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Learning Pulse

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Learning Pulse

By Vicki Cerda

Recently I had a chance to attend a truly international learning conference in Spain. Online Educa Madrid 2005 took place at the Príncipe Felipe Congress Centre Auditorium Hotel in Madrid in May and attracted hundreds of participants from over 30 countries on both sides of the Atlantic. We are used to having Miami billed as the crossroads of Latin America and Europe, but in this case Madrid took center stage as the meeting point between European and Latin American professionals in the Spanish-speaking world. In this issue, I will share with you Part One of my trip report covering conference highlights and the content of selected sessions at Online Educa Madrid. So, what did some of the conference experts and presenters have to say? Read on!

Opening Session: Thursday, May 12

The conference began with a session of five high level panelists including Directors, Vice Presidents, Ministers and Secretaries of Education representing Spain, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Portugal. These were respectively: Mariano Segura Escobar (moderator), Rolando Mota, Hugo Martínez Alvarado, Yolanda Blanco and Manuel Pereira. Some of my learnings from this session include:

- The evaluation and measurement of the impact of the education to the student and to society is still lacking and an important area of opportunity to be addressed by our profession. (Spain)
- Information and knowledge are the real differentiating factors in our industry. (Portugal)
- In Chile, more than half of the students in the public sector have mobile phones and 43 % have computers at home; the major use is to obtain information and secondarily to prepare for class. (Chile)
- Educational goals in Mexico not only involve students but also the professors. The instructors need to come up-to-speed not only technically, but also in the area of research. (Mexico)
- How does Brazil manage the content in order to account for the vast difference in education among its states? By varying the salaries received by educators working between the richer and poorer states and by providing consistent quality of the courses via material offered through linked satellite programs. (Brazil)

Virtual Online Tutoring for Corporate e-Learning: Thursday, May 12

Moderated by Íñigo Babot of the Universitat Ramón Llull in Spain, two of Spain's largest financial institutions shared their knowledge and experiences implementing e-Learning. The two panelists, both training directors at their organizations, were Ane Aguirre from Grupo BBVA and Laura Rosillo from La Caixa. Both enthusiastically displayed their current best practices and future plans to continue to integrate e-Learning initiatives and tutoring support as additional channels throughout the many business initiatives they have underway. Their case stories were similar, emphasized internal employees and touched upon the following points:

- Three complementary strategies are in place: an open catalog of standard online courses, e-Learning with or without a classroom component, and collaborative portals.
- The virtual platform/portal has served as a way to democratize education for all.
- The use of virtual tutors and mentors (made up of employees) has been a great way to pass on what is not written down – the culture and values of the organization.
- Has e-Learning led to less classroom training? No, it has actually increased it. Why? Communication and socialization is still an essential part of learning and the use of online has lead

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to people wanting to meet each other and feel part of a group. Also, pre and post use of e-Learning was marketed as a way to sell more classroom learning. This has helped all learn better by both allowing for level setting up-front and allowing for continued conversations and questions after the classroom session. As an additional benefit, being part of a community has allowed numerous people to respond to the answers posed (vs. just one person) so that the credibility and the quality of the posted responses are also of a higher level.

Tune in next month for Part Two! And as always, feel free to contact me with any comments or feedback.

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