

Effective Technology Usage in a Laptop Teaching Environment

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The Practice

Students work in pairs. They adopt a publicly traded (U.S.) firm that files annually with the Securities and Exchange Commission and track it over time. An ideal firm is one that is in the high technology sector, has recently taken the form of an IPO thus possessing an electronically attainable SI form, and has been in existence for more than one year thus ensuring that both a 10K Annual Report and DEF 14A proxy statement are available. Early in the thirteen -week course, specific search techniques are taught and important online information sources identified and illustrated. On an individual basis students write mid-term and final take home exams that test the students' ability to mix theory, Web based information sources, and personal interpretation. In pairs, and on a weekly basis for eight weeks and complete a three page assignment. Analytical skills are developed and honed through the completion of week-by-week assignments.

In such classes groups of students deliver a multi-media presentation using Web-based evidence on a topic related to the assessment of a company or an industry. Concurrently, a second group surfs the Internet and collaborates in a virtual team using live chat software, such as ICQ, to construct a critique. Ten minutes later, it presents its rebuttal. Other class-mates also search the Web for presentation omissions. Again using live chat and working in virtual teams, audience members discuss the online evidence, and then collaborate to write, and submit, a one-page group critique. Along with guiding the class, the professor also accepts the critiques submitted online by the audience groups and assesses them at a later time.

Guiding Principles Behind the Practice

1. Use the technology as students use it.
2. Mix theory lecture in with technology use.
3. Keep students busy in class.

Sources of Inspiration or Influence for the Practice

Why this choice of pedagogy? A number of reasons justify its choice. First, eighteen to twenty years olds use these classroom technologies on a daily basis as part of their normal lives. Second, when used creatively, these classrooms become practice fields or learning laboratories that simulate the complexity faced by professionals operating in the work force seeking to make sense of often bewildering competitive environments. Finally, the effectiveness of such practice fields can be assessed fairly easily.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Practice and Responses

1. What are some of the solutions available to an instructor seeking to teach effectively in an electronic classroom setting?

One approach is to teach without the use of a computer or lap-top. Traditional alternatives falling under the category of non-computer usage include teaching by cases, teaching by lecture, teaching by a combination of lecture and case, and instruction by means of a major project. The options of in class computer use are a little less varied and include teaching with a network connection or teaching without one.

2. Can you describe a lap top university and classroom setting?

Picture a university setting where public areas are wired for students' convenience as are residence rooms, cafeterias, libraries, hallways, student lounges and even a pub. Now, picture a classroom where each student is linked to the Intranet and Internet using a notebook computer. The classroom contains ergonomically designed chairs, acoustic absorption material, large screen data projectors, with power and data connections at students' desks.

3. What aids are offered to students to help them learn in an experiential manner?

- Website URL's linking the students to relevant theoretical online material.
- Ongoing in class demonstration of how to apply specific Web site content to specific analytical frameworks.
- A Powerpoint presentation to summarize each theory and an associated analytical framework that is illustrated in matrix form.
- A detailed question driven assignment, illustrated in Figure 1 below, to accompany each web available theory.

Figure 1

Garbage Can Theory of the Firm

Please hand in a three or less page application of Resource Based Theory of the Firm. Your efforts should respond to the following questions:

With your corporation in mind, please make use of a search tool such as Copernic.com, or an industry list of corporate participants such as that provided by Hoovers.com to identify a management consulting firm, or a software development company.

Once chosen, identify a number of solutions provided by this company. With this group of solutions in mind, identify a series of suitable problems from your company's most recent 10K, 10Q, or 8K form filings, recent news article about I, or chat groups. SEC.gov, 10K Wizard, and SEC Info are but three online sources for SEC documents. News articles are available through a number of sites including Corporate Information, Office.com and Hoovers.com A good source for a chat group discussion is The Fool.com.

Next, match these solutions and problems to the individual in the company who is mostly likely to be the decision maker. Information of this nature can often be found using profiles or news releases found on the company Web site, its SEC Def14A files, and general news articles about the organization. When responding to each of these questions, please be sure to clearly document your information sources in the text of your write-up. The PowerPoint presentations on this topic are available on ACME. You might find it helpful to search the home page of your company for its press releases.

4. Which technologies work well?

In order to gain some insight into how the students responded to this course, we decided to conduct a survey. We were interested in gaining some insight into how they felt about the course, whether their ability to use computers had changed, and whether the course had influenced their behaviour, particularly with respect to in-class use of ICQ for non-academic reasons. We developed a questionnaire that contained a total of 28 questions. Of those, 10 questions were directed at assessing skill acquisition, 12 probed how the students felt about the technology usage in the course and the remaining 6 covered behavioural issues. There were total of 105

students enrolled in the course and the survey was administered in class near the end of the term. A total of 73 responses were received for a response rate of 74%. The survey was conducted anonymously and students were given no incentive for completing the survey. In regards to which technologies worked well over 60 % of the students responded that Web based real time analysis as used in the course was the most significant enhancer of the course. This was in response to the following two questions:

- Did the in-class use of the WEB enhance the course?
- Did the in-class use of Power Point presentations enhance the course?

For More Information (References)

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2001 "MBA's could learn from tech-savvy undergrad schools." With Jennifer Bolt. The Globe and Mail Report on Business. March 27, 2001. P. B 15.