Distance Learning Overview

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Overview of Presentation:

• Definition of Distance Learning
• Technologies used for Distance Learning
• Other Distance Learning Issues
• Questions
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Definition:

Structured learning events in which the instructor and the learner are separated in time and/or space, and communication between them is facilitated by some form or forms of technology.
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**Basic Defining Elements:**

- **Separation of instructor and learner** - distinguishes it from face-to-face instruction

- **Influence of an educational organization** - distinguishes it from private study
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Basic Defining Elements:

- Use of technology - carries instruction as well as uniting learner and instructor
- Provision for two-way communication so students may initiate or benefit from dialogue
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Basic Defining Elements:

- Possibility of occasional meetings for both educational/training and socialization purposes
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Types of Technologies:

• **Synchronous** - live, in-the-moment interaction

• **Asynchronous** - delayed interaction
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**Synchronous Technologies:**

• Live, in-the-moment interaction
• Many are similar to classroom instruction
• Scheduled like classroom instruction
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Types of Synchronous Technologies:

- Computer Conferencing (Real Time)
- Audio Teletraining
- Audio Graphics
- Interactive Video Teletraining (1-way video)
- Video Teleconferencing (2-way video)
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Audio Teletraining:

Strengths:

• Very inexpensive
• Easy to set up
• Minimal training on equipment
• Use existing phone lines
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Audio Teletraining:

Weaknesses:

• Not appropriate for training requiring live or interactive video

• Requires pre-distribution of visual materials
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Audiographic Conferencing:

Strengths:

• Very inexpensive
• Easy to set up
• Ability to share graphics (charts, graphs, photographs, etc.)
• Whiteboard capability
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Audiographic Conferencing:

Weaknesses:

• Not appropriate for training requiring live or interactive video
• May require pre-distribution of computer files
• Requires some degree of computer literacy to develop course materials
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Computer Conferencing (Real Time):

Strengths:

• Very inexpensive
• Easy to set up
• Minimal training on equipment
• Use existing networks
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Computer Conferencing (Real Time):

Weaknesses:

• Not appropriate for training requiring live or interactive video

• Incompatible computers/software may require pre-distribution of visual materials
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Interactive Video Teletraining:

Strengths:

• Transmits live video and audio
• Cost effective (medium & large audiences)
• Widespread availability of receive facilities
• Response systems can increase interactivity
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Interactive Video Teletraining:

Weaknesses:

• Requires a lot of equipment to broadcast signal
• May require installation or rental of satellite receive dishes
• Requires thorough training on equipment at receive sites
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Video Teleconferencing:

Strengths:

• Allows the instructor to see the learners
• Allows for multiple “instructor” sites
• Allows learners to interact visually with each other
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Video Teleconferencing:

Weaknesses:

• High transmission costs
• High equipment costs for each site
• Difficult to manage visual interaction with multiple sites
• Many systems are “voice activated” for visual control
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**Asynchronous Technologies:**

- Delayed interaction
- “Anytime & Anywhere”
- Mostly self-paced instruction
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Types of Asynchronous Technologies:

• Computer Based Training (CD-Rom)
• On-Line Training (Internet & Intranet)
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Computer Based Training:

Strengths:

• Self-paced
• Branching based on individual answers
• Testing and evaluation
• Use of graphics, motion, video and sound
• Use of existing video tapes and graphics
• Inexpensive distribution costs
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Computer Based Training:

Weaknesses:

• High costs for development
• Long development and revision times
• Moderate computer literacy skills required by learners
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Internet & Intranet Training:

Strengths:

• Self-paced
• Materials easily updated
• Access other sources real time
• Access multiple courses
• Inexpensive distribution costs
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Internet & Intranet Training:

Weaknesses:

• **Moderate to high computer literacy skills needed to create Web-based training sites**
• **Video and sound use limited**
• **Security measures needed to stop unwanted users and hackers**
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Which Technology is the “BEST?”

• It Depends…
• Your Specific Application
• Your Previous Technology Investments
• Your Ability to Develop and Support
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Summary:

- Distance learning is not a panacea
- There is no one “best” technology
- Mixed technology approaches are generally preferred to a single technology
- Application(s) should determine technology