

Case Study: Reflective Journal

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Submitted By:

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1. Overall Reflection

It was appropriate that our case study focusing on rapid-design approach required a rapid-design approach for its planning and facilitation. Despite the short deadline, I'm pleased overall with the collaboration process and the final implementation of the discussion. Our strengths as a group were our collaborative spirit, flexibility, and versatility; all three of us would have been comfortable handling any of the assigned responsibilities and tasks necessary for the facilitation of our case study.

One of my biggest takeaways from this process is that less is indeed more. Although case studies require support scaffolding for both the learner and the instructor, it is also necessary to make sure that participants are neither overly restricted nor impeded by that scaffolding. In my case, I was tasked with curating the supporting readings. In the end, I found numerous articles identifying the core principles of a rapid-design approach and an equally rich range of articles describing how this approach could be used in different work and industry related contexts. However, all these articles, taken together, would have provided too much supporting material for learners to digest easily, so I realized that I had to be far more selective in my final choices. This was quite challenging. After reviewing several of these articles, our group settled on two required articles and three recommended articles that helped orient participants to the case as well as to the discussion.

I also found that the less-is-more approach carried over to the discussions, which provided a related takeaway: the less you moderate, the more you facilitate. I had never participated in an online class discussion as an instructor, but I see now just how well a discussion can flow given the right prompts, participant motivation, and judicious moderation on the part of the instructor. As learners, I think we have an inherent expectation of instructor

feedback; when such feedback does not occur in a discussion, our natural reaction is to think that the instructor is not as involved as we would prefer. I now see the importance of tempering this expectation by explaining to learners how a discussion forum works and what exactly the instructor's role in a discussion forum is. As I was going through the week, I had to resist the urge to jump in and start commenting and instead let the dialogue develop organically.

Finally, by facilitating this case study and by better understanding the central role the discussion facilitator plays in the learning process, I have come to realize that effectively moderating a discussion involves a repertoire of techniques that I don't feel I possess and which represents a glaring weakness in my skill set. While researching this topic online, I found several texts that focus on moderating discussions and specifically on strategies and protocols for fostering effective online discussion. One text that I've already purchased is *Going Online with Protocols: New Tools for Teaching and Learning*, by Alan Dichter, Janet Mannheimer Zydney, and Joseph P. McDonald. I have a forthcoming project that will likely involve a discussion forum, which will be another opportunity for me to gain some moderating experience.

2. Reflection on Discussion Facilitation

i. Team Work

Very early in the planning process, our group arranged to meet face-to-face in Google Hangouts to review the case study, break down the facilitation requirements, and assign specific tasks based on those requirements. I felt fortunate to be on a team with Peter and Brian because they were as enthusiastic about our group's facilitating the first group case study as I was and—just as importantly—because they were readily available to meet in a “live” context online. As a result, we were able to allocate pre-work and discussion tasks and responsibilities equally and very early on; this ensured that we had enough time to prepare the supporting materials for the

case study. In this first meeting, we decided who would take the lead on each responsibility. We designated Peter as the lead for the Creating Rubrics Detail form, myself as the lead for defining objects and selected reading, and Brian as the lead for creating discussion questions and facilitating the discussion.

Because our group consisted of only three team members, we did not designate a team manager. However, to some extent all three of us performed the duties of team manager. For example, I got the ball rolling with the group preparation by contacting Peter and Brian to schedule our initial meeting, and I set up and moderated the Google Hangouts sessions in which we met. Peter summarized the Monday–Wednesday discussion and framed the summary of the Thursday–Friday discussion (for which Brian and I also provided takeaways). Brian helped set up the Google documents, which centralized the group’s ongoing work, and was in charge of uploading the final materials into Blackboard.

All three of us took leadership roles in our areas of responsibility. The Google documents allowed for comments by others and subsequent revisions. I was tasked with creating the objectives and assigning the readings, and I created the objectives first, coordinating with Brian because he was designing the discussion questions and we wanted to ensure that objectives and discussion questions were aligned. Peter and Brian added their contributions in a timely manner; therefore, when we met for the second time to review all of the materials before submitting them, we were able to provide concrete feedback on each person’s area of responsibility.

ii. Discussion Pre-work and Facilitation

Was the opening question/activity effective?

