Internship Report:

Instructional Design Leadership

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May 6, 2006

IT 6930

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Introduction

One of the requirements of the Instructional Learning and Technologies program at CU-Denver is to complete an internship in the field of your choice. During that time, students are required also to complete a management and leadership report outlining how he/she spearheaded a change or managed a project/process through to completion. This report also outlines how the student has met the competencies required by the ILT program.

I have been working as an instructional designer at a highly dynamic corporation for over a year; and as a result, I have been fortunate enough to complete a number of projects. I had initially planned on writing an internship report on my efforts to revise and re-launch a train-the-trainer program for my department. However, because my company is so dynamic, that project no longer existed in its original form. Therefore, this report chronicles my experiences over the past as an instructional designer for a large corporation – the projects and courses I have worked on, the obstacles I have faced and what I have learned from it all.

Position Overview

As previously stated, I work as an instructional designer at a large corporation – EchoStar Communications, parent company of DISH Network.   My official title is Documentation and Training Specialist II. While the primary responsibility of others with this title is classroom facilitation, I focus on the development of curriculum for leadership and management training under DISH University, EchoStar's corporate training university.

Our customers range from individual contributors to high-level managers, and the working environments vary from corporate office environment, to call centers, to field installation offices, to satellite uplink centers. Other training departments handle the technical training for the company – call center agent new hire, installation techs, technical up-trainings, etc.

When I first began with DISH University, I was the only instructional designer. I had been told it was "lean and mean" – I suppose they really meant it! Some people may have felt too much pressure to produce. Not knowing any better, I actually liked the situation. True, the deadlines were near impossible and I often felt like I was the only voice of good instructional design; however, I learned a lot about the field in a very short period of time. Adult learners like to learn by doing – and I certainly did a lot of doing! Luckily, I have supportive management who trust my judgment in many instructional matters, but who also know the business and are able to provide needed insight into the audience and culture.

I have been transitioning into a "player-manager" role over the last six months, having gained two direct reports. I am now the senior developer of a team of three. It has been an exciting opportunity, and a bit of a challenge – one person is very new to instructional design and has been learning along the way; the second person has nearly nine years of experience. As a result, I must be cautious in my approach with each. One of the techniques I am able to use with both is to do what Kouzes and Posner refer to as "tell stories about teachable moments" (p.239, 1995). Every mistake is an opportunity to learn, an idea that goes for both my team and myself. Keeping this philosophy in mind has helped me develop my less experienced employee as well as keep my sharing relevant to my more experienced employee. I will discuss more about my experienced with management later in this paper. I look forward to continuing my growth as a manager and having the opportunity to shape the future of the department.

On Projects

Since my start at EchoStar, I have completed the following projects:

- Sexual Harassment Prevention Online (New Hire and Refresher)
- FISH! Catch the Wave
- Peer Today, Boss Tomorrow
- Improving Personal Productivity
- Writing Effective Performance Appraisals
- Semi-Annual Performance Appraisals
- Effective Feedback
- Performance Management
- Performance Appraisal Management Online
- Recruiting Like Sharks
- It's For You (escalated call management)
- Focusing on Efficiencies
- New Manager's Toolbox
- IT for Managers
- Diversity (special request for team with problems)
- Effective Presentations for Non-Trainers (blended)
- BEST (Building Excellent Skills for Trainers) Certification Program

I am currently working on a number of other projects (both online and instructor-led) and oversee the projects worked on by my team. Because of the sheer number of projects, I thought it would be more appropriate to outline how a project goes from inception to completion by using the ILT program competencies, highlighting some of the challenges faced in trying to marry best practices to "real world." Where appropriate, I will say more about specific projects. *[Note: I have used some of these projects as assignments during my time in the ILT program. If you are interested in reading a more in depth analysis of Peer Today or Effective Presentations, I will be happy to provide them.]*

Promote collaboration, partnerships, and relationships for full inclusion

This competency is key for any successful career in instructional design, particularly in the corporate arena. Projects often begin as internal department initiatives, but several originate as requests from elsewhere in the company. Therefore, it is vital that I cultivate relationships with all my stakeholders from the first meeting to course roll-out. They are often my only subject matter experts (SMEs) and their input is invaluable.

