Managing Distance Education for Success

Wm. Benjamin Martz, Jr., Northern Kentucky University, USA
Morgan Shepherd, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, USA

ABSTRACT

By 2006, the distance education industry is predicted to be well beyond $33.6 billion (Merit Education, 2003). As with most markets, one of the keys to taking advantage of this growing market is customer satisfaction. Therefore, the greater the student satisfaction in a distance program, the more likely that program will be successful. This article identifies five key components of satisfaction for distance education programs. First, a viable list of potential indicators for student satisfaction is developed from the previous research that compares traditional education environments to distance education environments. A questionnaire was developed using these variables and administered to 341 distance students. The results revealed five constructs for student satisfaction in a distance education program (Martz & Reddy, 2005). Using these factors as guidance, this paper extends those findings to provide some operational and administrative implications.

Keywords: customer satisfaction; distance education; IT Education; online teaching

INTRODUCTION

Why Do We Care About Satisfaction

The education industry is being transformed by the ever-growing presence of distance education. The industry has many segments and ancillary components, including higher education, corporate training, and IT infrastructure. The distance education industry has several market drivers that educators, colleges, and businesses must take a serious look at to successfully implement distance education programs and courses. Howell, Williams, and Lindsay (2003) posit that those interested in distance learning education must be well informed about the trends within the industry. One overriding concern is that the interest in distance education is driving a huge investment without an understanding of what will make a distance education program successful.
The first market driver is the significant market potential. International Data Corporation sets the worldwide value of the e-learning market at $23 billion for 2004. Others (Merit Education, 2003) predict a 2005 market of $33.6 billion. Over 90% of all colleges are expected to offer some form of online courses by 2004 (Institute of Higher Education Policy, 2000). The corporate segment of this industry is growing substantially as well. Corporations envision online training warehouses that will save large amounts of training dollars. Estimates have this training warehouse market segment at $11 billion in 2003 (Kariya, 2003). At the same time, major corporations are expanding their corporate university/distance learning programs. AACSB International (1999) offers that there are more than 1600 corporate universities with their eyes on a distance learning component and further predicts there will be more corporate than traditional universities by 2010.

The corporate market growth is being driven by the profit potential. Corporate managers and college administrators envision significant cost reduction (Traupel, 2004) and significantly higher demand (Sausne, 2003) for training/education, both of which can create higher profits. For example, elective classes that do not have enough students enrolled in on-campus classes may pick up enough distance students to make teaching the course more feasible (Creahan & Hoge, 1998). The college or school’s mission or charter represents another driver to implement distance education programs. As most educational institutions serve a geographical region, either by charter or mission, a distance-learning program may be a practical method to help satisfy this strategic mission (Creahan & Hoge, 1998). The distance education model can be seen as a way to improve profits and improve the ability to provide education to students

Figure 1. Drivers and potential inhibitors of distance education (Martz & Reddy, 2005)
Users’ Digital Competences Study to Design MOOCs for Digital Literacy in Mexico
Ricardo Mendoza-Gonzalez, Laura C. Rodríguez-Maríinez and Mario A. Rodríguez-Díaz (2016). *User-Centered Design Strategies for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)* (pp. 15-29). www.igi-global.com/chapter/users-digital-competences-study-to-design-moocs-for-digital-literacy-in-mexico/143430?camid=4v1a