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Online Educators´ & Webinar Trainers´ Toolbox

50 fun, interactive methods for training in virtual 2D & 3D spaces

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1. Foreword

Have you ever attended a webinar, i.e. a seminar on the web?

Personally, despite an increasing necessity for online education due to global health and climate risks, I think that this format of interactive seminars via the Internet is still used far too naively and, above all, remains somewhat unattractive.

In recent years, I have attended many webinars. While some trainers have been able to speak to me, others have really inspired me.

What was particularly important for me and my positive learning experience was whether the respective e-trainer managed to get close despite the distance. It is necessary to establish a "relationship" and rapport in the virtual space.

Unfortunately, I have also experienced some webinars where this could not be achieved.

At such events within minutes... I started checking my mails.

It was good when I noticed this. Because then I could reflect on what exactly was bothering me, what I was missing or what I still needed.

I then thought through these "disturbing" points, thought out solutions, made adjustments and then tried these optimizations out in my own webinars.

And if the feedback from the participants at the end of my webinars is, for example:

- "My goodness, time's already up!"
- "Thank you for allowing us to address my points as well. Now there was a lot of stuff I could take away with me."
- "That was an intense 90 minutes - you got me thinking." then I had done my job well.

I admit I'm a fan of 2D and 3D webinars.

And one of the things that I've learned is:

Intensive cooperation between the e-trainer and the participants is always achievable when the e-trainer enables and allows this through action and interaction.

Please join me now in 50 webinar methods in virtual 2D and 3D spaces.

As an e-trainer, make sure that your participants are actually there and not just present.

I wish you much success.

Yours Anja Röck

2. Introduction

There is only one thing you can rely on for sure at the moment, and that is that there will be a constant stream of new developments and that these will result in changing needs for new training concepts.

Demanding and active participants challenge us as trainers and coaches time and again.

In a digital knowledge society, where daily change is part of everyday life, e-trainers and e-coaches increasingly require qualities such as flexibility and creativity.

Because only if participants really feel addressed and integrated will they stay with the topic.

I emphasize that this is only possible through constant foresight[1] mixed with a good portion of curiosity[2] on the part of the trainers and coaches.

The individual methods in this collection are introduced from the practical perspective of Susan and Mark, two e-trainers.

For each method, the procedure and the tools used are explained in the virtual 2D and/or 3D space. Afterward, there are tips and, if necessary, variants are shown.

This webinar method toolkit treats the following webinar situations:

- Personal introductions

- Getting ready to start
- Thematic work
- Group work
- Loosening up and
- Reflection Feedback Summary

For beginners as e-trainers or e-coaches, the method toolbox aims to make visible a wide range of interaction possibilities in the 2D and 3D spaces.

The presented variants go one step further and seek to inspire advanced users to think further about proven methods in virtual scenarios.

Basically, the collection consciously distinguishes between methods that are more suitable for virtual 2D space and those that are suitable for 3D worlds and then adds when and how a change is possible.

The listed methods especially take into account that the participants become more and more "grown-up."

As an e-trainer and e-coach, we should always take care to treat the participants in the same way.

Important for an intensive webinar process is, therefore, among other things, opportunities for interaction created by the trainer and coach.

These ensure that the participants can be involved in a varied and interactive way with their needs and can be accompanied in synchronous, virtual 2D spaces, or 3D worlds.

Important notes:

- I have endeavored to determine all possible origins of individual methods and, where necessary, to refer to them. Should a copyright reference have been overlooked, please excuse this and contact the author.
- For a politically correct, smooth reading, I have used gender-neutral terms (e.g. participant) in this book as well as the third-person gender-neutral plural pronoun "they," "them" or "themself."

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[1] Huffington Post USA (2014): Das Geheimnis der Kreativität: So ticken einfallsreiche Menschen, [online] https://www.huffingtonpost.de/2014/03/06/das-geheimnis-der-kreativitaet_n_4911257.html [16.01.2019]

[2] Zukunftsinstitut GmbH Deutschland: Was macht Menschen neugierig?, [online] https://www.zukunftsinstitut.de/artikel/was-macht-menschen-neugierig/ [14.07.2020]

3. Theory & Practice

Theoretical foundations, really? Yeah, really!

I think some theoretical information to round out the methods has earned a place here.

But don't worry. Since the practical relevance is very important to me, I will, wherever possible, illustrate with examples what I mean.

I continuously discuss with colleagues the disadvantages of "teaching from the front" or monologue lecturing. By this, I mean that mainly the trainer speaks, and the participants mostly listen.

To conduct such a "pure frontal instruction" often still seems "easier" at first glance. Especially in virtual space, when the technology can also interfere with the course of the lesson, e-trainers and e-coaches may have the feeling that they have the "Flow" and direction of the lesson under control.

The instructor presents their content, asks questions selectively (at a specific time, and precisely planned). The learners/participants are only allowed to answer or ask a question themselves via the text chat.

Could the participants answer the question correctly?
Good!
If not, then the teacher answers the question themself - and continues.

For years the pros and cons of the frontal instruction methods are widely discussed (in educational circles).

And although this fundamental debate may perhaps apply to face-to-face teaching of children and young people, in my opinion, it does not apply to adult learners.

Because adults only learn well if they are interested and if they can see the benefits.

