Case Study #4: Jennie Davenport & Pedro Lopez

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I. CASE SUMMARY

Professor Essex has been teaching and facilitating a very successful face to face workshop for gay and bisexual men, called Man to Man (M2M). This workshop is for people who have been infected or may be infected with HIV or AIDS. His workshop aims to change the attitudes and behaviors of these potentially infected men in order to correct decision-making skills for the future. The workshop is very intensive and the methods used may elicit several powerful emotions and feelings that lead participants towards a more comprehensive understanding of the risks associated with unprotected sex with multiple partners.

However, a grant from the National Health Association (NHF) has been offered to transform M2M to an online format (iM2M) and still gain a positive outcome from participants. Since Professor Essex has no background with online instruction, Jennie Davenport has been hired to coordinate the program. Along with Jennie will be Pedro Lopez, a professor in the Health Sciences Department. He will oversee the content of the course and prioritize the essential components of the face to face M2M workshop that must be included in iM2M. Currently, Jennie and Pedro have differing opinions about the success of iM2M.

II. STAKEHOLDERS

Jennie Davenport has been given a substantial challenge with her involvement in this project and from her background in creating online programs; she seems very fit for this position. However, from Jennie’s point of view, there are many differing opinions on how to most effectively produce a powerful online workshop and she is beginning to doubt not only herself but the future of iM2M. It would be detrimental to her reputation if this project was a
failure. Pedro Lopez is also a stakeholder in this project since he was hired on because of his background in the specific content area of the workshop and his expertise will definitely be worthwhile. Yet, he still doubts that the reproduction of the highly successful M2M workshop can be done. He is not confident that Jennie can create a program that will compete with the current course.

Professor Essex is a stakeholder in this project because he is the main reason for the instructional team being formed in the first place. From his perspective, he has very little experience with online programs and he needs Jennie and Pedro to take the lead. He is counting on their skills and proficiency in this area in order to secure the funding from the National Health Foundation (NHF). His department will rely on the monies for future projects and it would be disappointing to the department if iM2M does not succeed as he hopes it will. The NHF is a stakeholder since it is their money that is funding this project. From their perspective, the outcome of the online workshop will lead to any future funding for Professor Essex. Finally, gay and bisexual men in the community who are engaging in risky sexual behaviors are stakeholders because their decision-making skills and attitudes may not be changed from their participation in iM2M as much as it would with M2M. This could lead to a heightened level of individuals contracting and spreading HIV/AIDS.

III. DESIGN CHALLENGES

- The first design challenge is an unclear project goal. The objectives that Professor Essex provided were vague, making it difficult to provide a “state of the art” multimedia program that is required of Jennie. In order to create iM2M successfully, the initial planning stages will need to be very intensive and that will require very specific learning objectives and expected learner outcomes.
• Also, there was no indication that the ADDIE model was used to analyze each stage of planning that went into effect before M2M was conducted. This information would have been vital to Jennie and Pedro’s planning of iM2M.

I would prioritize these challenges in the order they are listed. There needs to be specific learning objectives put into place for the instructional team to continue successfully.

IV. OTHER CHALLENGES

• It is apparent that cooperation among the instructional team is not happening. There is no cohesion between each individual; rather they have their own picture in their mind of what iM2M looks like. Additionally, each member of the design team has conflicting ideas about the feasibility of the project, in particular, Jennie has been comparing her involvement in creating an online HIPPA workshop to the iM2M project. Pedro feels that this comparison is inaccurate and does not contribute to the success of iM2M.

• Also, the incorporation of several necessary components of M2M need to be considered and the team is having trouble making this happen. Those components are the “hot cognitions” which could cause ethical and liability issues for the university, group exercises, counseling services and games that are used in M2M.

These case-based challenges which are more case-based should be addressed according to the order they are listed.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

• My first recommendation is for the instructional team to redefine the project goals and objectives of iM2M. They should mirror the needs of the learners and the
expected outcome of the workshop itself. Each of the learning objectives should correspond to a specific learning activity that will take place during the course. This will take extensive planning on the part of the team and will require several meetings, revisions and discussions to finalize the project goal. This recommendation will address the challenge that Jennie initially had with the vague goals she received from Professor Essex.

