Dolphia Nandi

Project 4: Improving a Webinar

PART A: Report

Introduction

The webinar 'Children Are Born to Learn: Motivation and Engagement from a Developmental Science Perspective' is primarily focused on child psychology and development. I liked that the speaker spent a significant amount of time on each slide. I also liked that she used personal stories in the presentation. That was definitely a hook for the audience as we love to hear about experiences more than statistics. She talked about chunking and community joining as a motivator. She also used the propellers analogy through out the webinar. She talked about doing silly things such as playing – that was definitely interesting and caught my attention.

But I think this webinar could be improved in several places.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Content

The subject of the webinar is 'child development' which is a very interesting subject. As they are the future, my hopes were quite high from the presentation. But I was very disappointed in the presentation and I felt that the content could be more organized. It took me a while to understand what her big idea was. The audience should be presented with the big idea in the beginning; not after 9 minutes. I also had a hard time understanding the meaning as she went into too much detail. Professor Medina talks about this in [Deep Thoughts with John Medina](#) where he explains how a 60 minute presentation can be divided into six 10-minute lectures. He also mentions how much time should be focused on each topic. He has three major ideas and he designed it so well that the audience can take in more information than they realize.

I personally liked Dick Hardt's presentation but that style was not appropriate for this kind of subject. While I believe too many slides take the attention from the subject, too few slides are no good either. I had a hard time remembering what she spoke about as those were not in her slides. I was more busy writing down notes than listening to her words. In addition, she spoke about several new topics but she did not always have new slides. A new idea should have been opened with a new slide. It was not easy to follow her words with the slides because an audience like me are expecting to see changes in slides when she presented a new idea.

I liked Cathy Moore's idea to give handouts which contains more information than the slides have. In that way, slides don't get over crowded but the audience doesn't get too busy with note taking. This leads to my second recommendation: How many words are perfect for a presentation.

Recommendation 2: More Multimedia components.

Most of her slides have too many words and a too few graphics. She should follow the 40 words per slide principle and incorporate more visual elements. Prof Medina says 'A picture really is worth a thousand words.' If she had used pictures, multimedia components and animated clips to illustrate the points this webinar could have been much more interesting. The topic was quite interesting and so is the content. If she worked on the presentation part by adding visual components like images and video, it could be a kickass presentation. She should have used the Venn diagram as a propeller illustration rather than speaking. Consistent animation for slide transition would be interesting as well.

In most webinars--including this one--I can't hold my attention. I know I am not the only one who can't keep her attention. It's a problem for many. This webinar was quite boring and I finished this over the span of 5 hours (by pausing and playing). I always wondered why I can't keep my attention and why I loose interest in training and webinars. Professor Medina explains 'Why is text less efficient than pictures?' Because our brain sees words as tiny pictures. In addition to Prof Medina, Edward Tufte's[2] The cognitive style of power point also explains how much visuals are important and how the display of evidence fosters decision making.

Recommendation 3: Lack of focus and less interactivity

It was not clear from her presentation which audience group she was addressing. Was it for parents or teachers? We could not find the focus when she talked about imprisonment schooling. It's also not clear which age group she was addressing. Was it preschoolers or K-12? In addition, I found the entire webinar quite un-interactive. There was no way to interact with the speaker.

She could have participants interact at the end of each chunk. In that way this webinar could be more engaging. Like me, I am sure other member of the audience were on their mobile phone or laptop doing other work. If it is interactive, people get involved much more easily. I liked what Cathy Moore[1] explained in her article, 'Tips for webinars or virtual training.' Add thought provoking questions for people to answer. In that way webinars do not become a one way conversation and it becomes much more interactive. She also mentions what kind of questions to include that will give the audience no choice other than focusing. Like she mentions 'your participants will stay with you, thinking and participating, instead of clicking away to plan their Bali trip'. This is exactly what I meant. The addition of the video of the presenter could be a bonus too.

Recommendation 4: Lack of hooks

Prof Medina says in chapter 6 "We don't pay attention to boring things." It's very true. This webinar was boring so it was hard to pay attention. It was an hour long. According to Medina, she should have broken it into six 10-minute chunks. He also explains where this magic number ten came from.

This webinar was not doing anything but stuffing us with a plethora of information like the ducks in the movie. She should have used hooks to hold attention of the students. Audiences needed to be baited at 9 minutes 59 seconds in order to hold the attention throughout the entire webinar. It's often easy to say rather than doing. Questions like what kind of hook should be used is fairly common. The hook should be relevant. I remember she used her kids as an example. Those were nice hooks but she did not used it properly in every 9 minutes 59 seconds. Those hooks should be relevant; the audience should empathize with the hook and engage with the content.

