Malcolm Gibson

Case Study 11

EDCI 672-007

Reflective Case Analysis

Randy Brooks

Purdue University

November 13, 2016

Dr. David Paredes

Malcolm Gibson Case Overview

Craiger University is on the hunt for grant money to fund the development of a critical Computer Science online course to address a growing need in the IT industry. After the Craiger University Computer Science (CUCS) staff have developed a model digitizing their current in-class program, department head Dr. Tsagas brings in Malcolm Gibson as an online course SME and instructional designer to evaluate how well the plans addresses the Information Technology Consortium's (ITC) Preparing Tomorrow's Technology Professionals (PTTP) Request for Proposal (RFP) grant criteria.

Key Stakeholders and Primary Concerns

Client:

Dr. Tsagas is the primary client who, as CS department head, has engaged Malcolm Gibson to address issues with the current proposed ITC PTTP RFP submission. Her focus is to earn the ITC PTTP grant while also providing a very effective online course to help address the IT professional deficit in the industry. She is aware that she does not have online course expertise among those on her current staff.

Audience:

There are three varied audiences here:

➢ CUCS instructors – This group will be tasked with administering the online course and, as staunch brick-and-mortar classroom instruction experts, are also key SMEs for the base content.

➢ ITC PTTP RFP evaluators – This may be toughest audience as there is no interim feedback to be gained from them. You submit your best RFP based on their meager guidelines and hope for the best.

➢ Students pursuing certification or degrees using the new modules – This is the ultimate audience of the project. They are the driver for the ITC PTTP funding to address the severe industry problem of a lack of IT professionals.

SME:

In a unique twist of fate, Malcolm Gibson serves in both the role of SME and the role of designer. Malcolm knows the online world from his work as a web developer and knows course design via an instructional designer background.

Dr. Tsagas and the other CS professors are also SMEs as they provide expertise regarding how the courses are taught in-class and how they see the online bachelor's degree and technical certifications structured.

Designer:

Malcolm Gibson's role as both designer and a key SME is the unique challenge of this analysis. He must determine how much of his own knowledge and expertise to put into the course and how much of the CS instructor design to retain. This is a complex task as the description and examples must be built to please CUCS instructors and the ITC PTTP RFP evaluation staff, while ultimately providing critical content and direction for the students that will be using these courses to acquire the knowledge needed to fill a growing industry void.

Malcolm has taken on this challenging task with an eye to future. "Online learning is here to stay and the question is not whether one should adopt an online program or not, but how can one produce an online program that reflects the quality of the traditional delivery system?" (Marks, 2016, p. 75) Reasonable success with this activity should lead to future consulting contracts as Craiger University joins the mad rush towards creating a plethora of quality, rigorous online courses. "Numerous reports, surveys and studies have shown that the eLearning industry is gaining speed with increasing numbers of individuals, corporations, and institutions turning to eLearning as they recognize its effectiveness and its convenience." (Marks, 2016, p. 75)

Instructional Design Challenges

Though all 5 ADDIE elements are in play, the focus of this study is on design.

Analysis:

Upon combining CUCS professor knowledge, Malcolm Gibson experience, and the needs of ITC PTTP, there is little question what content needs to be provided, so content analysis plays a small role. Malcolm addresses this with an evaluation of how the CUCS proposed layout aligns with the ITC PTTP requirements (which is poorly) and then we are quickly off to the home base of this case in the land of design.

Design:

This case analysis lives in design. With content and timeline defined by a combination of Malcolm's expertise, the CUCS staff, and the ITC PTTP criteria, the yuge (Trump, 2016) question centers on delivery packaging. Though Malcolm's initial design proposal is questioned strongly by the CUCS staff, most of their concerns are addressed by Errol Craig Sull's Distance Learning article "A 2014 Guide to Engaging Students: It's Not Your Grandfather's Online Classroom!" (Sull, 2014, p. 68 - 69):

> ➢ Faculty maintains a regular presence in the online classroom,
> ➢ All responses within 24 hours,
> ➢ More feedback communicates valuable learning experiences and instructor commitment,
> ➢ Add humor while avoiding sarcasm,
> ➢ Link comments to professional world application,
> ➢ Discussions are the heartbeat of the course that takes the learning deeper and wider,
> ➢ Add other related and intriguing resources such as applets and relevant video/audio.

