METRIS GLOBAL

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD (USCG)

BOAT FORCES COMMAND CADRE (BFCC) BLENDED LEARNING SOLUTION: CASE STUDY

CHALLENGE:

To enhance the training and development of Boat Forces Command Cadre students at the United States Coast Guard Leadership Development Center (LDC). The shared vision was to create a more effective and engaging learning experience that combined both virtual and resident instruction, leveraging adult learning theories, instructional design models, and technology.

BACKGROUND:

The USCG LDC's Performance Support Department partnered with METRIS GLOBAL support staff to improve the BFCC curriculum by better aligning it with adult learning theories and instructional design models. Their approach involved creating a blended learning solution that included both virtual and resident instruction components. To achieve this, they reviewed the existing curriculum and categorized lesson components based on their suitability for virtual or resident delivery, as well as synchronous or asynchronous delivery.

They utilized the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model for online learning environments and Bloom's Three Domains of Learning to make decisions about virtual versus resident instruction. The virtual environment was chosen for lesson components that required students to process information at various complexity levels before participating in live discussions.

On the other hand, resident instruction was chosen for components that required close personal interaction and rapid knowledge exchange between instructors and students.

Moore's Transactional Distance Theory was employed to further categorize lesson components into synchronous and asynchronous delivery, based on factors such as the need for self-paced learning and the level of instructor-student interaction. A detailed roadmap for the two-week BFCC course was developed, outlining how these components would be delivered over one virtual week followed by one resident week.

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ACTIONS:

The project team took several key actions to implement this blended learning solution:

1. Categorization: They carefully categorized lesson components as suitable for virtual or resident instruction based on the level of interaction and complexity.

2. Synchronous vs. Asynchronous: The team further divided lesson components into synchronous and asynchronous delivery, considering factors such as student autonomy and the amount of instructor dialogue.

3. Detailed Roadmap: A comprehensive roadmap was created to guide the two weeks of BFCC, outlining the delivery format and schedule for each component.

4. Learning Benefits: The project team ensured that the blended course design offered several learning benefits to students. They aimed to make learning more active and less passive, reducing classroom time for informational content delivery through virtual-asynchronous instruction. The follow-up virtual-synchronous discussions and asynchronous discussion board activities allowed students to actively participate at their own pace and collaborate more effectively.

RESULTS:

The implementation of the blended learning solution yielded several positive outcomes:

1. Enhanced Learning: The blended approach provided a more engaging and effective learning experience, aligning with adult learning theories.

2. Active Participation: Students had opportunities for active participation and collaboration, both in virtual and resident settings, without the time constraints of traditional classroom learning.

3. Network Building: Resident instruction allowed students to build and enhance their command cadre network, meet senior leaders, and practice public speaking.

4. Improved Learning Phases: The spaced delivery and application of virtual lessons allowed students to process information in phases, enhancing their readiness for live discussions and team-based activities.

5. Higher Student Satisfaction: Blended learning addressed common student complaints about passive learning, making the curriculum more engaging and interactive.

OVERALL:

The USCG Boat Forces Command Cadre Blended Learning Solution successfully transformed the traditional curriculum into a dynamic and engaging learning experience, combining the best of virtual and resident instruction while aligning with adult learning principles. This approach not only improved learning outcomes but also enhanced collaboration and networking opportunities for BFCC students.

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