

Graphic Organizers – Project 2

ILT 5830 - Workshop: Assessment and Technology

Greg Lea

Project Overview

I recently developed a course for my organization called *Default Call Center 101*. This five hour course is delivered to a group of 10-20 new-hires about once per month as part of a larger, comprehensive new-hire curriculum. It introduces new employees to the concept of taking calls for mortgage loans that are in jeopardy of foreclosure. These employees' jobs involve educating customers about options that exist outside of foreclosure for keeping or selling their homes. One of the key objectives for this course is that participants become familiar with the different loan workout options that are available to customers who are behind on their monthly mortgage payments. There are eight main options that should be researched and presented to the customer in a specific order. This order arranges the options in a hierarchy. The top of the hierarchy is most beneficial to the customer and to my organization, thus it is important to always follow the hierarchy.

The original iteration of the course introduces the workout options as a list. A few days later the topic is revisited, more detail is added, and the hierarchy is introduced as a graphic. I added a formative assessment in the form of a graphic organizer to enhance the early introduction of the hierarchy.

Motivation

Originally, I created the graphic hierarchy to appeal to visual learners and provide variety for what is a text and lecture dominated course. The problem is that while the graphic hierarchy does appeal to visual learners, it does not decrease the amount of lecture. It is certainly nice to look at, but the learners do not do anything. It is just a picture in a book. Implementing an assessment that uses a graphical organizer adds a kinesthetic element, higher order thinking, and assessment AS learning to the instruction. It also breaks up the lecture, providing more opportunity for discussion.

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Procedures

I created a handout (attached) which features a blank version of the graphic hierarchy featured later in the curriculum (also attached). I enhanced the graphic by adding empty callouts that can be used to add a description of each workout option. The hierarchy was implemented at this stage to plant seeds for the detailed definitions to come later. After the instructor discussed the eight workout options, he distributed the graphic organizer and asked each participant to list each workout option sequentially in the hierarchy and add a brief definition.

Obstacles

Because this activity was introduced very early in the curriculum I risked overwhelming the participants with detail at a time when they were trying to settle into their new jobs and new corporate culture. My initial thought was that the beginning of the class should be simple with the content gradually growing more complex. I thought this could be too much too soon.

Findings

Contrary to my initial thoughts, the inclusion of this activity at this early stage in the curriculum was well received and participant reactions were very positive. Prior to the activity, more than one participant commented that they were excited to find out exactly what it was that they would be doing on a daily basis in their new jobs. The most important outcome of the activity was the large amount of discussion it generated. (Due to time constraints it may have actually been too much, but “too much” can be reined in by the instructor and is not viewed as a negative development.) The participants’ excitement about learning more about their new jobs was evident and their questions were intelligent, thoughtful, and relevant. After the activity participant comments included “fun,” “helpful,” and “interesting.”

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Conclusion

This was another example of the power of assessment AS learning and the importance of using assessment as a tool in the classroom beyond assessment OF learning. I learned that activities are more than a method of breaking up a lecture and adding hands-on learning to instruction. Activities can enhance learning by invoking discussion, instilling excitement, and promoting cognitivism. To complete the graphic organizers, participants were forced to consider why one workout option would be favored over another and therefore placed higher in the hierarchy. This is an example of higher order thinking versus less thoughtful activities such as staring at an already completed graphic hierarchy.

I have always used graphics such as the hierarchy in the content that I develop. However, the success of implementing the graphic organizer in this activity provides an incentive to revisit similar past creations and convert them from a static graphical representation of a topic to an interactive, implementation of assessment AS learning. Graphical organizers are one of many tools that can be used for this purpose.

Loan Workout Option Hierarchy