Courses tailored to the online environment for the particular mindset of technology-focused online learners must be chock full of these elements highlighted by

Sull in order to differentiate themselves from, and be competitive with, in-classroom instruction.

"Flexible, digital systems promote the crafting and curating of incredibly complex processes, awarding reflection, analysis, metacognition, and social—yet self-directed--revision of thinking and behavior." (Marks, 2016, p. 77) "Online literature states that two components that must be present in a successful online learning environment are a sense of community and quality course design." (Marks, 2016, p. 77)

Development:

Malcolm's challenge here is convincing the CSCU professors that his expertise in this arena yields a quality product. The CSCU instructor inhibitions towards online course delivery are the mountain to overcome. From a development perspective, there are two fully developed paths to choose from, so this study is more about determing the best design for effectiveness.

Implementation:

There is not a lot of direct involvement with this role in this particular evaluation, but it must be kept on the table as managing this course load as the basis for both a bachelor's degree and as multiple, stand-alone certification courses adds a level of complication. When designing, which is the focus of this case study, the ID must ensure that the needs of both classes of students, which will be approaching the course from very different perspectives, are being met adequately.

Evaluation:

Though the Kirkpatrick Levels analysis (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006) is not applied here, Malcolm must keep the Level 4 implications in his crosshairs throughout the design process as the ultimate purpose of the project is to produce competent Information Technology employees quickly to fill an ever-widening void in the immediate job market. Malcolm would be wise to regularly highlight this focus during his interfaces with his audience of CUCS Professors.

Designer Constraints and Analysis

Malcolm's biggest initial challenge is 'selling' the CSCU instructors on how to make an online course rigorous and engaging. Their current world is 'tried and true' classroom-based actions that may or may not translate smoothly to an online environment. Malcolm must address this head-on. "One barrier to faculty acceptance of eLearning is the idea of quality. University faculty members question the rigor, authenticity, and value to future employers in eLearning contexts." (Marks, 2016, p. 75) Relatedly, the current UCSC instructor proposal does not appear to meet the ITC PTTP criteria.

Equally concerning is that the timeline to meet the submission deadline is ludicrous. Ideally, Malcolm should have been engaged earlier. Alas, he needs to spend significant time on the sample module as the visual aspect of the course is sure to be a key item in the ITC PTTP evaluation. Thankfully, tailoring course details to student needs does not need to occur until after the grant is awarded, so he only needs to focus on the CUCS instructor and ITC PTTP RFP evaluator audiences at this time.

Though the initial review with the CUCS instructors yielded a massive stack of questions, they are in line with what should have been expected and reflect that the instructors are taking this submission seriously and are performing a very valuable vetting activity for Malcolm. Ertmer et al. (2014) provided their view of the challenges within the case study article:

➢ Engaged late in the process,

➢ Structure and content are already determined,

➢ Due in six weeks,

➢ Faculty's proposed structure won't meet goals of ITC PTTP,

➢ Faculty's proposed certificates cannot stand on their own,

➢ Faculty's design is the same sequence as their face-to-face program,

➢ Current face-to-face program is not creating 'tomorrow's technology professionals',

➢ Rule-based, procedural information is tough to make meaningful and relevant,

➢ Worried about everything (Malcolm),

➢ Need all the help we can get (Dr. Tsagas).

Proposed Solutions

Proposal #1 – Stick with CUCS instructor course design:

Many online courses are simply digitizing the content of the existing in-class material. Malcolm's safest approach is to use what the CUCS instructors already have in place and add a few new digital elements (applets and operations) to increase the rigor and engagement.

