Drops, Failures & Withdrawals:

Increasing Online Retention

Presented by MATEC NetWorks in partnership with the Radical Platypus group

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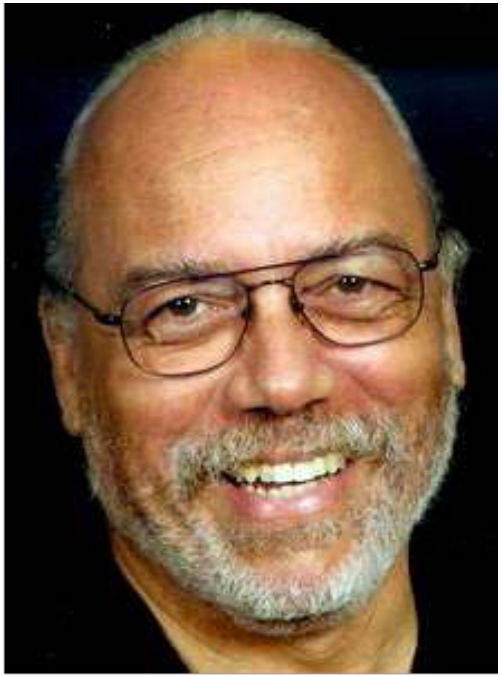
NetWorks Webinar Presenter



Raymond Rose

Mark Viquesney
Host

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Objectives

- Increase understanding of the reasons DFWs exist in online courses, and that there are incremental steps to help reduce DFW rates.
- Provide guidance on how course designers and instructors can manage student expectations.
- Identify ideal components of course orientation to reduce tech problems and manage expectations.
- Identify strategies and activities that will improve the online pedagogy that makes learning more effective online.

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If your course is fully online..

has been in existence 5 or more years…

you should know the DFW rate for your course/program.

Has the DFW rate changed over time? Gone Up? Gone Down?

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Why DFWs?

- Wrong expectations
- Tech problems
- Prerequisite problems
- Pedagogy conflicts

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Manage Expectations

- Be clear in course description
- Set expectations in syllabus
- Create a Learning Agreement

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Identify your expectations of students

- In the course description
- In the message you send each student after they register (before the course begins)
  - Minimum login requirements
  - Participation requirements
  - What it takes to succeed in the course

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Learning Agreement

- Read, Agree to, Sign, and Return
- Specify basics:
  - Login and make 1st required posting within the first 48 hrs of the start
  - Failure to login or communicate by the 3rd day means you've dropped
  - Log in at least every other day, missing no more than 2 or 3 days

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Provide Course Overview. . .

Provide everything learners ever wanted to know and shouldn't have to ask

- Course content overview
- Learning goals
- Grading policies
- Assessment rubrics
- Assignment & due dates checklist
- Table describing course sections and usage
- Table describing usage of tech tools
- Policies and procedures
- Weekly timeline
- Schedule of meetings
- Weekly activities summary
- Communications plan

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Provide Overview Information...

Describe your course design, practices, and role

- Purposeful virtual spaces
- Scheduled asynchronous communication philosophy
- Learning through collaboration and interaction
- Your role as guide

And write it all using a personal, friendly tone

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Tech Problems*

- Browser wars
  - Mac vs PC vs Smartphones
- Required programs beyond the CMS
- Bandwidth
- UI

(*See Orientation)

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Technology

- Don’t assume everyone knows how to use the technology deliberately
- Assign practice for each technology with informal ungraded activity before assigning grade
- Provide links to detailed instruction and tutorials within assignments
- Provide Tech Questions thread

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Prerequisite Problems

- *Just Say NO* to the Online Course Readiness Test

- Provide orientation
  - tech apps
  - course navigation
  - ability to post and reply
  - submit assignments

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Orientation: Week 1…

- Begin building community
- Review syllabus
- Preview flow of the lessons
  - Course calendar
- Course structure and navigation

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Orientation: Week 1

- Introduce and practice technical steps
  - Introduce and practice reading resource pages
    - PDFs and external sites
  - Understanding discussion participation
  - Multimedia

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Questions? (before talking pedagogy)

- Wrong expectations
- Tech problems
- Prerequisite problems

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Pedagogy Solutions…

Let the Content be Your Voice

Before the course

- Put in time and energy using your voice in the course content and. . .

During the course

- Use your time and energy for meaningful feedback

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Pedagogy Solutions

Control the time and energy
you and learners spend manipulating the course

and

Use that time and energy
for learning

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Create & Control Purposeful Virtual Spaces

An obvious place for everything and everything in its obvious place

- Structure, order, and detailed information comforts learners showing you've planned and prepared for them
- Limit learners' choices to just those they need
- Display links to all major areas on all pages

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Sample Course Layout. . .

