTRODUCTION

Although online teaching and learning has been available for decades, many universities have hesitated in offering courses and programs due to the potential fear of a lower quality experience for students. Some initially had seen the move to online courses as an administrative way to save costs by increasing student enrollment without additional infrastructure or staffing. It did not take

long before most organizations realized this was not the case, and if high quality instruction was to occur, an equal, if not more attention and cost were required to offer a similar quality learning environment online, as most were use to face-to-face. The internet offered connectivity, however, it has not been until recently that true higher level interactive learning tools have been made available, that are rigorous (both pedagogically and technologically), engaging and discipline specific. In addition, the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4014-6.ch012

open access education tools that are now available allow almost any faculty member willing to take some time to learn menu driven templates to create dynamic, worthwhile electronic learning objects. The term Open Educational Resources (OER) was adopted by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2002 at the Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries. One of the more famous OER projects was the 2001 Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Open Course Ware initiative, where the university made available to the world free of charge, their curriculum. Although some cynics believed this might lead to the elimination of teachers, more often, the opposite has occurred, albeit a modified approach in the way teachers can now be more of facilitators and mentors of the discipline, as opposed to strictly content generation. Tangent resources to OER are organizations such as Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org/>), which is an “organization that develops, supports, and stewards legal and technical infrastructure that maximizes digital creativity, sharing, and innovation.” This type of organization is a critical supplement for those wishing to create useful educational content without having to capture all of the video, audio and other resources that might go into an e-learning object.

Learning objects have been around for many years, first cited in the literature in 1967 by R. W. Gerard. In 1994, Wayne Hogins formalized during a workgroup the concept as ‘a collection of content items, practice items and assessment items that are combined based on a single learning outcome’. Currently, multiple OER offer high quality online learning objects. Organizations which provide the OER learning objects, include WISConline (2011) (<http://www.wisc-online.com/listobjects.aspx>) who feature a variety of free learning objects on the topics of business, health, general education and professional development. The objective of a learning object is to engage the learner in an authentic, sustainable way, and ideally allow

each learner to work as little or as much with the concept as they need for mastery. This approach to teaching and learning addresses individual learning styles, as well as places the learner in the center of learning, affording them more control of their pace, abilities and outcomes. Other side effects of this approach include a higher level of self-regulated learning, intrinsic motivation, metacognition and ultimately the ability to learn both in a constructivist, non-linear format, as well as an objectivist realm, which tends to be the more common linear pathway of traditional chalkboard education. Some examples of historical Learning Objects include simplistic combinations of lecture notes with low level quizzes and homework assignments. Today’s electronic learning objects can be highly integrated and offered in a more constructivist model, which has been seen to be more attractive to the millennial students, and their web-based approach to learning. Although many faculty members have used and are believers in traditional learning objects, some are hesitant to embrace an instructional technology philosophy to the same object-oriented approach. However, when faculty members are shown how to translate their learning objects into e-learning objects by using low threshold, menu driven technology tools, it appears that most are open to updating their approach. Some of the e-learning object tools include wikis, blogs, pod/vodcast and even capturing high definition digital video/audio video embedded into the instruction. The key difference is the ability to create these e-learning objects with relatively little expertise. Historically, professors spent all of their time continuing to stay current with their discipline-specific research and little time on preparing their teaching material. Expecting faculty members to learn how to write programming code, in order to create an e-learning object would not only be difficult, but impractical, as a distraction of their main role as an expert in their field. However, now there are many, easy to use, menu driven templates to create the e-learning objects, as well as highly interactive Web 2.0

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