IOEE ® INSTITUTE OF ENTERPRISE AND ENTREPRENEURS

SFEDI® AWARDS

Virtual
Delivery Guide

Setting The Scene

In 1985, Peter Drucker noted:

Today businesses, especially the large ones, simply will not survive in this period of rapid change and innovation unless they acquire entrepreneurial competence (Drucker, 1985, p. 132).

Thirty-five years on, many commentators would agree that this quote is still highly relevant today. In the UK, businesses are currently working through the uncertainty, ambiguity and impact associated with the exit of the UK from the European Union, increasingly unpredictable and severe weather events and now the outbreak of Covid-19. There is agreement amongst different communities of practice that these events will:

- Require businesses to think creatively about how they will manage business processes and practices in the near to mid-term
- Create long-term changes to economic cycles - the 'new normal' economy as coined by El-Arian in 2010.

We have seen with the outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK that businesses are currently working through a number of challenges including how to support home working for staff, develop

resilience within key business operations and ensure continued delivery of products and services to customers. For example, a significant number of businesses providing education, learning and training have notified learners that face to face delivery will no longer continue. There is an opportunity for a number of these businesses to shift from face to face to virtual, or remote delivery so that existing programmes can be completed and new programmes can commence. However, available research demonstrates that businesses vary in their experience and expertise in providing virtual/remote delivery and that there are a number of unknowns, or "need to know's", to navigate in managing the transition to virtual or remote delivery and providing an effective experience for the learner.

These unknowns can result in staff being nervous or unsure about how to use virtual and remote methods to deliver learning programmes. For example, staff may be nervous about accessing and using different technologies or unsure about how to prepare materials for virtual delivery or how to manage the interaction with learners within a virtual learning environment.

▶ This Guide

The overall aim of this guide is to outline a number of tips and techniques in using virtual and remote methods to deliver enterprise and learning skills development.

It is primarily designed for those businesses who are new to, or have limited experience of virtual learning and who have a number of questions about how to move from face to face to virtual delivery in the near term. In addition, it may be of interest to those businesses with more experience of operating virtual learning programmes as a checklist that they are doing the right things in the right ways.

If you wish to explore specific aspects of this guide in greater detail please contact Leigh or Sarah on on leigh.sear@sfedi.co.uk or sarah.trouten@ioee.co.uk

▶ Some Tips and Techniques

A review of the academic and professional literature on virtual and remote delivery of learning and skills programmes identifies a set of tips and techniques related to planning, preparing and delivering an effective experience for the learner.

Those tips and techniques of relevance to the development and delivery of enterprise learning and skills programmes include:

Tip 1: Invest some time in choosing the right tools

The starting point is ensuring that you have the right tools to facilitate the delivery of the learning programmes provided by your business. For example, are you looking to deliver focused programmes to relatively small groups of learners or more generic or standardised learning programmes to larger groups of learners? Are your programmes focused on developing understanding and knowledge of the subject (i.e. '*about*'), skills (i.e. '*for*') or experiences (i.e. '*through*').

These programme characteristics will influence whether Skype for Business, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facebook Live, Microsoft Teams, GoTo Meeting, Adobe Connect, WebEx or other more bespoke virtual learning environments (e.g. Google Classroom, Canvas or Blackboard) are appropriate.

It is also important that you choose a tool now which will provide scope for growth in numbers in the near to mid-term. One of the potential outcomes from a temporary shift to virtual or remote delivery, to cope with Covid-19, is that we identify how virtual learning adds value to the learning experience, particularly as a way of supporting learning 'on' or 'at' the job

Tip 2: Tailor content for virtual learning

In a face to face learning environment, a learning programme may last half-a-day, a day or a number of days spread over two or three months. However, research demonstrates that learners make sense of content differently within a virtual environment and attention span is lost more quickly. So, the general rule of thumb is to reduce what you wish to say by approximately one-third, if not more.