The increasing technological complexity of training offered at EchoStar makes it impossible to create online learning without the partnership between the e-Learning team and me. Two projects that relied heavily on this partnership were Sexual Harassment Prevention (SHP) and Effective Presentations for Non-Trainers (EPNT). For each course, I wrote the content and developed the flow and look of the course in PowerPoint, complete with scripting, assessments, learning interaction outlines, etc.

At that time, I turned the project over to the e-Learning team, who used Captivate and Articulate to convert the course into a serious of .swf files which were then deployed through ELM (our learning management system). The e-Learning team's expertise was vital to the success of each project – from programming to sound recording, they brought the courses to life. Several members of the team also have instructional design backgrounds, so it was helpful to discuss the pros and cons of certain learning decisions as development proceeded.

Conduct a needs assessment AND Conduct a learning or performance instructional analysis

This is one of the "best practices meets real world" scenarios I alluded to earlier. Typically, a detailed needs assessment cannot take place – initially, due to lack of manpower; subsequently due to a distinct cultural resistance. If the course was requested, there must be a reason for it (tongue planted firmly in cheek). Despite this, I feel that we as a department have worked hard to maintain the integrity of our development and do the best we can with what we have.

SMEs, usually those requesting the training, are interviewed prior to development on all programs. Our learning population, once understood, changes very little. When I first started I held several conversations with trainers, managers and individual contributors from all other the company to gain a better understanding of my audience. I continue to fine tune my understanding by touching base with contacts throughout the enterprise, particularly if a training might come across as "too corporate."

When I was the sole developer, I was not concerned with standardizing the needs assessment process – I asked the same questions and knew what I needed to do. Since gaining a team, I have instituted a

Training Request Questionnaire (see appendix) to formalize the questions we ask our stakeholders with the intent on bettering our needs assessment capabilities. So far, it has helped the stakeholders focus more on the root cause of problems. I am currently working on a certification training for the Purchasing Group. When they first approached us, they did not have a clear idea of what they needed the learners to be able to do after completing the course. The questionnaire helped them focus on performance rather than awareness. I can now base my learning objectives directly on the stated needs of the stakeholders.

Early in the design process, I must make the decision on whether or not the training should be online. I take into account the audience, the need for accuracy in tracking (e.g., compliance requirements), the goals of the learning, and the location of the learners. For certain projects, such as SHP, the online element was required by legal to ensure we were able to report compliance in accordance with Sarbanes-Oxley. In other projects, such as EPNT, I decided upon a blended approach primarily because of the content and the learners' performance goals (the why and how are outlined in the online course, along with the building of the presentation; final application mastery is demonstrated in the classroom portion).

Apply various theories/strategies and current research, and consider local needs and constraints to design activities and experiences for learning

Some people may argue differently, but I have been very glad to be in school during my first year on the job. School forces me, for lack of a better word, to be familiar with the latest in research and design theory. My classmates offer a variety of viewpoints and experiences which I am then able to incorporate into my work. At DISH University, we call it CASE – copy and steal everything. I am always quick to give my peers credit where credit is due, however.

Currently, I rely heavily on instructional message design to ensure that participant materials are more than simply a place to take notes. I feel that the materials should be an active part in learning, and employ many of Linda Lohr's (*Creating Graphics for Learning and Performance: Lessons in Visual Literacy)* principles when designing both books and online content. *E-Learning and the Science of Instruction* by Ruth Colvin Clark and Richard E. Mayer guides much of my online learning design, most apparently in the use of storytelling and an on-screen "coach" for EPNT.

Application is the key to all learning. As such, performance-based objectives take precedence over all others. You will never see the word "understand" in one of my objectives! The focus of my design, typically soft skills, lends itself to the use of socio-cultural design as opposed to traditional course design. My classes are very collaborative and require the learner to take part in several communal activities, from role-plays (Peer Today, Boss Tomorrow and It's For You), to activities designed to illustrate the importance of a plan (Focusing on Efficiencies), to practical use of required forms (Writing Effective Performance Appraisals).

Design learning and performance products and resources that reflect an understanding of the diversity of learners and groups of learners

Sensitivity to learning preferences, regional practices and even the choice of names is key to any successful designer's approach. One day while speaking with some visitors from El Paso, I overheard them mention that they wish they would see more Jorge's, Maria's and Espinoza's and fewer Sally's, John's and Eddie's. This was a revelation to me. We had worked very hard to ensure that our scenarios in SHP represented all ages, races and creeds, yet I had missed a very simple thing – their names. From that point one, I have worked to ensure that the names in my classes are as diverse as the faces.