Course Home | Content | Discussions | Online Journal | Dropbox | Grades | Classlist | Help

Course Content

- Course Syllabus
- Course Content
  - Week 1
    - Overview of the Week
    - Welcome
    - Meet Your Instructor
    - Get Acquainted, Part 1
    - Ask Your First Question
    - Meet Your Journal
    - Let's Talk About This Week
  - Week 2
    - Overview of the Week
    - Get Acquainted, Part 2
    - Read and Discuss: Collaboration
    - Prepare for Team Activity
    - Review Your Assessment/Feedback
    - Let's Talk About This Week
  - Week 3
    - Overview of the Week
    - Begin Your Outline
    - Team Activity, 1 of 5
    - Read and Discuss: Metacognition
    - Review Your Assessment/Feedback
    - Let's Talk About This Week

Change is a Process, not an Event…

Learning Objectives

This lesson will build on the *Making Change* Game experience, your int
leader, and the three case studies you have done thus far in the cours
game based the framework on educational research about change, inc
go through an adoption of a new idea or innovation.

Assignment Details

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (Loucks & Hall, 1979; Hord, Ruth
and Hall, 1987) is an extremely helpful tool to understand individuals in
to use when considering how to motivate and guide them to change the

- Identify the change to be adopted and your context
- Describe stages of concern that you experienced, giving specif
  bring it to life for us
- Conclude with a section in which you write your insights from th
  will be important to remember in your future leadership role.

Expectations

- Visit the website on CBAM provided for school administrators i
- Generate a personal example in which you apply the stages o
  experience.
- Provide your conclusions and insights from this lesson and Co

How to Do It

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Provide Expectations, Rubrics, and Guidelines for Success. . .

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Participation	Is reluctant to participate, even when prompted	Posts insightful comments and questions that prompt on-topic discussion	Consistently helps clarify or synthesize other classmates' ideas
Effectiveness	Does not clearly express details or provide explanation	Expresses ideas clearly, uses adequate explanation, examples and details	Assists in providing further explanations of classmates' ideas
Timing of Initial Post	Fails to post initial post in 1st half of week	Submits one post in 1st half of week	Submits one post in 1st half of week
Quantity of Posts	Posts less than once or makes more than ten responses	Posts one initial post and up to two responses to others	Posts one initial post and up to ten responses to others

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Detail, Detail, Detail Your Assignments

- Break multi-part activities into separate assignments
- Create a predictable set of recurring document sub-sections
  - Activity Overview
  - Learning Objectives
  - Assignment Details
  - Expectations and Rubrics
  - Tech Instructions
- Use bullets and numbering
- Link to longer text and materials

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Provide Answers. . .

Answering questions requires time!

- Provide info on how learners find answers to questions
  - Assign exploration of how to ask questions
  - Describe the two main types of Q&A
    - Tech questions
    - Assignment clarification questions

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Provide Answers. . .

Provide two discussion forums:

1. "Ask a Tech Question"
2. "Ask an Assignment Clarification Question"

Answer questions only ***in appropriate space*** and only ***once***

- Link from other discussions back to the specific answer
- Assign, advertise, remind
- Include instructions on how to search forums

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Provide Answers

Never let an answer fade away. . .

Capture and reuse your answers

- Take weekly notes-for-next-time
- Build and add to your overviews, instructions, FAQs

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Control Asynchronous Discussion Threads

- Give each topic its own separate forum
- Limit simple discussion threads to one week
- Break up discussions/interactions with sequential deadlines
- Provide an on-going social forum
- Provide a weekly “Let’s Talk about this Week”

Keep all communications *in* the course and *out* of email!

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Sample Discussion Threads

Ongoing topics throughout the course

Ask Me Questions [Ask tech and assignment clarification questions]
Resource Sharing [Share your findings]
Coffee Shop [Get acquainted, enjoy personal conversations]

Week 1: Wed Aug 22 – Tue Aug 28

Introduce Yourself [post alien intros and meet classmates]
Submit Confidentiality Agreement [University required]
Let's Talk About this Week [Weekly wrap-ups]

Week 2: Wed Aug 29 – Tue Sep 6

Define Your Vision [State your goals]
Interview a Leader [Design questions, interview, analyze responses]
Let's Talk About this Week [Weekly wrap-ups]

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Manage New Postings

- Learn, teach, and use tech tools
  - “Read next new message”
  - “Sort by date”
- Require new subjects for each posting

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Which Discussion Is Easier To Follow?