This does not mean that important content should be left out – it just needs to be delivered in a different way. This can be achieved through:

- *Chunking content into shorter sections* ideally between five to eight minutes. For example, SFEDI has recently completed an Erasmus Plus project which developed a series of mini-learning format resources (MLFRs) for small business owners and managers. MLFRs are designed to develop knowledge and skills in brief time-bound sessions. They should be practical and relevant to the challenges and issues facing the learner. Typically, a MLFR will consist of a combination of visual, audio and experiential content

- *Provide links to other materials* (such as videos, case studies, TEDx talks) which enable learners in their own time to add depth to the understanding and skills gained during the virtual sessions

- *Build in more checkpoints* than you would for face to face delivery. Quizzes, questions and real time exercises can be used to check progress and ensure learners less comfortable with virtual environments are keeping up with the material

- *Be clear about the aim of exercises* – e.g. is a quiz just a quiz to complete or is it part of the assessment of learning. This will help learners understand the stages in the learning journey

- *Provide clear guidance* for the use of discussion boards (e.g. through the use of rubrics) and set clear deadlines for the completion of activities

- *Provide opportunities for learners* to engage with you in different ways (e.g. talk facilities within the tool or platform, the use of email, discussion boards).

Tip 3: Retain the social interaction and experience exchange

When facilitating virtual delivery of a session it can be easy for the facilitator to deliver a somewhat didactic session, talking to a set of slides, reviewing a specific case study in detail and then taking questions from the learners at the end. However, virtual learning experiences can retain the social interaction and facilitate experience exchange between the participants that we witness within face to face learning environments.

Tips here include:

- At the start, it is important to ask learners to introduce themselves and outline any expectations and concerns
- At appropriate moments ask specific individuals, using their names, to share their experiences or respond to a question

- Use short reflective exercises and provide learners with time to make sense of a certain segment of the learning experience and provide feedback
- Where possible use the appropriate function within the virtual learning environment to record the feedback from the learners and refer back to this feedback later in the section or at the start of the next session
- At the conclusion of the session ask learners to identify one thing that they will take away from the session
- Set preparation tasks for the next session which involve learners contacting each other between the sessions (e.g. using email or a web-based conference facility).

Tip 4: Facilitate as well as teach

Building upon the above, virtual learning environments can support more facilitative learning approaches and strategies. At one level, you can allow discussions between learners, whilst listening, encouraging, praising and challenging experiences where necessary (e.g. through questioning). So be prepared within virtual environments to lead from the back, rather than the front, by spending more time commenting and less time lecturing.

Tip 5: Accommodate differing levels of experience in using virtual technologies

Learners will be starting from different positions in using virtual technologies and not everyone will have the same comfort level. In face to face learning environment we will sometimes witness learners becoming frustrated with other learners who take longer to understand certain concepts or parts of the learning experience. Research highlights that something similar can occur in virtual learning environments but this can stem from the facilitator if learners are struggling with the technology.

It is important that you provide space for learners to connect with the critical elements of the learning content (e.g. through quizzes, discussion boards, talk facilities) and provide feedback to you in different ways, both during and after the session. In part, this is why it is important to tailor content for virtual or remote delivery, particularly in reducing what you wish to say.

 Less can sometimes be more!

Tip 6: Learning and fun are not mutually exclusive

If facilitating learning within a virtual environment is a new experience for you there can be a tendency to overly concentrate on ensuring that it is works for everyone by directing the session too much. At the start, you can use your lack of experience as an approach to engaging learners and bringing out their concerns and worries about learning in a virtual environment. If the majority of the learners are new to or have limited experience, then start the session with a fun ice-breaker. At times throughout the session encourage the learners to engage with one another. Use storytelling to foster an atmosphere that encourages social interaction and human connection between learners.

Tip 7: Use other media to support learning and skills development

It is important that other media are used appropriately to support the virtual learning experience. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- Using discussion boards to support experience exchange and facilitate reflection on learning between sessions
- Using email to communicate with learners between sessions. This is important in reinforcing any actions outlined within the online session related to any preparation work required, deadlines for completion of tasks and (where appropriate) assessment of learning
- Using tools such as Zoom and Skype to provide one to one support – this is particularly important if learners have been unable to participate in any of the online programme sessions
- Posting out paper materials to learners. This could be activity sheets, workbooks, key readings and any other useful resources. So, paper and pen can still be used to add value to the experience within a virtual learning environment.

