Project Report: HsKA/MSU/SEWEurodrive Webinar Project

ENG674: International Technical Communication
Title: SEW-Project Webinar: What's New in PowerPoint 2010
From: Team 3 Software

Mankato – Fer O’Neil, Krista Teigen, Allison Weber
Karlsruhe/SEW – “removed”

Meetings Between HsKA & MSU Students

March 18 Sunday
Skype: Krista and Karin discussed the original “Project Plan” and to clarify the steps needed for the specific goals for each group.

March 20 Tuesday
Google Video chat: Krista and Fer had a Google Video chat to go over our own notes and to create a combined outline uploaded to Dropbox (“Project Outline Notes.docx”).

March 24 Saturday
Google Hangout: Markus, Fer, Krista, Allison (not successful)
Skype: Markus, Fer, Krista, and Allison

April 7 Saturday
Google Hangout: Krista, Fer, and Karin discussed the project timelines for each team—Karlsruhe and MNSU. We received the Karlsruhe project timeline the previous week and we asked questions about the dates for their content and deliverables. We used this meeting and information to gain a final understanding of our own project timeline and how much collaboration we would be able to incorporate into the final project.

April 14 Saturday
Google Hangout: Krista, Fer, Karin, and Allison discussed our final webinar details, such as the software we would be covering and how we would like to have the Karlsruhe participate in the webinar as our “audience.” We set the live webinar for the following week and Karin said she would be there.

Summary-conclusion of meetings
The two teams were able to have a meeting almost once a week, with the exception of Easter weekend. The meetings were attended by at least one team member from each group (Karlsruhe and Mankato) but no meetings encompassed every team member. From the Mankato team perspective, these meetings were very beneficial to our project goals of collaboration and creating the webinar deliverable. The team members who participated in the weekly meetings communicated using email the contents of the meeting. This kept each team member apprised of the timeline and project details.

Adobe Connect Live Webinar
Team 3 was assigned the topic of “Software skills training” and from the early meetings with the Karlsruhe team, we collectively decided that both teams did not have to report using the same software. This was apparent from the truncated timeline our team had to work with (the Mankato team) and also because the perspectives of the two teams on which software would be best (for
many reasons including not limited to expedience, ease of use, and availability) led both teams to choose different software. The Mankato team chose to create a software skills training webinar using the software Microsoft PowerPoint 2010. Besides the aforementioned list of reasons why the Mankato team chose this software over using Photoshop (as the Karlsruhe team chose), the Mankato team understood the primary objective of the webinar not necessarily to be “actual” learning (although that was an objective) but to use “software skills training” as the backdrop for how to prepare a successful webinar. We chose the title “What’s New in PowerPoint 2010: Images and Animations” and a direct URL link to the recorded webinar is listed below:

https://umconnect.umn.edu/p29589507/  ~no longer active~

The Webinar Building Experience

The benefits of webinars – personal experience

With the increasingly global nature of business and education, both have been challenged with adapting current models to facilitate learning to accommodate diverse and globally located audiences.

From the business perspective, webinars are an inexpensive, quick way to reach out to users and employees while still maintaining a semblance of personal contact—using a webinar’s video component, this face-to-face (F2F) capability of a webinar allows for collaboration and interaction among the webinar’s participants. This is preferable to a ‘static’ recording or pre-recorded tutorial that is ‘mass produced’ with a general audience in mind (for example, “customers” or “employees”) but cannot compare to the personal aspect that a webinar has.

For education, an example of one pedagogical proponent of webinar and F2F technology is the social constructivist pedagogy. The constructionist pedagogy believes that for true learning to occur, students need to experience knowledge outside of their individual framework and this concept is advanced by “collaborative learning”, which Bruffee defines as “a process that constitutes fields or disciplines of study. Collaborative learning is based on the rationale that the task of learning to think and write as a knowledgeable peer is not solely an individual and mental endeavor but instead occurs through interaction” (Thralls and Blyler 1993, 251).

Overview of the qualities and crucial aspects of a successful webinar

Detailed planning is crucial to ensure success of the webinar. Beforehand, the webinar facilitators should research the audience and determine any prior knowledge they will bring to the webinar. Based on experience of the audience on the webinar topic, the facilitators can tailor the content to create a script that will engage the audience and suit their needs. The script will demonstrate careful planning to ensure the timing is correct; the introduction captures the audience’s attention; the
most important information is presented first; the tone is conversational; and the conclusion
summarizes the main points of the presentation.