Subject
Join the Discussion
→ Attention team xyz
→ what are our objectives?
→ my list + rubrics
→ we need roles, too
→ let's meet @ the armadillo tonight
→ agenda for meeting
→ will attend via cell
→ report on 1st meeting
→ who can do graphics?
→ I will pdf the final
→ Sob! How do I catch up?

Subject
Join the Discussion
→ Re: Join the Discussion
→ Re: Join the Discussion
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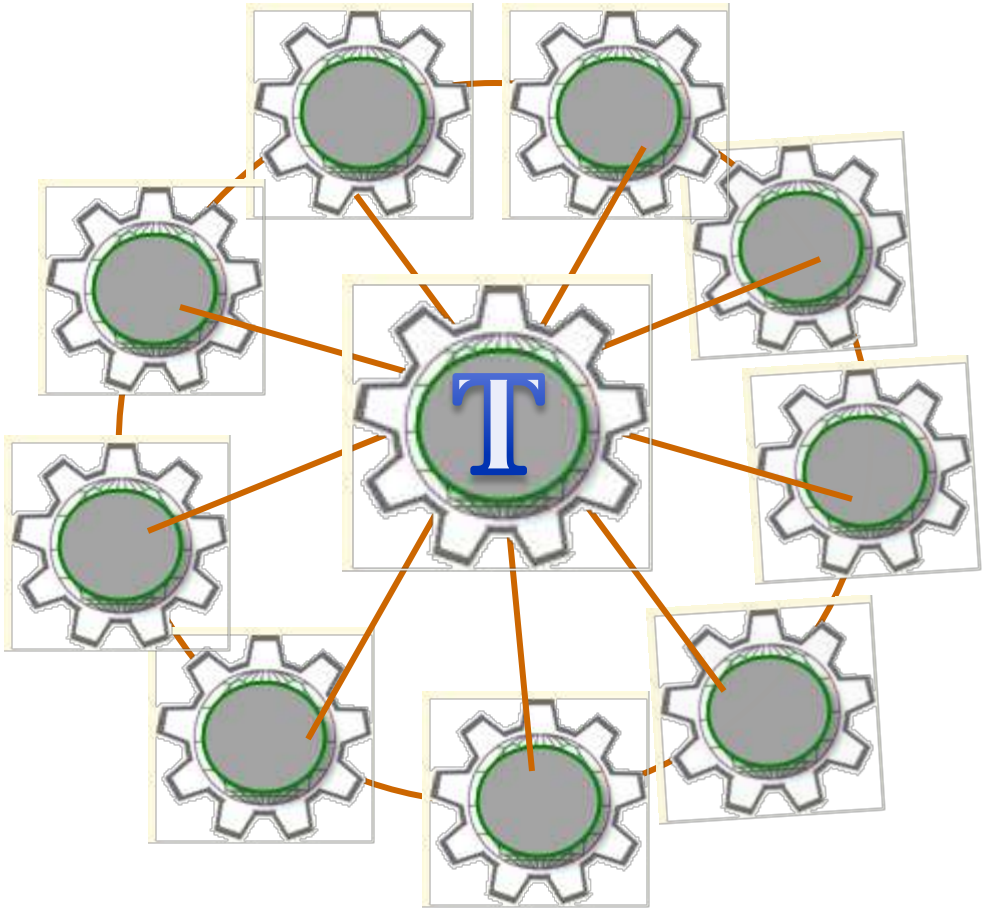
Why Online Instructors Burn Out



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Let the Learners Provide Feedback

Requires High Facilitator Interaction	*Requires Little Facilitator Interaction*
A. Begin working on your composition offline on Wednesday, the beginning of Week 3. **B.** *Post it for my review* by the end of the week. **C.** *I'll review it* and email a response to you as soon as I can.	**A. Create and Post Your Composition — Complete by Noon Saturday** • Begin working on your composition offline on Wednesday, the beginning of Week 3. • *Post it for your classmates' review by mid-week*, no later than noon Saturday. **B. Read and Respond — Complete by End-of-Week, Tuesday** • Using the guidelines in the lesson, *offer constructive feedback* to at least one classmate on their compositions, choosing a different classmate than you worked with in the last lesson. • As you log in at least every other day throughout the week, *read* at least four to six of *your classmates' critiques* of yours and others' compositions. **C. Other Expectations** • *Respond to the classmate who provided you with feedback* and answer any questions from the classmate whose work you analyzed. • Respond to one or up to two other classmates at will as your time allows.

