Preface

Finally!

Educators – including teachers, trainers, courseware developers, and instructional designers - are recognizing that *culture matters*! It matters in training, in the formal classroom, and in e-learning. In fact, the information and experiences offered in this book are relevant in any of these environments. However, in face-to-face environments, the learners' feedback, attitudes, reactions, and behaviors provide many clues that a course may not fit with their cultural preferences. Learners may become quiet, offended, unwilling to participate in an activity, and so forth. In this face-to-face situation, the instructor or trainer receives immediate feedback and, subsequently, can adapt content or instructional strategies immediately. However, in e-learning, especially self-paced courses, such clues are missing. In fact, unless a learner reports back to you, or you have a system for tracking learner success across cultures, you may never know if your course was culturally appropriate or not, or if cultural differences impeded learning. Thus, the *designers and developers* of e-learning are challenged with recognizing cultural differences and adapting courses to learners' cultural preferences *before* the course is actually produced or published.

But, why care? First, research has shown that people learn best in their native language and in a relevant cultural context. Second, content accuracy varies by location. In addition, we can alienate learners with culturally inappropriate content or images. We can also hinder effective learning by not providing culturally acceptable ways to learn.

So, how do we do create culturally appropriate e-learning? When I published my first book, *Globalized e-learning: Cultural Challenges* (2007), very few research studies had been conducted on the impact of culture on learning. The studies I compiled contained extremely useful information, but practitioners found it difficult to implement the proposed solutions. In addition, the solutions arose from research, not from field practice…We lacked the business perspective of how to provide e-learning to multicultural and multinational workforces.

This book is a strong step towards making research available to practitioners and making researchers aware of practitioner challenges. It is a 'handshake' between academics and corporate practitioners! In the first section of the book, we present ten case studies conducted in global academic environments, but whose results have very practical applications to corporate and educational e-learning. The researchers' "lessons learned" provide valuable guidelines to other academics, global organizations, and companies that develop e-learning courseware for international consumption.

In the second section, we offer three corporate case studies that show how corporate organizations have adapted to the changing needs of the multinational learner and the globalized workforce. Their "lessons learned" serve to indicate future research needs for academics and what not to do for fellow courseware designers and developers.

Throughout the book, we have dispersed more than 50 mini-cases that illustrate cultural differences in humor, environment, technology, learning styles, and so forth. When I placed the call for proposals, I received so many emails stating that "I don't have a full case study, but you'll love this story," that I broadened the scope of the book to include these mini-cases. These are actual events and they complement the corporate and academic cases.

Lastly, we concluded the book by providing five resource chapters to guide e-learning practitioners in the processes and techniques necessary to create culturally appropriate and accessible e-learning. Our hope is that these will inform organizations as to what needs to be done to e-learning courseware before money is spent on delivery or production. I then conclude with a summary that refers back to the theme, Culture Matters!

In addition to the book itself, we have also developed support materials for instructors, so if your role is to educate others on how to make training and education more global, we highly recommend you use this well-organized instructors' resource.

Thank you for reading this book. As the editor, I often mount my soapbox for culturally appropriate instructional design. To date, it has been a struggle to convince training and education providers that culture matters; however, I hope that, with this book, I am at least facilitating the progression towards more culturally appropriate e-learning.

Regards,

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