▶ Further Reading and Resources

These links will provide you with further information and insights on the tips and techniques outlined above.

Audet, J., Tremblay, M., Chartier, S. and Contreras, C. (2018) Effective Online Entrepreneurial Education: Is It Possible? *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 21, 1, pp. 1-15.

Arbaugh, J.B., Desai, A., Rau, B. and Sridhar, B.S. (2010) A Review of Research on Online and Blended Learning in the Management Disciplines: 1994-2009, *Organization Management Journal*, 7, 1, pp. 39-55.

COOP-IN and The Use of Online Serious Educational Games — http://coopinproject.eu/en/

E-learning is a clever business tool but know the limitations — https://smallbusiness.co.uk/e-learning-is-a-clever-business-tool-but-know-the-limitations-2544086/

Distance learning solutions to support virtual learning — https://icsb.org/distancelearning/?

Gibb, A. and Price, A. (2014) *A Compendium of Pedagogies for Teaching Entrepreneurship*, National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education, Coventry.

How to Create an eLearning Course in 12 Steps — https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/how-to-create-an-elearning-course-steps

Kyro, P., Kauppi, T. and Nurminen, M. (2008) Entrepreneurial Learning and Virtual Learning Environment, in van der Sijde, P., Ridder, A., Blaauw, G. and Diensberg, C. (eds.) *Teaching Entrepreneurship: Cases for Teaching and Education*, Physica-Verlag Heidelberg, Heidelberg.

Learning outside of the classroom — https://www.raconteur.net/hr/learning-outside-the-classroom

Lloyds Bank (2019) UK Business Digital Index, Lloyds Bank, London (accessible at https://resources.lloydsbank.com/businessdigitalindex/).

ME2ME and Mini Learning Format Resources — https://me2meproject.eu/

Online executive education — https://www.raconteur.net/hr/the-new-executive-education-is-online?

Patel, S. (2014) 15 Free Online Learning Sites Every Entrepreneur Should Visit, *Entrepreneur*, 3rd November.

Questions to ask in designing an e-learning course — https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/bid/339927/4-questions-that-will-lead-you-to-the-perfect-elearning-course

The Open University (2019) Innovating Pedagogy 2019, The Open University, Milton Keynes (accessible at https://iet.open.ac.uk/file/innovating-pedagogy-2019.pdf).

The Ten eLearning Commandments — https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/bid/297719/The-Ten-eLearning-Commandments-Infographic

Ways in which learning and development are changing — http://res.cloudinary.com/yumyoshojin/image/upload/v1/pdf/learning-development-2019.pdf
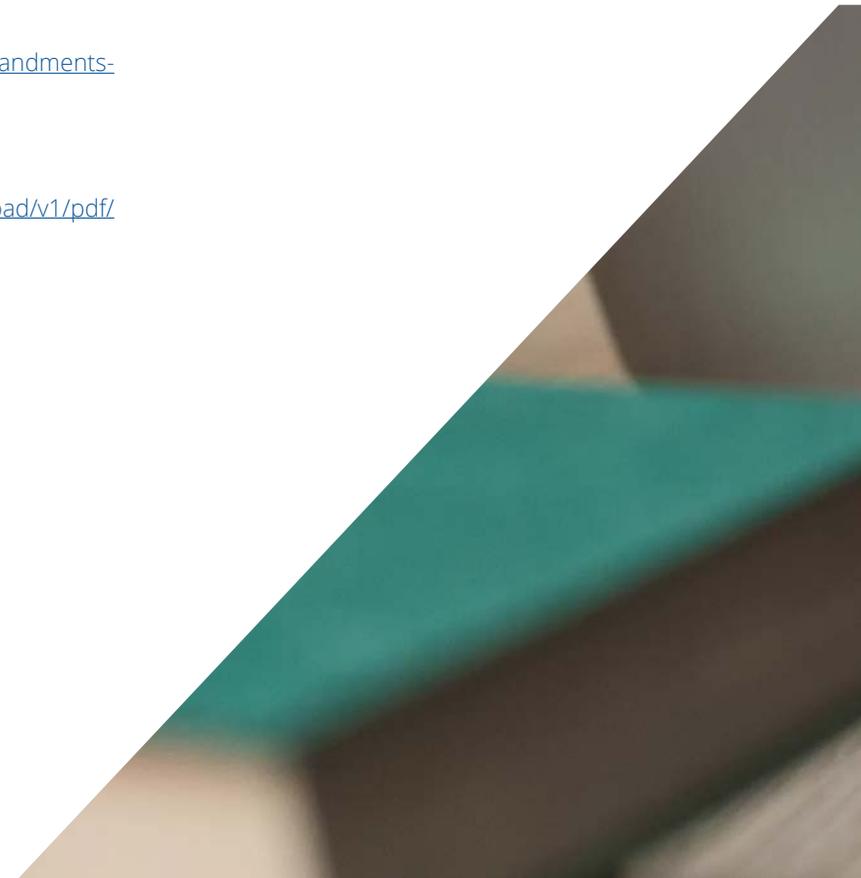
Further Information