Another theory I try to employ in my design is Universal Design of Learning. This theory, well documented by the University of Washington's The Faculty Room speaks to the importance of designing training that allows all participants to benefit equally – without requiring them to reveal disabilities, fears, etc. We do not follow *all* of the UDL guidelines, we include as many as is possible within our current business culture. All online training complies with Section 508 requirements, particularly regarding text for all narration and the availability of reasonable accommodations. In the case of expression, participants are given a number of ways to demonstrate mastery – role plays, written worksheets, online assessments, simulations, etc. Not all training includes every possible form of expression; however, I strive to allow a gradient of participation to ensure all learners are given the opportunity to succeed while still maintaining the standards of the objectives.

Develop products and resources to support learning and performance

Each training project's medium of transfer is decided upon early in the design process. We consider audience, location, costs and the goals of the training and decide whether it will be online, instructor-led or a combination of the two. Regardless of the type, all training has supporting documentation. All instructor-led training that I have created includes a participant workbook designed to support and contribute to the learning. Online training often includes workbooks, job aids, or simply detailed instructions or links to living documents posted on our intranet. Supportive documentation serves to relieve some of the anxiety felt by anyone learning something new, a theory supported by the General Principles of Motivation (retrieved 2006).

I was always a very motivated learner, so ensuring that my design included a strong WIIFM (what's in it for me) was something I had to work on in my first projects. It seems second nature now, but when I look back at some of my first courses (FISH! in particular) I notice a missed opportunity to build internal motivation, which is important when you are trying to change behavior.

One of the General Principles of Motivation compiled by Honolulu Community College states, "motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organized" (para. 5), you must present the content in a way that makes it meaningful to the learner. By selecting the appropriate medium for learning transfer, I hope to maximize the likelihood that my learners will relate to the material, practice their new behaviors and continue to apply their new-found skills back in the "real world" of their workplace, where the learning environment is not always as supportive as an instructional designer would like to see; hence the need for excellent supporting materials.

Evaluate effectiveness of programs, products, or practices AND Assess student/participant learning

Formative evaluation of a training program takes place at various stages throughout the design process. At each stage (learning goals, initial outline, various drafts of leader and participant guides), my general manager reviews the material to ensure it is clear and on target. We will discuss various strategies to ensure I am keeping the audience well in mind at all times. This was especially important early on in my tenure at EchoStar, because I lacked the knowledge of the business that is key to making the learning relevant. I also try to involve trainers in the review process when they are available, and often hold informal brainstorms with developers from the technical side of things to see if my ideas make sense to anyone else.

Once the training is in a "final draft" stage, we hold an alpha. A trainer is assigned to facilitate this alpha, and I observe the initial session. At this point, I am evaluating two things – the effectiveness of the training for the learners, and the effectiveness of the materials for the facilitator. Following this initial session, I will either distribute level 1 evaluations (based on Kirkpatrick's scale) or hold round tables with the participants to gain their insight. I also sit down with the trainer and debrief the session. If changes are needed, I make revisions and schedule a pilot session. In this situation, we do not always announce the session as a pilot. I do this because I want to see an unbiased reaction to the training. Often, if a participant knows he/she is in an alpha or beta situation, that person will change the way he/she looks at the class. Following this pilot, a decision is made whether to hold the train-the-trainer or continue with revisions.

Summative evaluations are somewhat more difficult to do when it comes to the training I design. Typically, level 2 assessments are built into all online courses, along with learning interactions. Often we include role-plays or case studies to allow participants to demonstrate mastery. To evaluate whether we have affected a behavior change with a course such as Sexual Harassment Prevention, we can evaluate the number of claims and/or reports to MySafeWorkplace.com. At this time, claims are up – however, that is to be expected after a corporate-wide initiative requiring *every* employee to go through a refresher course. This heightened awareness has made employees feel safer in reporting unwanted behavior, and in this case, I count that a victory.