The webinar team will also have clearly defined roles: the moderator or presenter. They will have
practiced these roles in a trial run so there are no surprises on presentation day. The moderator will
troubleshoot the technical difficulties that might occur throughout the webinar, they will be quick to
set the poll questions and formatting, and will be responsible for recording the webinar.

If using PowerPoint or similar software for slides, each slide should only contain key points, display
high contrast colors, helpful graphics, and subtle animations. To invite participation from the
audience and to create an interactive experience, the webinar will include polls and Q&A sessions
into the presentation.

To show appreciation for the audience’s attendance and participation, the webinar team will send a
follow up email that contains training handouts, useful links, and contact information of the webinar
team.

Ultimately, a very good webinar should reflect excellent teamwork, careful preparation, a succinct
and engaging script, and seamless transitions of the training material.

Webinar best practices – How to prepare a webinar
From our research, we found that there are some relatively universal “best practices” for creating
and running a successful webinar. We followed most of the examples and suggestions that we
researched and we explain some of them below and although not exhaustive, we did incorporate
many of them into our webinar.

First, preparation is imperative to create a successful webinar. As we found through this process,
there are so many aspects of a webinar to account for that creating an accurate timeline and
detailed project outline is essential for success. Of course, knowing who the intended audience
is not only helps to keep the focus of the topic narrow, but also will help answer questions relating to
the delivery and format of the webinar.

For the format of the webinar, starting with a clear title is a best practice—one of the most
frequent complaints on evaluations is that the webinar did not match the audience level advertised,
or that webinars advertised as advanced or for “all levels” were not. It is essential to set an
appropriate expectation for the audience before the webinar experience.

There are two schools of thought for the “outline” of the webinar and whether one should script the
webinar or not. For some, not scripting is better because it keeps the content fresh and personal
while engaging more directly with the audience. Conversely, others believe that to present the
content effectively, a semi-strict adherence to a pre-made script is important. Both methods have
merits and which one is best probably depends on the type of webinar that is given. For this webinar, which is a structured skills learning tutorial, a script is advisable and was highly effective as well.

If a script is used, it is much easier to plan event timings throughout the presentation. These are such changes throughout the webinar such as transitioning from one slide to the next, starting a new topic, or switching from one screen type to another.

Another frequently seen best practice that probably depends more on the webinar type than the other best practices, is to place the most important information first or early in the presentation. For “edutainment” type webinars, those that are paid for or have “volunteer” participants (otherwise, non-employee or non-student), using this technique is probably advisable. However, for the purpose and intended audience of this webinar, this was not a primary concern. In our case, we were presenting three different topics but each one was just as “important” as the other three. We determined that it was more effective to have a strong opener and we did this by focusing on the “ice-breaker” best practice, which we attempted by combining a humorous event with the presentation of the first topic. However, as is the case in many webinars, judging the effectiveness of the humor to “break the ice” is often difficult to ascertain. Nonetheless, we felt that it was a worthwhile attempt and unless negative feedback was received (either in the webinar or from post-webinar surveys), this approach is appropriate.

It is important to practice or perform trial runs of the entire presentation. It is especially important for tutorial or training-based webinars because there are often multiple “hosts” or “moderators” who have to work on concert. Through practice, one will determine better or more efficient ways to present the information and will undoubtedly find mistakes in either the content or unforeseen technological limitations such as audio/video display problems.

Finally, all the hard work preparing and practicing the presentation will not matter unless the audience is notified of the webinar. Our research found a strong admonition about creating effective webinar notifications and for sending notifications multiple times and using multiple deliveries. Once again, the intended audience will dictate this to some degree, but at the minimum a succinct notification need to be sent to the participants. For this project, we chose to send a Google Calendar invite that is sent using a Gmail account. The contents of the email should include the appropriate title (as discussed above), the date and time of the webinar, and how to access it. Those are the three essential pieces of information that need to be included in the webinar notification. Other methods of notification include sending Twitter messages to followers who may be interested in the webinar (or to students of a university) or by using other relevant social media channels. See Appendix I for the text of the webinar notification that was used for this project.
**Webinar best practices – How to conduct a webinar**

It is important that the webinar host presents with enthusiasm and energy, and as such finding a suitable person to present the webinar is very important. During the presentation, it is important to point out the features of the webinar technology that the audience needs to use to interact or to otherwise participant. Additionally, from the preparation and trial runs, you should have a good idea about the how the technology will display to the audience and you can adjust timings in the script to account for lag, or audio/video delays. And similar to best practices for other types of presentations, such as PowerPoint, it is advisable to use more graphics or visuals than text on the screen.

