ATMC Conference Roundtable Discussion Takeaways

Challenges & solutions for engaging participants in virtual learning

Challenges:

- Managing student engagement

- Online platforms
    - Researching and selecting the right platform for your training (Zoom, GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams, and others)
    - Some platforms are not very interactive
    - Depending on class size, cameras/mics can be very distracting and/or hard to gauge student engagement

- Staffing shortages

- Instructors are subject matter experts in their field, but are not always technology savvy to effectively utilize online platforms
    - Require trainers to be skilled in using the platform & its tools
    - Instructors also need knowledge of instructional design principles

- Engagement in virtual learning
    - getting students to ask questions
    - instructor's willingness to engage attendees
    - Instructor's ability to portray a subject digitally

- Funding

- Learning platform technology
    - hardware requirements
    - shop/office/studio environment needs

- Management does not value training
    - Create better culture and provide leadership/management training
    - Pitch it to your employees as a benefit and not a punishment:

- Time Zone differences

- Instructing complex subjects in small bites

Solutions

- Make training mandatory for staff and/or provide incentives such as bonuses

- Methods for managing student engagement:
  - Arrange for smaller class sizes, if bigger class sizes then may need more than one moderator
  - Maximum 2-hour session duration
  - Create quizzes for the training sessions
  - Create poll questions to be used during the training
  - Instructor calls on students to answer questions/give feedback during class
  - Provide a unique identifier that students will log in with and are prompted for throughout the training
  - Require attendees to take a course on platform setup
  - Provide read-ahead material
  - Allow students to take control of the training PC/application to demonstrate or practice the skill being taught
  - Use ice breakers / small talk to establish a comfort level for asking questions & participating in discussion
  - Answer questions during intermission
  - Answer questions posed via chat

- Vary class sizes and time length online and how it affects engagement
  - Smaller class sizes work better
  - Class time length should be small chunks

- Communicating with registered students:
  - Use QR codes for links to virtual sessions
  - Web course on how to use the instructional platform
  - Direct phone number to training assistant/moderator
  - Ice breaker / small talk as warm up; encourages discussion & questions

- In multi-session training, students practice implementation of concepts as homework; quiz/discussion in next session

- Cameras on unless class size is so large that it is distracting

- Gamification of the material to make it more exciting

- Integrate mixed reality training

- Record sessions then perform a Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) event

- Advocate for buy-in from the shops for the following:
  - Training as an investment, allow personnel to attend training during production/work hours
  - Pay for training, cost has diminished (no travel expenses)

- Seek guidance on which platform to use
  - Test drive all platforms and reach out to industry professionals

- Seek guidance on how to setup and perform virtual classes

- Convert classes that don't need tactile learning to virtual format

- Technology deficient technicians/trainers
  - Use moderators and technician helpers to set up areas and software

- Suggestions for producing high quality webinars
  - Have a webinar moderator whose role is to:
    - manage participants' mics, chats, and questions
    - monitor the instructor's audio and shared content
    - stimulate participants to ask questions by being first to ask a question or promoting the instructor to clarify a relevant point

  - Create a studio with green screen, multiple cameras, mics/audio, switches & other production resources

- Moderators can be outsourced if not available in-house