Other summative evaluations we have been able to implement include before and after behavior surveys (Organizing Your Email), follow up emails and/or meetings to ask participants to self-report their use of the principles learned (FISH!, Focusing on Efficiencies, Peer Today), and observations from training managers (BEST Certification Program). If pressed, I would say we are more in the toddler stage of performing effective summative evaluations, yet we are certainly heading in the right direction.

<u>Utilize research methods to investigate a learning or performance problem AND Participate in an implementation process or change strategy</u>

The project that I had intended to use for this competency was the overhaul of our train-the-trainer process. As a developer, I was not satisfied that our current system was sufficient to help the trainer prepare for the class properly; nor did I feel that it drove consistency of standard throughout our department or for any other trainer who might need to facilitate a course at a later date. At the time, we had 4-5 trainers working at the corporate offices in Colorado, and close to 12 trainers working in the field. A typical train-the-trainer consisted of a conference call wherein we talked through the course – I explained my reasoning behind the instructional design and the trainer who held the pilot would share his/her insights on what might be the trickiest sections for a facilitator to work through. Shockingly, this did not work.

To solve this problem, I started by examining our current system – what were we doing? Was it consistent? Who was involved? After drafting a rudimentary workflow, I created a survey to send out to all of our trainers. It consisted of only 4 questions:

1. The part(s) of the TTT process that work(s) best for me is/are...
2. The part(s) of the TTT process that work(s) worst for me is/are...
3. I think it would be really helpful if we...
4. Any other comments or suggestions, or anything you want to get off your chest?

As you can see, we are rather informal in our department. I kept it informal in order to encourage participation and to counter the "evil corporate us vs. them" mentality that often exists between headquarters and field offices, regardless of the company. In retrospect, I should have made the questions more specific; however, I did receive excellent responses and it showed me that we had a greater diversity of preferences and needs than initially thought. There were two main points that needed to be addressed – the field trainers wanted to be more involved, and we needed to take advantage of technology to allow trainers to observe what the class looked like during a real session. We have access to a full studio at our location filled with people who know what they are doing and are eager to help, so I thought we might leverage that to better our process.

From the feedback received on the survey, I created a new process draft:

1. Course is developed.
2. Mini TTT meeting held to prep alpha session facilitation
3. Alpha sessions conducted at Meridian and 2 field locations (based on volunteers).
4. Feedback gathered and incorporated into course.
5. Train-the-Trainer video produced:
    a. Discuss content.
    b. Demonstration of exercises, activities, high-stress or difficult sections (this would be a filmed classroom environment)
    c. Reinforcement of main points and outline for course implementation.
6. Broadcast via internal satellite channel enough times to allow viewing and/or recording of session.
7. Conduct follow-up call with trainers to answer remaining questions.

I distributed this workflow to all key stakeholders for approval, and was just about to test it and measure the impact when the project was halted due to a bit of reorganization within the department. Most field trainers were assigned to non-training roles and our need for such a wide-reaching TTT process was reduced. We are currently working on a new process that will meet current needs – which include a new challenge of certifying non-DISH University trainers in select courses. The journey continues...

On Change

Obviously, change is an elemental part of my day-to-day existence at EchoStar. Anyone who says he "thrives" on change is probably trying to get a job – change is uncomfortable, difficult, and disruptive, no matter how well it is managed or how motivated the individual may be. What matters is how quickly a person is able to master the four phases of Change Curve as defined by Drs. Jaffe and Scott – Denial, Resistance, Exploration and Commitment (2003).

I need to be able to shift focus based on priorities, or else I am not an effective member of my department. We exist in a company that believes in training, but not so much that we are given the freedom to perform as performance consultants. As a result, we sometimes create training because we are told to – and often with little to no warning. DISH University leaders do their best to evaluate the needs and discuss other alternatives; but when a request comes from the top executive level, these discussions only go so far. There are three specific projects I created that required me to move from Denial to Commitment within 10 seconds.

The first was Performance Management, a mandatory two-hour course for all managers at the corporate location. Basically, it was a training on company policies to which managers were not holding their employees accountable. I wrote this class in 1 day, and while the VP of Human Resources was pleased, I knew the training was sub-standard. I tried to include interactivity, but in reality it became an info-dump. I learned quite a bit from the experience, particularly in knowing how to ask the right questions to get to the heart of a perceived need. This knowledge came in handy over the course of my other two "turbo projects."

