



Reach and Teach Lessons in Becoming a Virtual Virtuoso

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With learning budgets still being squeezed, more and more organizations are adopting the virtual classroom as 'business as usual'. Properly facilitated, the virtual classroom can be an engaging, comfortable and accountable learning environment - a far-cry from the passive, one-way haven multitaskers have learned to love. Here are six lessons to ensure your virtual facilitation success.

Do a different kind of homework.

Make the most of the fact that participants can't see your every move. Take the pressure off by preparing notes and slides that are easy to refer to without sounding overly scripted. Use the notes to support a confident delivery. Develop a ritual that allows you to focus and energize yourself a few minutes before your session begins.

Pull up an easy chair.

The social connecting and rapport building that makes people comfortable in the face-to-face classroom won't happen here without some prompting. Take the extra effort to make personal connections with and between participants. Create comfort by outlining clear expectations for how to participate and the role you will play in encouraging involvement.

Add some pop to your talk.

The energy you project will be reflected back to you by participants... good, bad or ugly. Think of your voice as your energy instrument with infinite range of tone, inflection and pace. Use your

voice to make up for energy lost through the absence of body language and facial expression.

Get everyone talking.

The natural-turn taking that occurs in face-to-face discussions is compromised virtually. The visual cues are missing. Open questions directed to the whole group may generate silence not because participants are disinterested but because they are waiting for someone else to take his or her turn. Let people know how you want them to respond and call on people by name generously.

Dish out the details.

When participants are confused about what they are to do in the virtual world, you can't walk over casually to clarify. Clear, specific directions are even more critical in this venue - with visual support through slides and 'print-your-own' style handouts.

Fend off awkward moments.

Awkward moments - like consistent latecomers, off-base comments or negativity - magnify in the virtual classroom. Work diligently to keep things focused and to turn glimpses of negativity into positive problem solving. Minimize attention to latecomers - why take valuable time from those who arrived on time?

Try even a few of these virtual virtuoso lessons and enjoy the beautiful learning you and your participants will create together.