If you require any further information or if you would like to discuss any aspect of the guide in greater detail, please do contact Leigh or Sarah on leigh.sear@sfedi.co.uk or sarah.trouten@ioee.co.uk

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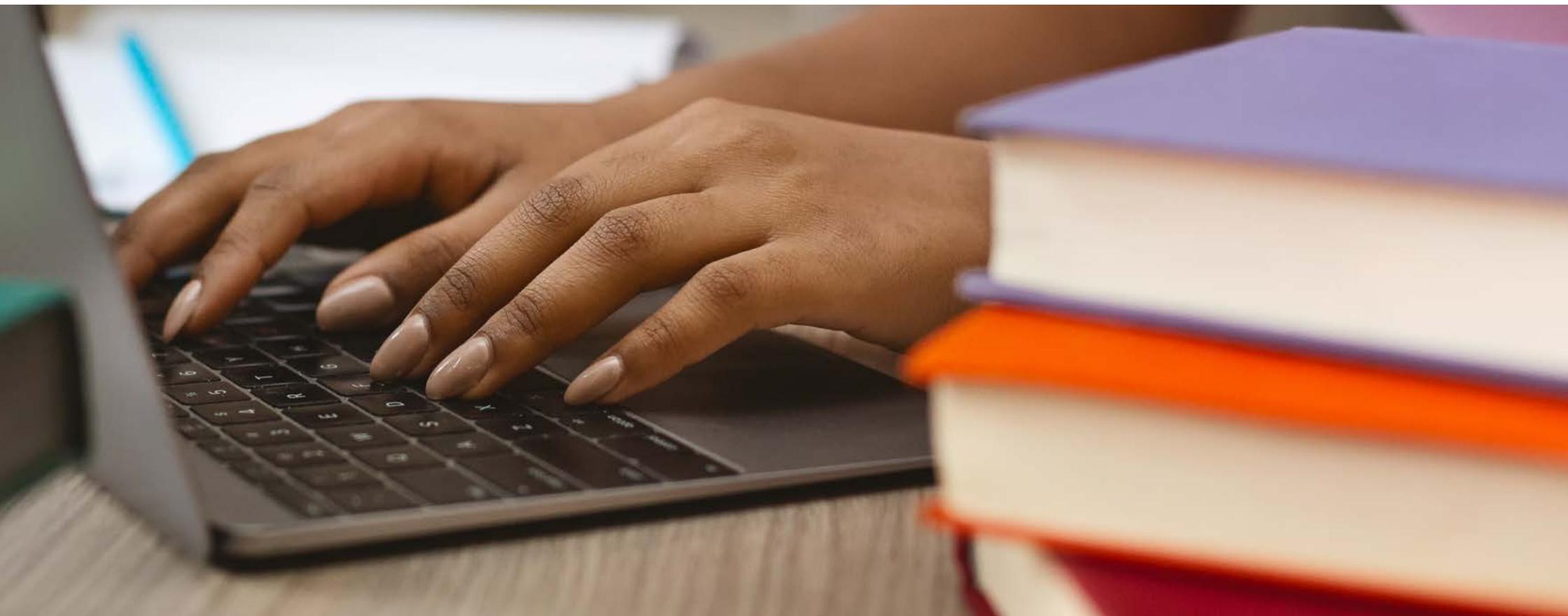
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