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Advanced Practices in Learning Systems Design

Case Facilitation Plan – Reflective Journal – S. Winrotte

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When I was younger, there was a specific shoe store that my family would frequent. The store was always inventing new marketing tactics, and I might even go out on a limb and say that whomever was in charge of their marketing was a genius. One of my favorite marketing tactics was the time that they brought in a money machine. The money machine looked a bit like an old-fashioned phone booth with money and coupons on the floor. The lucky customer who was chosen to play the game would step into the machine, a fan at the bottom would blast on, and the customer would try to catch the money. The fan blower was so powerful that it was very challenging for the customer to catch the money.

I mentally stepped into the money booth the moment we were told our team breakdowns. Decisions and tasks started flying at me. I knew that, being Team 1, we had limited time (if I am remembering correctly, eight days) to work through the beginning part of the process. As I looked at the team member roles, I remember asking myself which role would suit my strengths well. Generally, I am task oriented, detail orientated, and thorough. I was immediately drawn to being the 'Lead for the Case Facilitation Plan', knowing that I would be physically pulling our report together. I jumped at the fact that I was the first in the team to declare a role and choose to lead the Case Facilitation Plan. It was not long after we began that I realized that maybe I should have picked a different role based on the group dynamics I perceived and my consequent actions. Due to my perception of the situation, feeling as we were a bit slow to start the process, I began initiating group communication to get our plan on track. It is hard to look back and determine if this was appropriate for my role. In some ways, I felt like a team manager by kick starting communication and asking other team members to participate in specific ways. On the other hand, everything I was asking of my teammates was directly related to the Case Facilitation Plan.

To be honest, at this point, I felt as if I would never catch the money, make any headway on the plan. Our team manager was not communicating about a potential tentative schedule or times to virtually meet, and I was becoming anxious about how we were going to meet our turn-in deadline. So, I dove in to what I had leadership for, the Case Facilitation Plan. I was writing portions of the Case Facilitation Plan and asking for feedback and opinions, but I felt like I was not getting much feedback. Mentally, I had broken the analysis down in to three sequential parts: 1. stakeholders, 2. challenges/constraints, and 3. solutions. This is where I think I could have done things a bit differently. Because I had an assumption that doing so would trample on the team manager's role, I was not asking for team members' help in writing specific portions. In hindsight, I could have been more clear in asking teammates to contribute to the writing, rather than asking them to contribute opinions and ideas on what I had written. Because of this, I ended up writing the vast majority of the plan, and then discussing and editing it with two of my other three teammates while on a video conference call. I think we were all caught off guard by how long the process took, which caused half of the editing to be done by just two of us.

At some point in time during the conference call, I took my stance and started reaching for the money. I stopped thinking about who had or had not contributed what they should have, and instead, started working in the moment. While the burden of the case facilitation was not shared equally, I recognized that there were reasons why two team members were not as involved in the planning process. It could have as easily been me who had a weather issue, children issue, etc. to deal with. My attitude change rerouted my energy. The conference call discourse about our case, analysis, objectives, and discussion prompts was one of the best experiences I have had in the Learning Design and Technology program. As an external processor, I thrive on verbal discourse and was fueled by hearing my teammates discuss the case. The Lead for creating the discussion questions and I spent the last several hours of our conference call focused on refining our case's objectives and discussion prompts. We clarified our objectives and debated wording, style of question, ease in connecting the prompt to the additional readings, and breadth of potential responses. Two days before the discussion started, I emailed my teammates with a proposed response system that would help us from jumping in too quickly and dominating the conversations. The team thought it was a good idea, and so our discussion lead was slated to respond to three classmates and my other teammates and I were slated to respond to two classmates' posts. We also agreed that we would only comment minimally on a thread that had already been commented on by one of the four of us. It was great to have a plan in place, as it was not always easy to communicate during the week. Our plan worked well, and our comments were parsed out throughout the prompt time-frames.

Inevitably, the customer did not leave the money booth empty handed, and neither did we leave our conference call empty handed. Instead, we finished our call with a well thought out and thorough discussion plan. We wanted our classmates to participate in discourse around what we believed was the most pivotal aspect of the case, the inclusion of the SME blanker operators. As an instructional strategy, discourse is used to rework and refine the participant's opinions and ideas. Through this discourse, we knew that it was the obvious choice to have our classmates take on Abby's role, so we wanted to push the boundaries by only giving them two possible solution choices, circumnavigate or incentivize the SMEs. We knew that neither option by itself was the best choice, so it left space for continued follow-up questions and continued discussion. While there were a few classmates who provided shallow responses, many of the responses were well thought out and connected to the additional readings. The prompt accomplished its goal to refine our classmate's knowledge and opinion regarding the SMEs and their pivotal role in knowledge transfer. In the second discussion prompt, our instructional strategy centered around having our classmates connect their reality (current job) to the case. We wanted our classmates to connect the training resources they have made/currently use to training resources that Abby might decide to use. By having our classmates take on the role as an instructional designer at LT3, they were able to marry their knowledge about instructional design with their job experience to determine resource characteristics that would be beneficial in this case, such as, still images, video clips, written steps, slide presentations, etc. Leaving the second prompt completely open-ended afforded our classmates the opportunity to explore any possible training resource characteristic. While the class had been asked previously in a discussion prompt to create a visual design prototype, the class had not been asked to provide and connect a resource that they had made (or would use in their job) to a case. We thought that this was a fresh creative way for our classmates to connect to the case.

Just as the customer reached for all the money and did not catch it all, we reached but did not fully catch our objectives. While the discussion prompts were well received, the objective to "identify issues in documenting manufacturing processes and pose solutions to obtain necessary information for design" was not fully met. Our classmates did identify different issues regarding the SME blanker operators, but they did not all pose well thought-out solutions. It felt as though some classmates were stuck and unable to provide solutions that were outside the box. That being said, I think the second objective to "identify the needs of FDM and provide an instructional approach to meet those needs" was met. Discourse, and a bit of debate, allowed our classmates to think outside of their box which allowed them to meet additional needs that their instructional approach would not have otherwise met.

I was never the customer chosen to go in the money machine, but I was always planning my strategy. Even though I might have had a strategy, I am sure that I would have never been able to grab all the money. It is impossible for any strategy to take into account every variable that can impact the outcome. Overall, the strategy I used to complete my portion of planning and implementing the team Case Facilitation Plan was successful. There are many areas in which I can, and would, improve. It ultimately comes down to my overall goal in my career: every time I step into the money machine, I need to strive to catch more money than I did the previous time.