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Evaluation of Small Business Management Courses for Food Business 101

**Evaluation Approach**

A modified version of the learning object review instrument (LORI) developed by Nesbit, Belfer, & Leacock (2004) served as the rubric for this evaluation. The standard dimensions defined in Nesbit et al.’s (2004) LORI instrument of content quality, learning goal alignment, feedback/adaptation, motivation, presentation design, interaction usability, accessibility, reusability, and standards compliance are included in the evaluation rubric. How the learning object aligns with Food Business 101’s goals serves as a new dimension for this evaluation.

Standard ratings are used for each criterion including the new dimension. The criteria for each dimension in the standard LORI instrument are used for this evaluation (Nesbit et al., 2004). The criteria for the new dimension gauges how well the learning object provides practical education to adult learners in a self-study format at low to no cost. All dimensions use the standard five star rating with five star being the highest possible selection and one star the lowest (Nesbit et al., 2004). The learning object with the highest amount of points will win the award.

**Finalists**

The two finalists in this competition are learning objects related to small business management, one from Saylor Academy and one from CTE Online. Saylor Academy offers BUS305: Small Business Management that provides “detailed introduction to the planning and operation of the small business, covering critical business planning strategies for both the manager-employee as well as the budding entrepreneur” (Saylor Academy, 2016). CTE Online offers the Small Business Ownership & Management Model to “teach individuals to perform marketing and management functions and tasks associated with owning and operating a small business” (CTE Online, 2016, para. 1). The target audience for Saylor’s offering are those who are seeking college credit (Saylor Academy, 2016). The target audience of the CTE Online offering includes students in grades ten through twelve.

**Assessment**

Table 1

*Summary of LORI Results*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimension** | **CTEScore** | **Saylor****Score** |
| **1. Content Quality:** Veracity, accuracy, balanced presentation of ideas, and appropriate level of detail | 4 | 4 |
| **2. Learning Goal Alignment:** Alignment among learning goals, activities, assessments, and learner characteristics | 5 | 5 |
| **3. Feedback and Adaptation:** Adaptive content or feedback driven by differential learner input or learner modeling | 4 | 3 |
| **4. Motivation:** Ability to motivate and interest an identified population of learners | 4 | 3 |
| **5. Presentation Design:** Design of visual and auditory information for enhanced learning and efficient mental processing | 4 | 5 |
| **6. Interaction Usability:** Ease of navigation, predictability of the user interface, and quality of the interface help features | 5 | 5 |
| **7. Accessibility:** Design of controls and presentation formats to accommodate disabled and mobile learners | 3 | 5 |
| **8. Reusability:** Ability to use in varying learning contexts and with learners from differing backgrounds | 5 | 3 |
| **9. Standards Compliance:** Adherence to international standards and specifications | 1 | 1 |
| **10. Alignment with Food Business 101 Goals:** The learning object aligns with Food Business 101’s goal of providing practical education to adult learners in a self-study format at low to no cost | 2 | 5 |
| **TOTAL** | 37 | 39 |

On the first two LORI dimensions both offerings received the same score. In content quality, both courses lost a star due to lack of cultural diversity. In all other aspects, the content for both courses are accurate and cover basic business topics including marketing, legal issues, finances, and planning. The content for both courses align to the stated learning goals.

In the dimension of feedback and adaptation the CTE Online course earns an additional star. While both offerings offer individualized learner profiles, the CTE Online course provides more robust feedback opportunities including group projects and reports. The Saylor learning object provides quizzes and an optional discussion forum. Since discussion forums do not contribute to the learner’s grade, it did not weigh in on the final score for this dimension.

In the dimension of motivation the CTE Online course earns an additional star. The CTE Online course provides projects that allow learners to address realistic business challenges and gives them choices on the delivery method they choose for the project. Unfortunately, the Saylor course does not give learner’s an opportunity to exercise any choice, instead forcing all learners to complete the same assessments.

The Saylor offering earns an additional star in the dimension of presentation design. While both courses are easy to navigate and have high production value, it does take an additional click to navigate through the CTE Online program. While this seems to be a small issue, in the context of a course encompassing over 15 topics with multiple subtopics each, an extra click does mean that learners will be wasting an additional second navigating through the course.

Both offerings received the same score for interaction usability and standards compliance. Navigation of both courses is intuitive and predictable. Help features were similar for both courses. Neither course appeared to comply with relevant international standards and specifications.

In the dimension of accessibility this evaluation focused solely on the ease of mobile use. As a private concern learning objects used by Food Business 101 do not have to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, busy restaurateurs rely very heavily on mobile devices each day. Evaluating the mobile capabilities of each course comprised a crucial step in assessing the learner’s experience. Using the Saylor course via a laptop or mobile device provided the same experience. However, the CTE Online course due to the additional clicks and the failure of pages to automatically resize provides an inferior experience for mobile users.

The CTE Online course clearly outperformed the Saylor course in terms of reusability. The Saylor course relies heavily on external links while the CTE Online course embedded the majority of content such as documents and videos. The glossaries provided in the CTE Online course were complete while the Saylor course expected learners to find terminology from other sources.

The Saylor course outperformed the CTE Online course in the final dimension of alignment with Food Business 101’s goal of providing practical learning objects to adult learners in a self-study format. Many of the CTE Online features that resulted in higher scoring in other dimensions actually work against it in this category. The design of the Saylor course fully supports the concept of self-study. In addition, the language and activities are more targeted to adult learners.

**Summary**

The Saylor offering received the highest score and thus wins the multimedia award. While both learning objects had many outstanding features there were three dimensions that contributed to the superior score for this offering. In the first dimension of presentation design fewer clicks were needed for navigation. The seamless mobile operation of this solution contributed to the superiority of this solution in the second dimension of accessibility. Finally, Saylor’s design focused on a self-study solution for adult learners that contributed to a higher score in the final dimension of this evaluation.

References

CTE Online. (2016). Small business ownership & management model. Retrieved from http://www.oercommons.org/courses/small-business-ownership-management-model/view

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Saylor Academy. (2016). BUS305: Small business management. Retrieved from https://learn.saylor.org/course/view.php?id=78