In our initial meeting, Brian, Peter, and I decided that the discussion prompts should be authentic and contextualized. To this end, Brian came up with three prompts, one of which was intended to get learners to agree or disagree with a statement; this was designed to activate learners' pre-knowledge of and assumptions about the topic. The second Monday-Wednesday prompt asked the learner to play the character of Diane and to create a memo of talking to points for the character of Stan. Due to time constraints, however, the Diane memo to Stan prompt was dropped and the first prompt was redesigned by Brian to place the participant more directly into Diane's world at IDEAL. This change ended up working out very well, as the revised M-W prompt allowed participants to work through their thoughts about a traditional ID model through the eyes of Diane, who is pushing for change in IDEAL's approach to ID projects; this revised prompt, in turn, made the Thursday/Friday discussion prompt more relevant to the case by using the IDEAL workplace as the space in which the dynamic/tension between traditional ID models and a more agile RD approach occurs and around which the case study is situated. Based on the number of posts generated by the opening prompt and the minimized prompting Brian had to do to sustain the conversation and keep it on track, I would say that the opening discussion question was both quantitatively and qualitatively very effective.


Did it grab the attention and interest of the participants?


When Brian, Peter, and I decided that the discussion prompts should be contextualized and be as authentic in nature as possible, we determined that the most effective technique would be to position the learner in the shoes of the characters of the case study. To this end, Brian designed the prompts so that the participants would have to respond in the first person. In my opinion, the first person perspective grabs the learners' attention and creates a kind of tension that generates more intrinsic motivation than does a direct question. Moreover, I believe that a

first person response allows participants to individualize the response even if they are playing a role. In the end, I am satisfied that we were able to generate the interest of the participants, as evidenced by the number and quality of the posts.

Was it sufficiently open-ended to allow for a variety of viewpoints?

Another advantage to using a first-person prompt is that the nature of the participants' responses is inherently open-ended, which for the purposes of this course aligns with the ill-structured nature of a case study review. This in turn allows learners to put forth a wide range of opinions and positions, which in turn generates more responses. There were several threads in the M-W discussion prompt that generated multiple responses to multiple persons commenting on the thread. Brian's follow-up questions also allowed additional viewpoints to be brought into the discussion. Take for example this exchange, where Brian posits a hypothetical for Nicole to counter her original assertion that twenty weeks is not realistic. Brian's question to Nicole, in turn, encourages Gus to respond:



Nicole Rongo
7 days ago



RE: Part 1: M-W The Writing on the Wall: Design Principles

When Diane looks at the statements, she's probably caught up on "Effective design requires a commitment to the full execution of each component of the design process." This is probably because A) it's not going to be possible in this project with Delta. They don't have 20 weeks to create the training. Who really has 20 weeks to do anything in the real world today? And B) it's an inaccurate statement. Effective design does not require a FULL execution of every component in the design process. If Pat Traditions is stuck on this thought, deadlines will be missed and the client will surely be disappointed. Diane knows that the training won't be that much more effective using the linear process than it would be using a rapid prototyping process... especially to the point that the extra effectiveness of a linear process would make up for the disappointment in the missed deadline. It just wouldn't be worth it. She's going to have to make sure Pat understands this.

Reply
Quote
Email Author


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Brian Thomas
6 days ago


RE: Part 1: M-W The Writing on the Wall: Design Principles

Nicole, the 20 week limit is certainly something that is a design constraint. Let's say that Diane did have 20 weeks. Would she be able to produce a better product if she did each step fully? Would rapid prototyping offer the same quality?

▲ Hide 4 replies


Gustavo Serrano
5 days ago


RE: Part 1: M-W The Writing on the Wall: Design Principles

Hi Brian,

Good question. "Would rapid prototyping offer the same quality"? I will say that it is very possible. It may be very challenging to deal with all the components of an efficient instructional design and make it work, but some work well under that pressure, however I do think that there should be checkpoints along the way. Kind of like quality control in many industries. By having these checkpoints the instructional designer along with key stakeholders have the opportunity to make an analysis of the process and move on to the next, this will ensure that any inconsistencies are being resolved before the final product. The proponents of Pat Tradition's traditional design state that "Analysis and design are considered a collaborative process.....The end user is often a key player in the design process, both contributing to the development of materials as they are developed and refined". It's nice knowing that even though it may be fast paced there is someone there along the way to help out.

Did you and your team refrain from dominating the discussion?