The next training was Recruiting Like Sharks, a training initiative driven by a new COO and President that changed the way we recruited and hired new employees. Once again, I had a very tight deadline (one week) to write a 2-3 hour course for all HR and recruiting employees. I moved to Exploration rather quickly, knowing that Denial and Resistance would do me no good (Jaffe and Scott, 2003). Unfortunately, I regressed along the Change Curve when the key stakeholder in the project (the director of recruiting) did not review the training for 2 weeks, and with 2 days left prior to the debut session at an HR conference, gave me several pages of notes. My Resistance rated rather high at this point. Despite all of this, I am actually fairly proud of the training. There's more telling in it than I would like. Still, it has high relevance to the intended audience and I was very proud of the visual impact of the supporting materials.

My most recent challenge was the BEST Certification Plan. The call center training organization met with my VP and had a meeting about the need to improve the quality of training throughout the enterprise. The result of that meeting was an agreement that DISH University would develop a one week trainer certification program for the call centers and installation offices. The timeframe? Four weeks. I was not present at this meeting. When told of this requirement, I was quite solidly in the Denial phase. Four the next four weeks, I did nothing but develop BEST curriculum. Stakeholders from the call center side had different opinions as to what constituted best practices in training, so there was quite a bit of discussion centered around supporting research and business needs.

I had to change my preferred style of development from sole contributor to reluctant collaborator. I found this is very difficult for me. That does not mean I am not open to revision or suggestions. I simply prefer to go work on my section by myself and then present a finished product for review. Incremental revisions seem very inefficient to me, even though there is much to be gained from such collaboration. I continue to work on this aspect of my personality, as I recognize its need from a leadership perspective, as well as from a workload perspective. In the end, I am fairly proud of the final product. Initial responses have been extremely positive, and I noted trainer improvement from Day One to Day Four of the program during the session I observed. I still feel like I had to compromise a few too many principles; however, I do see that I tend to take a more expert's view of the subject and this training is directed towards first time trainers. It was a good, if frustrating, experience.

I wanted to highlight these three projects to show how much change can interfere with best practices in instructional design. I did not intend to imply that we do everything this way. Below are some of the ways we use change strategy to our advantage:

Applying theories of diffusion, adoption, and change to a local problem and develop a change strategy…

Any time I roll out a finished course, I employ some sort of change strategy. This takes the form of a communication plan, timeline, implementation, feedback, and continuing evaluation of process. There are two projects that come to mind. The first is Writing Effective Performance Appraisals (WEPA). This seasonal course makes its debut roughly one month prior to annual performance appraisals, runs for two months, and then disappears until the next round. Despite such a limited run, this course is high impact because it affects every manager in the company, regardless of location. I work closely with HR to develop the timeline for this class, which must take into account HR deadlines for PA submittal as well as training schedules and resource availability.

For this course, I created a training broadcast which served as both a train-the-trainer for field HR reps and a refresher training for any existing managers who wished to watch the broadcast. The release of this broadcast was coordinated with communication from HR, which meant I had to set the broadcast schedules one month in advance, work with the uplink center in Wyoming to request the transmission, coordinate with the studio to record the session, write the script, get it approved by the Compensation Committee, and film the broadcast (four hours of reading a teleprompter over and over again for a 30 minute broadcast – yes…it was that exciting!). We set up a PA hotline to support managers during the PA process, and ensured there were enough sessions scheduled to accommodate all new managers who were required to take the training.

The other project requiring a change strategy is our New Manager Training Program. This is still in the early stages. HR/HRD has a goal to train all newly hired or newly promoted managers in five foundational management courses within 90 days of their promotion or hire date. This is the first time in EchoStar's history where mandatory management training of this type has been supported by the executive team.

All managers, with the exception of call center managers, are part of this goal – which means we need to coordinate sessions across the country to accommodate this mandatory training. My direct manager and I took point on this project. First we identified six regional hubs where we might hold sessions in an effort to cut down on travel expenses. Because there are new promotions possible every two weeks, I created a rough timeline upon which we estimated when we might need to hold sessions. I grouped pay periods into units, taking into account the 90 day deadline. From there, I worked backwards to create a task list with timelines to help us manage the back office support of multiple training sessions in multiple locations. I worked with HR to develop a reporting process that will alert us to all new managers every two weeks (pay periods). These names are then assigned to training sessions, based on location. I created a communication plan (emails, intranet article) that identified who needed to be alerted and when, which my manager then customizes to each group's training session.

