

Transcription of Interview

Dr. Rosemary Lehman of Instructional Communications Systems, University of Wisconsin-Extension interviews Jennifer Hofman, Training Consultant and President of InSync Training Synergy.

This interview was held at the 19th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning on August 15, 2003 and was part of the New Directions Forum: Blending Asynchronous and Synchronous Formats.

Rosemary: Since the focus today was on blending technologies for teaching and learning, I'd like to begin by asking your definition of "blending."

Jennifer: Blending learning technologies, is something I think we've all been doing for a long time, we just didn't give it the name of blending. Using a textbook to support a live classroom is a form of blended technology that we're very used to. It's picking different types of delivery methods from textbooks to satellite, very low-tech to very high-tech and combining them in such a way where the students can most effectively learn.

Rosemary: Now I'd like to know how you actually use blending in your work and – if you can, give us a few examples?

Jennifer: Well what I do is take a look at the program as a whole and not try to say, "Can I teach this entire program one way or another way?" I take it in a whole and I break it down into its individual chunks or learning objectives and I might even go down to the task level. So what's the best way to teach this task or meet this objective? I break it down into chunks and I figure out, "How do I need to test that particular objective?" So it really comes down to, "How can I test it?"

Rosemary: So, once you've made your decisions, designed your program or course, and implemented it, how do you know that it's been successful – how do you measure and evaluate it?

Jennifer: The programs that I've worked on that have always turned out to be the best programs are the programs where we have a chance to go back and evaluate after the program is over, and I don't mean immediately at the end of the program, but several weeks, several months, going back and either doing interviews or some type of objective testing, going back and saying are you actually using what it is you've learned? Skills transfer and knowledge transfer should be evaluated I think with the same techniques you would use in a face-to-face environment. Unfortunately the corporate environment from which I come, we don't do enough of that.

Rosemary: As we wrap up – do you have a final comment on blending technologies?

Jennifer: The thing that people need to remember about blended technologies is that that's the way you're going to make online learning work. It doesn't need to be complex, it doesn't need to be expensive, but doing an asynchronous self-paced tutorial in and of itself without any outside

input, a lot of people won't be successful because they won't finish it or won't understand something. Having a face-to-face one hour interaction with nothing else surrounding it might not be enough time for people to process and practice. You really need to combine the things and combine follow-up techniques. Turn learning into a process and not an individual event. As we train ourselves to teach and learn that way, I think our programs will become a lot more successful.