Overall, I felt we did a good job of letting the discussion flow organically. Brian moderated the first discussion, posing his questions later in the second day. His questions were short and well-designed, as evidenced by the fact that they were successful in generating additional responses from others not directly addressed by his follow up questions. I also added a series of questions on the third day to try to point the discussion in another direction. For the

second discussion prompt, Peter moderated the discussion, waiting for the second (and final) day to intercede. Although the number of participant posts was lower than the first day (primarily due to the shortened two-day timeframe for the second discussion prompt), I felt that the discussion likewise developed organically, qualitatively building off of the first discussion prompt. Peter's selected questioning, for example, prompted Nicole to give her opinion on the different industries that might inherently benefit from rapid prototyping, which took the general concept and principles of rapid prototyping discussed in the first discussion prompt and moved it into the realm of application (to specific industries).

Did you make the case topic relevant to the course?

We were fortunate that the main topic of our case study aligned with the scope of the course: Advanced Practices in Learning Systems Design. We were also fortunate that our case study contrasted a rapid design approach with the type of linear ID model that we studied in-depth in the course Introductions to Learning Systems Design. In this sense, the case was a sort of meta-study, highlighting not necessarily a design issue, but a design model issue. Therefore, the challenge for us was to facilitate the case study in such a way that did not reduce it to an exercise in labelling. Because I was responsible for selecting the course readings, I wanted to make sure that articles describing the features of rapid design development (and contrasting it with features of a traditional ID model) were complemented by articles that showed how RD could be applied in not only authentic contexts, but also alternative contexts, such as education.

Were the case objectives met through the discussion?

When we were planning the discussion topics, we were careful to align the discussion prompts with the objectives, which would not only make the prompts relevant to the case study

objectives for the week, but would also allow us to determine the extent to which learners had met the objectives by the end of the week. For example, the first discussion prompt aligned with the objectives “examine personal assumptions regarding the use of traditional instructional design models” and “identify the key principles of a rapid design approach.” Participants were required to select an RD principle from Pat Tradition’s list and write down their reaction to that principle, which could either support more traditional design principles or be more aligned with non-traditional ID principles. For example, Sarah discarded all of Pat’s traditional principles and included a new one: “Rules are meant to be broken.”

The Thursday–Friday pro-con discussion prompt was designed to get learners to fulfill the last two learning objectives:

- Differentiate the main advantages of using a rapid design approach with the advantages of using a more traditional instructional design model, such as ADDIE.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a rapid design approach when applied in specific instructional context.

By seeing both sides of the ADDIE-RD argument presented, learners were able to differentiate the strengths and weaknesses of both models and, in the case of those arguing to keep the pro-traditional ID approach, were required to identify the advantages of using this approach over an RD approach, which was ostensibly an easier argument to make. However, as the discussion of this prompt unfolded, several arguments presented for both sides delivered more nuanced perspectives. Gus, for example, identified the importance of taking into consideration both project context and the best interests of the organization, the balance of which can create a more

complex dynamic in which to try to adhere to a singular, set instructional design approach or philosophy.

iii. Effectiveness of Discussion

Were the instructional strategies and media appropriate for the particular case?

This case study was a contrast in two very different ID models. The objectives we designed for the case facilitation focused on getting the learner to not only identify the features of both ID approaches, but also to distinguish strengths and weaknesses when applied to different contexts. In this sense, we felt that this case study was not about determining a right or a wrong approach. Rather, it was about getting participants to evaluate their own assumptions, either based on what they've read in selected readings to support the case or on what they've experienced directly using either or both of these contrasting models. To this end, having learners discuss these elements with one another was the primary instructional strategy used to advance these objectives, rather than relying on specific media such as a video lecture describing the differences between two approaches.

Were the methods appropriate for the particular case?

The primary method we used to carry out our instructional strategy of promoting learner-to-learner discussion and to connect back to our case facilitation objectives was the discussion forum. Although the discussion forum is a structured space, it facilitates an ongoing and ill-structured dialogue, which is what a case study requires to work through all of the different and complex elements involved. In this sense, the discussion forum is an ideal method to support case-based learning. Using more formal practice problems or assessment questions, for example,

to verify the extent to which participants have understood the case study elements would neither be appropriate nor effective.

Was any attempt made to use innovative methods?

Our group did not intentionally set out to use innovative methods. However, what we found was that creating discussion questions to get participants to respond to prompts in character (e.g., Diane and, in the second prompt, Pat Traditions) would motivate participants more, because responses would be personalized based on the participants' understanding or experiences with the different design models, yet still be filtered through the assumptions of either Diane or Pat in the context of the case study.