We have held 3 sessions so far, and have identified areas of opportunity in our process. The key piece is trying to revise the communication emails to minimize resistance to the change in culture. We also recognize the need to streamline some administrative processes to help manage the inevitable need to change enrollment dates for various participants due to business needs. It is an ongoing process. The procedural foundation we laid prior to the roll out of this program has made the program go more smoothly than one would initially have thought and we will continue to make it better.

When specifically discussing the technological aspects of change (adoption and diffusion), there is one project that stands out as being a true learning opportunity. One of the first classes I worked on when I started at EchoStar was to convert our instructor-led sexual harassment prevention course to an online course. This move came about partially because of Sarbanes-Oxley, but also because an audit of training practices showed a lack of consistency across the organization. By offering the course online through our LMS, we have greater control of content, learner experience, and a trackable delivery system that satisfied federal and state guidelines.

The experience of launching this course went against many of the change theories I am familiar with, partially because of the mandatory aspect of the training, and partially because the technological capabilities of different locations are quite varied. Everett Rogers' Innovation Decision Process Theory states that there is a five stage process users go through in order to be convinced to adopt a technological change:

> (F)irst, they must learn about the innovation (knowledge); second, they must be persuaded of the value of the innovation (persuasion); they then must decide to adopt it (decision); the innovation must then be implemented (implementation); and finally, the decision must be reaffirmed or rejected (confirmation) (1995).

We developed a multi-staged communication plan to handle the *knowledge* stage – corporate, call centers (CSC), then field installation (DNS). The *persuasion* stage turned out to be a very difficult stage to get through. Corporate resisted because the trainers did not see the value of changing something they had been doing for a long time, regardless of legal and administrative reasons, or even the fact that it freed up their classroom time to focus more on leadership training courses. CSCs resisted because of the lack of standardization in new hire training programs – they saw it as a time stealer rather than a time saver. We were confronted by exaggerated reports of how many people had issues for the first week or two. The DNS locations resisted because of lack of technology and resources.

To help encourage the users to get through the *decision* stage, we actually had to move into the *implementation* stage first. They had to see it working in order to be convinced it would happen. The roll out has been successful, but not at all simple. We had identified many of the problems prior to roll out, but were confronted by several unseen issues – primarily focused around the technology available to our end-users. Eventually, the *decision* was made to accept the technology – although there really was no true choice, as the training is mandated by legal. We do continue to work on the *confirmation* stage by working closely with our HR partners in all organizations to offer documentation and user support whenever needed.

New employees accept the training well, and as the use of online training continues to grow in our company, the resistance should continue to abate. One of the greatest benefits of this experience is that we were able to unearth some systemic issues surrounding our infrastructure in some locations. Because we have several mandatory online training initiatives sponsored at the executive level, these locations feel empowered to ask for improvements rather than finding ways to get by.

On Leadership

I recently read an article by Randy Kesterson and Susan Broome that outlined The Society for Leadership of Change's model called Islands of Change (2005). The model states that each person lives on one of three islands whenever change appears – the Strategy Island, whose inhabitants ask what needs to change and why; the Tactics Island, whose inhabitants ask how do we make the changes; and the People Island, whose inhabitants ask how do we get our people involved (Kesterson and Broom, 2005). The key to successfully leading an organization through change is making sure the leader visits all the "tribes" to learn to speak their language and to build a strong team that will bridge the gap between all of the islands.

This article struck me as singularly helpful when considering leadership from a big picture perspective. If I had to choose, I would say I am part of the Strategy and Tactic tribes, and not terribly concerned with the People Island. The importance of ensuring all groups are taken care of appropriately has become more and more apparent to me as my managerial responsibilities increase within the department. I have tried to take a more strategic approach by examining our internal processes to ensure that we are equipped to deal with all three "islands" when a change comes our way.

I am building course change request processes that focus on strategy (what needs to change and why), tactics (criteria for change, prioritization standards, who will do which type of courses) and people (getting all parties involved, asking for input from personnel who often feel they do not have a voice in the process).

Building strong processes is part of a vision I have for the future of our department to continue to move away from a reactive model towards a more proactive. Kouzes and Posner refer to this as "imagining the ideal" (1995, p. 94) – imagine what would the perfect department look like and work towards achieving that. It is my goal to continue to build on the successes we have had over the past year to solidify our presence as an important component of employee satisfaction and corporate strength.