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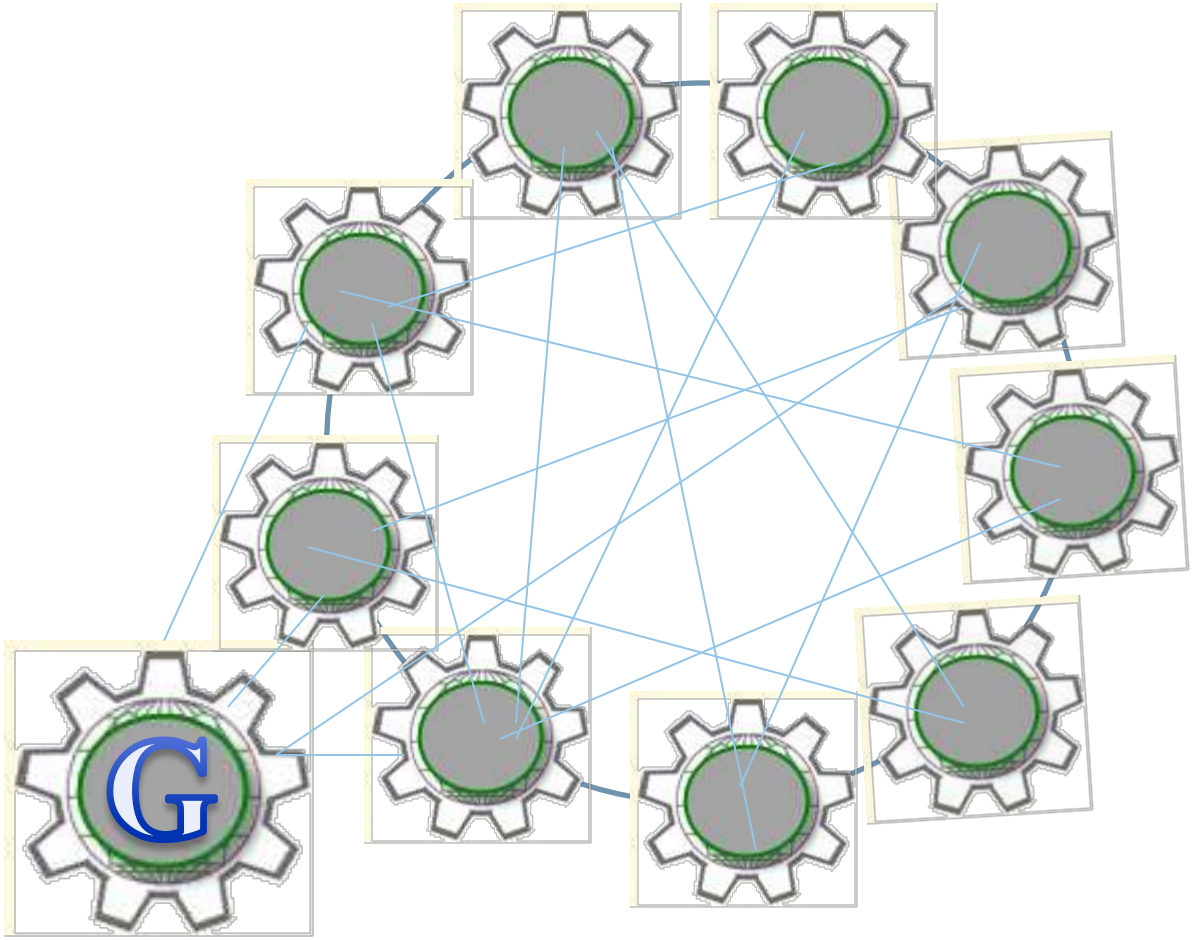
How to Avoid Burn Out



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Successful Learners Need

- The technology to be transparent
- To know where they are and what their next steps should be
- To know what to do to be successful

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What is Your Online Tone?

- Analytical
- Curious
- Humorous
- Imaginative
- Informal
- Neutral
- Nurturing
- Whimsical

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Do You Only Have 1 Tone?

Expand your repertoire!

Develop your abilities to use at least two more…

Analytical
Curious
Humorous
Imaginative
Informal
Neutral
Nurturing
Whimsical

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Formal Ice-Breaker Activities

- Have participants post personal info, read about each other, informally discuss their similarities

- Decide if you want participants to post photos -- or perhaps images to represent themselves

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Ice-Breaker

Write a few lines or paragraph introducing yourself through the eyes of your pet -- if you have one!

- If you don't have a pet, try imagining a goldfish bowl and describe yourself through fish eyes.
- *Remember, the pet is describing **you**, not itself.*

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http://www.questionpro.com/t/ABkVkZJxRY

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Radical Platypus is a group of professional development talent including Ray Rose, Bob Allen, Dr. David Thornburg, Dr. Lynell Burmark, Dr. Jim Bower, Dr. Sara Armstrong, and Jim Brazell. The team specializes in career and science, technology, engineering, mathematics and arts education. The team has organized and is presenting the Master Series as a community service for MATEC.

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