Pros:

The timeline for the ITC PTTP proposal is very achievable and the CUCS instructors are familiar with the content of the course. If awarded a grant from ITC PTTP, CU could easily take their program digital.

Cons:

"If the current program were already 'preparing tomorrow's technology professionals,' there would be no need for the ITC PTTP initiative." (Ertmer, Quinn, & Glazewski, 2014, p. 115) Digitizing an existing course is not progressive. ITC PTTP needs an online course that pops.

Malcolm knows the content design needs to be adjusted. If he cannot do this, his heart is not fully into trying to 'band-aid' elements for the submission. If Malcolm is trying to get future business out of this consultation, he must embrace the freedom that he has been given and advance the challenge. This proposal will not do that for him.

Proposal #2 – Redesign course according to Malcolm's guidance:

Though time is short, the potential for securing an ITC PTTP grant is exponentially increased by heeding Malcolm's advice. CUCS faculty know that going digital is a key component of their future and, up to this point, they have not been able to obtain funding. ITC PTTP is a timely opportunity and adding Malcolm's expertise to the activity is just the boost that they needed.

Pros:

The new online course will be spectacular. Clearly aligned to best match the ITC PTTP criteria, this has the potential to put Craiger University on the 21st century education map. Malcolm should easily secure additional consulting gigs with Craiger, and others, as a result of a resoundingly successful submission. With CUCS professor content knowledge guided by Malcolm's experience and design background, this is an ideal opportunity to create the exact set of modules necessary to accomplish the desired goal.

Cons:

Meeting the ITC PTTP deadline for submission will require significant overtime hours. Malcolm will need support from the CUCS instructors in order to best translate/enhance their current in-class material to impacting online courses. The CUCS instructors will also need training in the administration of such an edgy course. Large challenges to overcome, but this risk is needed in order to be competitive for the ITC PTTP dollars.

Consultant Recommendation

In their quest for relevancy, Craiger must offer the ITC PTTP program a submission centered on Malcolm's designs. Dr. Tsagas gave Malcolm clear direction from her heart with "I would like to give you some leeway to explore…different ways to structure the curriculum in certificate programs. We need all the help we can get…" (Ertmer, Quinn, & Glazewski, 2014, p. 116). And earlier in that same conversation she mentioned that the fact that Malcolm was having concerns reinforced her decision to hire him. Upon hearing those two comments, my direction to Malcolm Gibson is to 'carpe diem!'

Dr. Tsagas needs to help get the CS professors on board with conforming their content to Malcolm's online course design templates while also becoming familiar with the operation of an online course. To aid in this effort, Malcolm needs to come forward with a strong and engaging model of a module while also directing the professors to some

amazing digital tools. Sharing the findings of numerous scholarly papers regarding the mass move to online courses combined with Mr. Gibson's productions should be sufficiently convincing in the effort to engage the CS professors.

The matter of hours to produce the needed products is an area that Malcolm may need to address by bringing on a competent peer to help with the work. This may be his one big shot to land a dream job, so risk will be required of him as well.

The CUCS team is well-positioned for receiving the ITC PTTP grant with a strong base curriculum and they would be wise to heed Malcolm's voice of experience developed through actual application in the world that they are desiring to equip and train quickly and effectively.

Bibliography

Ertmer, P. A., Quinn, J., & Glazewski, K. (2014). *The ID casebook: Case studies in instructional design* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2006). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels* (3rd ed.). Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Marks, D. B. (2016). Theory to Practice: Quality Instruction in Online Learning Environments. *National Teacher Education Journal, 9*(2), 75 – 80.

Sull, E. C. (2014). A 2014 Guide to Engaging Students: It's Not Your Grandfather's Online Classroom! *Distance Learning, 11* (1), 67 -70.