Recommendation 5: No introduction?

The first slide was where they talked about the speaker but briefly. They spoke a lot about her but it was impossible to remember because there was no written document except her picture and name. The Author's bio or short paragraph about the author would be nice. Dick Hardt[3] explained his introduction by showing a bunch of pictures. I felt that it was a bit stretched, but a few power point slides with the speaker's biography and accolades with pictures would be good for viewers. For example, adding pictures of Virginia Tech in a PowerPoint slide or written words about The Max Plank Institute would be great.

Conclusion

Overall, I found many places where this webinar could be improved. The content is good so she needs to work on the delivery part like the addition of images, video and graphic elements. Slide transitions with animation would be a bonus too. While delivering the slides, she can add hooks every 10 minutes to hold the audience's attention. Hooks, like sharing personal stories and interesting case studies can hold the attention of an audience much longer. A lot of content was missing from the PowerPoint slides so sharing those in the handouts was necessary. Overall, this presentation could be improved in the line of recommendations.

Mentions:

1. Tips for Webinars or Virtual Training, by Cathy Moore
2. The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint, by Edward Tufte
3. The "Lessig Method" of Presentation, Presentation Zen
4. Brain Rules, John Medina
5. Deep Thoughts with John Medina, PCMA

PART B: Small Group Notes

Copy and paste them here, along with the names of your group.

ED-103 Block 4 Meeting Notes   Monday 10/24 7:30 pm EST

Leader: Robert Constantin
Recorder: Jeremy Guillette
Chief Equity Officer: Lucille Kenney
Checker of Understanding: Dolphia Nandi

Slides should be less than 40 words per slide
It's nice that she sits on the same slide for a few minutes
9 minutes into her webinar she starts talking about the different development principles

Strengths of the webinar
- Spent time on each slide
- Good existing anecdotes about children to pepper throughout to hook at 10 min
- Showing personal stories as hooks
- Topic in general, emphasis on play
- Using the framework as a perspective (developmental science)
- Motivation was a cornerstone, used propellers analogy throughout
- Community joining as motivator
- Talks about chunking
- Motivation throughout
- Talked about doing silly things as play

Improvements for the webinar
- Couldn't tell which age group she was addressing. Preschoolers? K-12?
- Talked about "imprisonment schooling", so where is the focus?
- Who is the audience for this webinar? Teachers? Parents?
- Audience should be at the front with big idea
- Went into details before meaning
- Should get the big idea in at the beginning, not 9 minutes in
- Focus on fleshing out the big idea in the first ten minutes
- Missing introductory slide talking about her idea and audience
- Needs to mention meaning more, details too much in presentation
- Need to re-gain attention every ten minutes, break up presentation
- Could have participants interact around a question in webinar at the end of each chunk
- Question(s) after every chunk from audience
- Integrate the slides into the talk more, go on to a new slide when talking about a new topic
- Multisensory experience, integrate the audio with the visual component
- Could have more slides with multimedia or animated clips which illustrate points
- Videos of animals learning instead of just mentioning the topic

- http://www.animalplanet.com/tv-shows/jane-goodall/videos/almost-human-chimps-human-tools/
- Use the propeller metaphor more throughout, possibly weaving in more meaning
- Animations in every slide, some imagery
- More concise intro? Video within the video? Some short bio/CV? Richard Mayer's presentation had a much shorter intro, although he had more credentials
- Use some specifics like the intro to illustrate points
- Reduce extraneous information, sometimes there's more data than you need
- Use Venn diagram as a propeller illustration
- Get a consistent animation for slide transitions
- Don't have this much text in the slide
- Check the number of words per slide
- 15 minute presentation with about 400 slides was okay
- Could be better to have more slides
- Too many slides or too much text takes the focus away from the presentation
- Balance between text and content
- Don't need to fix individual slides, but rather overall presentation
- Shorter slides don't look as heavy
- Chunk into 10 minute segments with general ideas
- Big idea "children are born to learn"
- Big ideas:
  o Children want to play to learn
  o Play as a propeller of motivation
  o Social belonging as propeller of motivation
  o Development science perspective and motivation
  o Principles of developmental science
  o Zone of Proximal Development?
- Introduce hooks in between big ideas, for instance the personal anecdotes
- Illustrate examples, look to "Powerful community-joining examples" as a good model
- If you only have 3 big ideas, hit them all in 30 minutes

Group assessment:
- What we did well:
  o Focus, keeping each other on track
  o Collaborative
  o We came in prepared
  o This task seems easier to do with a group, more natural
- Improvements:
  o Possibly an agenda of how we're going to spend each chunk of time, divide it up according to how we'll spend it, possibly send out in advance
  o Project outline tends to function as an agenda