- Secondly, I would recommend that the ADDIE model should be implemented during planning stages of iM2M. Each phase of the design model should be examined and discussed with the entire instructional team. This recommendation will help address the challenge of not receiving any background instructional design information on the M2M workshop. With this new level of planning, Jennie and Pedro will have a more clear picture of what the entire workshop will look like in an online format. This model will aide in the process of mapping out the workshop and each activity that will take place from beginning to end. The final product will also correspond to the original project goals and objectives that were set by the instructional team.

- To solve the challenge of communication, I would recommend that the entire team meet face to face and discuss each individual’s picture of what iM2M looks like. This meeting will help contribute to the mapping out process that Jennie and Pedro will complete during each phase of ADDIE. It will be vital that all members of the team remain on the same page throughout the planning process.

- Finally, to address the challenge of incorporating the necessary components and activities that were powerful to the participants in M2M, it will be necessary for the team to prioritize those activities. In order of importance, the team will need to
decide if it is feasible for each component to be included in an online environment. For the “hot cognitions,” the team will need to discuss the inclusion of a privacy statement or waiver to be signed by each participant prior to their involvement in the workshop. Also, the use of a discussion board will need to be considered. It may be helpful to discuss options like a virtual chat room or blog where participants can converse openly with the option of anonymity if necessary. Additionally, the small group activities may be simulated with the use of Web 2.0 tools like Google+ or Skype.

VI. PROS AND CONS

Fortunately, the timeline for this project is long enough to complete each of the recommendations, so the team will be able to hold several meetings over a long period of time. If it takes several weeks to revamp the project goals and objectives, the timeline should stay on track. The negative side of that would be that some members of the instructional team might not agree with the revised project goals. This is a barrier that Jennie and Pedro will have to consider.

Also, the extensive research and planning that will go into examining the ADDIE model will prove to be very beneficial to both the iM2M and face to face M2M. I believe that implementing this model will contribute positively to both workshops which will please Professor Essex. Unfortunately, the ADDIE model takes time, revision, and patience and that may prove to be difficult on both Jennie and Pedro if they have not used the model before. This is a challenge that each of them will need to contemplate.

The meeting with the entire instructional team about improving communication will be helpful for the entire project and it will help keep the project goals, as well as the timeline, on
track. However, some members of the team may not be in agreement about the project and this will need to be addressed as it occurs. Finally, prioritizing each component of M2M that will be included in iM2M is necessary and will be invaluable to the future of the project. It is vital not only for the implementation of iM2M but for the participants who take place in the workshop. The behaviors and attitudes of the participants will be determined by how effective the activities and instructional materials were incorporated throughout the workshop. Additionally, Jennie and Pedro will have to work very hard to find a way to incorporate each component and create a meaningful learning experience at the same time. It may take several attempts to find the most successful product.

VII. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

Distance learning can be very difficult to facilitate successfully but the key is extensive and particular planning. Specifically for learning activities, Simonson and Schlosser (2009) state: “Learning activities are organized around demonstrable learning outcomes embedded in course components including: course delivery mode, pedagogy, content, organization and evaluation” (p.4). It is necessary for the instructional team of this project to complete each phase of the planning process before beginning the implementation of a pilot distance learning program.

Since I have been involved in the Learning Design and Technology program, I have had several meaningful learning experiences with the use of the online medium. I found it extremely beneficial to complete group projects with the use of several online tools like Skype or Google +. Being able to see the individuals I was working with was invaluable to our success and it made the ultimate learning outcome more consistent and unified.
According to Rosser et al. (2011): “Internet gay sex sites are now the leading environment where men meet men for sex in the U.S. and similar countries” (p.91). Since it is apparent that meeting and “hooking up” online is a common practice, especially among the target learners of iM2M, the use of online tools can most certainly be successful. If the target learner group is already using it, Jennie and Pedro would be doing potential participants a disservice by not incorporating the technology they are already using.

VIII. FINAL RECOMMENDATION

My final recommendation for the instructional team in this project is to find cohesion amongst the project goals, learning activities, learning materials, and assessments of iM2M. The initial outline of the workshop was entirely too broad and with the use of the ADDIE model, Jennie and Pedro will have a much clearer picture of what the iM2M workshop needs to look like. Not only that, but, each component of the ADDIE model will keep the instructional team accountable for their decisions in the necessary elements that they felt should to be incorporated within the online program. If the team is able to stay on the same page and continually revise each component of iM2M as necessary, the positive behavioral outcome that Professor Essex has been observing in M2M will certainly be a possibility.