Adult learners also want, indeed need, to link new content to their previous experience. The interested learner wants to influence and participate[3]. However, this is only possible if the learner is activated and involved. Then the learner is involved and feels responsible for the learning outcome[4].

Unfortunately, this form of "teaching from the front," which "degrades" learners to spectators or listeners, can also be found in virtual spaces.

The facilitator/lecturer transmits their lecture via webcam, some of the participants sit on-site, most at their computers in the office or home office.

Feedback or questions during the lecture are rather undesirable and, therefore, technically not intended by the participants.

In such a scenario, many learners rightly consider why they have to be there right now and cannot watch a recording at a time of their choice.

This is not the way a modern, learner-adapted instruction with all the possibilities offered by virtual spaces should look.

However, it is not only important to involve the participants, i.e. to work interactively in the webinar and to consider the needs of the learners.

Learners must feel "safe" and predominantly "comfortable" in the learning scenario.

Many adult learners in the recent past, unless they belong to Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000[5]), have had only domestic and/or limited experience with digital media (e.g. using Skype or WhatsApp). More recently, they have begun using Zoom and Google Meet. In businesses, Adobe Connect and Microsoft Teams were usually used.

Using digital virtual media for learning or further education is increasingly becoming a part of everyday life, even beyond watching videos on YouTube, gaming apps, and Social Media.

In my experience, the majority of adults (before 2019) have not yet experienced learning scenarios in virtual 2D (two-dimensional, being in the same online space) or even 3D (moving in virtual worlds) spaces themselves until recently.

From the initial hype around e-learning when "learning programs on the computer" (e.g. CBT - computer-based training, WBT - web-based training) was introduced in the 1990s, the opinion often still prevails that virtual learning "leaves you alone at the computer." It is a solitary experience.

An elementary factor in webinars is that "informal, social contacts [in virtual or digital learning scenarios] must not be neglected."[6]
A trustful cooperation and cooperative and collaborative work in a webinar would otherwise become more difficult.

A major advantage of virtual spaces is the possibility of direct communication.

And this does not only concern the real-time exchange through the microphone and the webcam.

In webinars, participant-oriented, interactive work with the entire group or in small groups is possible.

However, the e-trainer must know - and be proficient in - the respective space, with the available tools and thus the possibilities.

Most of the virtual 2D spaces on the market have a similar structure. They represent a protected online classroom that is usually only accessible by password.

Visually, the majority of the spaces, also referred to as rooms have a tabular user interface. Various areas contain the list of participants, a text chat, a presentation area, the possibility of video transmission, and a tool for file exchange.

Further details about the virtual 2D spaces can be found in the following video: https://youtu.be/Xa3pB6Up6Aw

In contrast to 2D spaces, participants move through the learning scenario in virtual 3D worlds as avatars (with representatives).
According to my experience so far, the three-dimensional learning world is actually experienced by the learners.

Even in 3D scenarios, the joint (working) on topics in large and small groups is possible. Presentation areas and interactive tools, e.g. for voting, are usually also available here.

An impression of a virtual 3D room can be found in this video: https://youtu.be/NaB0h1HnraA

Many methods from face-to-face events can be transferred to virtual scenarios (2D & 3D).

However, trainers and coaches should always bear in mind that webinars are not simply "seminars in a virtual space." Therefore, it is about more than just mastering the technology.

For example, it must be taken into account that 3D worlds, from the participants' point of view, are again closer to the real, live instruction experience than is the case with 2D spaces.

For example, distance zones (one's own personal and public surroundings) are perceived and important in the 3D space, whereas they play no role in 2D space.

E-trainers are therefore required to consider the necessary e-didactics right from the start - and using suitable methods.

But enough theory, let's get into practice.

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[3] Nuissl von Rein E. Prof. Dr. (2000): Interview Universität de Vest din Timisoara durch Dr. Ion Dumitru [online]
http://www.die-frankfurt.de/esprid/dokumente/doc-2000/dumitru00_01.htm
[14.07.2020]

[4] Dumitru Ion, Universität de Vest din Timisoara, (2000): Erwachsene lernen anders, [online]
http://www.die-frankfurt.de/esprid/dokumente/doc-2000/dumitru00_01.htm
[14.07.2020]

[5] absolventa (2018): XYZ – Generationen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt [online]
https://www.absolventa.de/karriereguide/berufseinsteiger-wissen/xyz-generationen-arbeitsmarkt-ueberblick [14.07.2020]

[6] Meister D. & Kamin M. (2010):Digitale Lernwelten in der Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung [online],
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241003246_Digitale_Lernwelten_in_der_Erwachsenen-_und_Weiterbildung [14.07.2020], pdf-Dokument S. 5

4. Notes on the compilation of methods

4.1 General information

To illustrate the practical relevance, all methods introduce the topic with an example of a webinar situation.

The perspectives of two e-trainers, Susan or Mark, are used to demonstrate particular methods. They explain how they would proceed in the webinar with a particular tool. Furthermore, the necessary preparations are explained and stage directions are given to the participants.

The methods are divided into main topics (see introduction), then alphabetically (see the table of contents) and presented as follows

Method titles with the reference 2D (for 2D virtual space) or 3D (for virtual 3D scenarios)

Session opener (see above)

Method sequence in the webinar

Tools used in the webinar room

The time needed in a webinar represented by ⧗ to