Employing effective strategies, manage one or more of the following endeavors (focusing on personnel)

As stated earlier, I have gained two direct reports over the last six months or so. Where there used to be just one developer, we now have a team – one that I am in charge of. I have enjoyed the challenges of becoming a manager. The experience continues to validate that while I handle the tactical side of things fairly well, I need to continue to work on my ability to empathize with my employees. I do well on a personal level, but when deadlines loom and workload increases, I tend to dismiss complaints that there is too much to do. After all, it was just me for a year and I got everything done!

Shortly after I gained my first employee, my manager reminded me that I have more experience, more education and a bit more of a knack for the job than my employee does and that I need to be able to put myself in her shoes without removing the accountability or high expectations. This approach has helped me tremendously. I introduced Ken Blanchard's theory of Situational Leadership to my employee to ensure we spoke the same language, and we have worked together to identify her development level (D-levels) on several tasks to ensure I use the correct leadership style (S-level) based on her competence and confidence (1985). We have also sat down to map out how we can move her through the development continuum to get her to the D4 (high confidence-high competence) level on as many tasks as we can. It has resulted in a good working relationship and as a result, my employee has shown marked improvement and confidence in the last 2 months.

My newest direct report has significant development experience, so I have taken a different approach with him. I mapped out my expectations for him and then asked him to share what goals he had. He identified increased technical knowledge for online learning development, as well as improvement on the ability to partner with stakeholders as more of a performance consultant rather than a training development. We decided that the technology development would be a gradual, ongoing process and I assigned projects that would allow him to gain needed experience in that arena. To address his other goal, I have observed his interactions with stakeholders and have given him feedback on his questions and his approach. I have also suggested that he and the other member of my team role play client interactions to help gain valuable questioning practice – after all, it is something you will only be able to do if you try it yourself.

My goal as a manager is to ensure my team has the resources and support they need to succeed in their jobs, while continually challenging them to reach their full potential. By doing that, I can only improve the training we development for the company and ensure that the learners can participate in classes that feature the best practices of instructional design.

Final Thoughts

Writing this report has been eye opening. First and foremost, I realize that I did a *lot* last year! The high volume was sometimes at the expense of best practices; however, so I continue to work on my ability to combine best practices with the reality of a business culture that does not always make time for it. This is not because DISH University's leadership does not think it is worthwhile; it is more a result of the "need it now" mentality that stakeholders bring to the table. I believe we have made great strides in showing that a little more front-end analysis pays off in the end, and we will continue to convince stakeholders one project at a time.

I love my job as an instructional designer. It combines so many disciplines – graphic design, technology, management, writing, educational theory, performance consulting, etc.   I get to do something different for every project, and continuous improvement is inherent in everything I do. What other profession allows you to do that? As we learn more about how people perform and learn, I feel that instructional design and performance improvement will play a key role in the success of a business, and that leaders will embrace the need for such things on a more consistent basis. It is an exciting time to be in this field.

- Appendix -

New Training Request Questionnaire

Project Title: Insert Project Title	*Your Department:* Insert dept. name
Project Requestor/Owner: Insert name here	*Director or above Sponsor:* If applicable
Extension/Phone Number: Insert contact number	*Date Submitted:* Insert request date

1. *What situation(s), problem(s) or company change(s) are prompting this training request? What are the impacts of this situation (business, performance, customer service, etc.)?*
   Type your answer to the question here.

2. *What is your goal? What should be the result of this training (specifically, what do you want the participants to be able to do once they have completed this training)?*
   Type your answer to the question here.

3. *Is there any business, performance, or other measurable data that is prompting this request? If so, what?*
   Type your answer to the question here.

4. *What is the current process to address this training need, if any? (Please attach any existing training material or documentation)*
   Type your answer to the question here.

5. *What is the desired launch date for this training?*
   Type your answer to the question here.

6. *Who are the project owner(s) and the subject matter experts for this project? Please include contact information.*
   Type your answer to the question here.

7. *To ensure we reach as many learners' needs as possible, please describe the audience, including locations, number of learners, job titles, other descriptive information, for this project.*
   Type your answer to the question here.

References

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