

## ETP: Blog Reflection Paper

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IISME has given me the opportunity to learn about the working world that my students will be entering, to talk with a wide variety of employees about their jobs and the skills required for success, and to continue educating myself about how best to teach children.

My assignment this year, at Philips Semiconductor, was to develop a plan for employee training through 2009. My research included careful reading of published reports, investigating courseware that vendors currently provide, and examining college and university offerings. I documented all of my research, and I wrote a final proposal.

Two things that I can share with students this year would be that I had to solve many of my own problems just as they should attempt to figure out problems before asking the teacher. I also had to meet the deadlines given to me just as they do when they finish homework on time. Showing responsibility is important in school and in real life, and we need those skills in order to succeed.

Legend has it that when Wayne Gretsky was asked why he was so successful as a hockey player, he responded by saying that he always tried to skate to where the puck was going to be, not to where it was. The notion of the "digital puck" as a metaphor for information technology in education seems appropriate: Sometimes the puck moves very fast, sometimes slow, and its movement is often erratic. This was a metaphor that I posed on my blogging page at LiveJournal.com.

I think what Wayne Gretsky is saying is that we have to assess what is going on around us but also prepare for the future. My assignment, researching the Training Strategy for the next four years at Philips, is a perfect example in point. Training is no longer a once in a lifetime experience; it is something we must all do continuously throughout our working life.

Training is an essential element in developing and honing the technical expertise and the skills required for management, leadership, and employee effectiveness. The objectives are increased productivity, reduced employee turnover, increased efficiency resulting in financial gains, decreased need for supervision.

As well, training and education contribute to an employee's sense of self-worth, dignity and well-being. These factors give them a sense of satisfaction through the achievement of personal and company goals.

Classroom based instruction is suitable for a wide range of training needs. It can be effective in stimulating both motivation and questions, especially for small groups of trainees. However, it is not optimal in many situations, when the group gets big, geographically dispersed, with dissimilar interests and backgrounds, or conflicting schedules to convene.

From my research, I found that training in the future will include more than classroom or instructor based learning. Much emphasis will be on on-the-job, just-in-time, and just-enough learning. It is commonly referred to as e-learning, web-classes, networked collaborative software, or internet services.

"Blogging" is, in my opinion, a terrible name for an excellent way to communicate in this new web based learning world. Blogging has become so strong that the word "blog" made Merriam-Webster's Top 10 Words of the Year list. Blogging is said to have had a huge impact on this year's US Presidential Election. Many Americans turned to blogs for information about candidates to avoid the traditional spin in print or news sources. I'm not sure that is such a good thing. But

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Our IISME blogging opportunity gave us a personalized look at each veteran's industry through their own eyes, a personal view of new technologies, tips from fellow blogging educators, and even some insights into the lives of these other educators. We became buddies now that we know a little about each other and each other's families. We even plan on meeting for a "Bloggers" fun evening at a home, bowling alley, or restaurant.

My veteran colleagues and I also used blogs as a natural knowledge repository. We could capture the context of opinions instead of only the end result. Some of the topics that I posed in my blogging were:

- **RAFT** (information about Resource Area For Teachers where members can choose from thousands of different and often unusual materials gathered from business the surplus stream to use in educational activities.)
- **Lighting** (Research points out that task lamps should be used when needed for additional office lighting.)
- **Always-On Workstation** (The ability to leave documents open when an employee leaves for the day and the computer automatically locks after a certain amount of minutes.)
- **Parking** (1. amount of shade, 2. proximity to the entry door, 3. ease of exit)
- **Phone Etiquette** (What does "gotta run" and "I've got a meeting" really mean?)
- **Stretch breaks** (A fundamental principle in the workplace is to allow approximately 5 minutes break for every hour of work, and a 15 minute break every two hours. Stretching all of the muscles used to perform ones job has now been proven to be vital in preventing a host of undesirable Repetitive Stress injuries.)
- **Ergonomics** (Sit up straight and align the ears, shoulders, and hips in one vertical line. Avoid unbalanced postures such as crossing legs unevenly while sitting, leaning to one side, hunching the shoulders forward or tilting the head.)

Not convinced? Take a look at Darren Barefoot who has placed himself on auction on eBay as a corporate blogger for rent. He even has a bid for \$500 USD for 3 months of blogging with a minimum of 5 posts a week. How about Jeremy Wright who started the "Rent a Blogger" idea on eBay who's current auction, which started at \$100 USD has climbed to \$1,600 USD for the same volume of posts. While I am not sure I agree 100% with renting a blogger for your company, I do however see the value in having a blogging presence on the web to represent yourself or company. If it takes renting one, especially one as prominent and knowledgeable as Jeremy Wright, whose technical blog is said to have over 60,000 readers per month, then so be it.

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This experience taught me that much learning occurs through Blogs. Would I Blog with the students? Probably not. Even though we were adults who were given rules (no ranting, no

derogatory info about companies, no exposure of private company information, Shari still had to intervene with reminders. If students want to blog about school projects on their own, I would be delighted. But if I were to initiate a project, I would feel obligated to oversee it and the time allocated to that task would be enormous. Maybe in the future, Blogging programs will have filters that can be set to warn the Blog creator when certain words or pictures appear. They could warn the creator who could then take a look at that particular entry or stream to see if the students are off-task (to put it nicely).