

Effective Email Communication

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Abstract

Program planners understand the pivotal involvement of people and recognize the critical dynamic of negotiating power and interests in dynamic environments during program planning. To successfully meet the needs of those at the planning table and, most importantly, the learner's needs, program planners must remain innovative in their planning practice and consistently incorporate an evaluation method during the planning process. This paper examines the significant planning decisions made by the consulting group Effective Manuscript and Information Line (EMAIL) in preparation for their presentation at an upcoming event for the United States Postal Service (USPS). The ADDIE model is the program planning model selected to aid in creating the presentation; the model has been selected based on previous successful implementations by the consulting group.

Keywords: ADDIE model, analysis, design, development, implementation, evaluation

Introduction

EMAIL Consulting, Inc. was contacted by the USPS to present an educational seminar about how to correctly compose an email at the upcoming national National Postal Forum conference held at the Charlotte Convention Center, in North Carolina on May 21-24, 2023. EMAIL Consulting, Inc. was presented with a contract to conduct a 1-hour long presentation about the proper components of emails that are sent from top US Postal Service Master down to individual postal offices and also between individuals within the postal office as well. This program is needed due to common misinterpretation of emails from top-down management to inter-departmental emails that need to be adequately worded or misinterpreted. The union postal workers often file formal complaints about needing to be in the communication loop within the postal service. EMAIL Consulting, Inc. has had success in the past with implementing the ADDIE training system for their project proposals, and all group members agreed that the ADDIE model was the correct model to use for this project with USPS for their upcoming conference. The ADDIE model was used to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the upcoming conference because it eliminates “peripheral knowledge from courses to ensure that the participants acquired the necessary knowledge and expertise to compose proper emails” (Allen, 2006, p.432). With the model in place and the project secured, EMAIL Consulting, Inc. began working on the project.

Analysis Phase

In the analysis phase, the instructional developer analyzes the job performance requirements and develops a task list. The developer then analyzes the job tasks and compares them with the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the conference attendees (Allen, 2006). During the initial analysis phase, a needs analysis was performed to determine the needs of the learners. The outcome of the needs analysis was that all of the employees were technically savvy enough to write and send an email. However, the task analysis uncovered that most employees need more personnel skills to develop a well-worded professional email that is acceptable to send in a work environment. EMAIL Consulting, Inc. collaborated with the USPS to determine learning objectives for the educational seminar. Upon completion of the session, each participant should be able to identify the main parts of emails, evaluate appropriate word choices based on recipients, and apply learned skills for acceptable sign-offs. With this information in hand, the developer for the consulting company, EMAIL Consulting, Inc., analyzed all of the essential components of an email, and a presentation was created that would be presented to the attendees of the conference. The developer will highlight and emphasize those essential points and give instructions on these email points during the presentation. All consultation team members will meet and approve the initial design phases, and once total consensus is obtained by verbal agreement, the next step of the planning process will be designed.

Design Phase

During the design phase, the instructional developer develops a detailed plan of instruction that includes the instructor's methods and media and determines the instructional strategies (Allen, 2006). The instructional developer for EMAIL Consulting, Inc. will perform the 1-hour instruction presentation as a PowerPoint/Google slide presentation, with the slides

emphasizing the critical components of the essentials of an effective email. Both acceptable and unacceptable examples of emails will be used throughout the presentation for each of the main points presented. Once the PowerPoint/Google slides presentation is completed, the instructional developer will present the presentation to all the members of EMAIL Consulting, Inc. for their evaluation and feedback, with any further revision or enhancements to be rereviewed and approved by all members before the presentation at the conference.

Development Phase

The instructional designer designs the PowerPoint/Google slides and the materials to be presented. Each unit or module of instruction and its associated instructional materials are developed, and any deficiencies that are identified are corrected at this time (Allen, 2006). Once the internal review of the instruction and materials are reviewed for accuracy and the operational tryout of the presentation is viewed and revised, which are based on any revisions from feedback and formative and summative evaluation.

Implementation Phase

During this phase, the instructional system is fielded under operational conditions. The final program is presented at the US Postal Conference, and the activities of operational performance provide feedback from the field on the participant's performance (Allen, 2006). While at the conference, the consultants will evaluate and quantify the number of attendees at this particular module and make a summative assessment of the attendee's active participation and enthusiasm during the presentation.

Evaluation phase

This phase is used throughout the entire planning process and is incorporated into each phase throughout the life cycle of the instructional system (Allen, 2006). The formative

evaluation will be incorporated within the final conference evaluation form as each participant will have the opportunity to complete an evaluation for each module they attended during the conference (Allen, 2006). This formative evaluation focuses on what should be done to improve or change a program while it is in progress (Daffron & Cafferella, 2021). The summative evaluation consists of the operational tryouts performed during the last step of the validation in the development phase (Allen, 2006). This evaluation aims to assess whether the training program worked (Daffron & Cafferella, 2021). The instruction developer and/or presenter in the presentation will evaluate during the program the attendee's responses to what is effective email language and what is ineffective email language. The operational evaluation, which will continue even after the training is over, is the periodic internal and external evaluation of the operation.

After completing the educational session, EMAIL Consulting, Inc. evaluated what worked well (strengths), what did not work out well (opportunities), as well as critical lessons to take away post-conference. The ADDIE model provided a solid planning model for the consultants. The USPS provided key objectives and components from the beginning, allowing the analysis to provide a trusted foundation for the rest of the model to flow together with a successful design and implementation. The handouts provided much participation from the class and improved overall class engagement during the session. When assessing the opportunities post-session, EMAIL Consulting, Inc. agreed lack of time to implement all educational material was an area of concern. There needed to be more time for participants to finish their assignments and share with the class. The one-hour time allotment was successful at the trial-run presentation with the USPS. However, because those participants understood professional email etiquette, they had fewer questions, and did not account for the distractions and extra socialization that would occur during the actual session. Critical lessons taken away post-conference included

standing firm in how much time we needed for successful educational implementation and requiring at least one supervisor to be in the room to support the facilitator and to monitor social distractions from participants. Another lesson learned is the importance of gathering emails or contact information from participants (with permission from USPS) to be able to reach out later with our survey to ask for direct feedback. Although learning objectives were met, it has not proved easy to quantify feedback without more of an official evaluation or assessment.

Conclusion

During the implementation of these steps, each consultant for EMAIL Consulting, Inc. will be actively involved in each step of the program planning and implementation with a democratic voice to support and revise any step of the planning phase. Upon completion of the USPS conference, EMAIL Consulting, Inc. will receive any and all feedback obtained while at the conference and review each of the feedback responses or observations. With this feedback, the consultation group will then implement additional materials that may need to be presented or omit any unnecessary materials that the attendees could not utilize in the practical everyday use of proper email composition.

References

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