Throughout the presentation, it is important to interject questions to engage the audience. This is an aspect of webinars that allows for collaboration or “two-way learning” that static presentations cannot achieve. Of course, asking appropriate questions is important to meet your goal of either gauging learning or interacting with the participants, among others.

The beginning, middle, and end of the presentation are the parts that participants will remember more vividly. For this reason, summarizing at the end is crucial to ensure a successful presentation.

Finally, once the webinar concludes, it is important to thank the participants and set any expectations that they may have for you (such as sending URLs, further information, contact requests and so forth) or expectations that you have for them (such as completing post-webinar surveys or taking learning assessments).

There are a few “don’ts” that are expanded across most webinar platforms and presentation topics. These include being extra diligent when using video or complex animations because of the high fail rate, reading straight from the script (as this is usually discernible from the audience’s perspective and violates the ‘being energetic’ best practice), and not allowing times without talking or some kind of activity.

**Mankato project – How to prepare a webinar**

Decide on topic/technology – Deciding which topic or technology to use is the first step. In our webinar, we had to decide on which software to use. We decided on PowerPoint because we all had access to it and some familiarity with it. The time-frame for this step varies on the amount of people who need to decide and how often they can get together. A few days or a week may be necessary, especially when remote meetings through Skype or Google Hangout must be organized or things decided entirely through email correspondence.

Divide tasks/roles – Our group divided up the tasks into the roles of presenter, moderator, and facilitator. The presenter decided on the different topics in PowerPoint to cover, designed the slides, and presented the materials. The moderator wrote much of the script and focused on usability while
the moderator and facilitator decided and wrote the polls, issued the invitations, and other behind
the scenes tasks during the webinar. This can be decided during one productive meeting, though the
roles last throughout the entire webinar and the follow-up.

Write script – The presenter and moderator concentrated on writing the script or basic outline of
the webinar. This step takes a couple of days, which involves both emails and collaborations in
Google Docs.

Prepare layout – See the image below. The team had to choose and design the best layout of the
modules before the webinar. Each webinar is different, depending on the medium being used, and
Adobe Connect allows for many combinations to fit different needs.

In Adobe Connect, our team recommends preparing the Polls before the webinar. It is also
recommended to number each Poll for which one is first, second, etc. because once entered into the
Pods menu, it is difficult to determine which one corresponds to the correct time in the scripted
webinar.
Preparing the layout took about a half an hour, in which time the team tested different layouts after class one day and also organized a half an hour before the webinar began.

Mankato project – How to conduct a webinar

First, the team should have a detailed script to follow during the presentation according to the best practices explained in the aforementioned section above. The script will guide the facilitator and moderator through the introduction, slide content, transitions, polls, Q&A sessions, demonstrations, and the conclusion. To conduct a successful webinar, follow these steps:

Prior to the beginning

1. Set up the webinar at least 30 minutes prior to the start time.
2. Ensure webinar connection, computer, webcam (if using), microphone, and headset are working properly.
3. Load slides and advance through presentation to test features, animations, links and transitions.
4. Test desktop sharing if using.

Introduction

5. **Welcome**: Welcome the audience to your webinar. Introduce yourself; explain the webinar topic and the goal of the presentation. See minute 11:30 – 12:30.
6. **Orientation to webinar technology**: Give the audience an overview of the key features of the software that are visible to them. Point out where they can submit questions, where they will be viewing the slides and demonstrations, and where they can respond to poll questions. It may be helpful to display a screen shot of the webinar platform to point out the features.
7. **Question**: Address how questions will be handled throughout the presentation

Click the video below for a short clip (minute 12:30 – 14:20) from the Mankato webinar that demonstrates the **Orientation to webinar technology**.
8. Introduce the new topic with a short summary. Give step-by-step instructions on how to perform the specific tasks. To show the step-by-step, there are several options. For a live demonstration, it is best to use the actual application and with Connect you can choose to share a live stream of your computer desktop to show your demonstration. See minute 14:36.
Polls and Q & A

9. Pose direct and meaningful questions to the audience intermittently. This helps gauge the audience’s level of engagement and interest. Tell the audience how answering your question benefits them.

10. Use polls to pose the questions. Common questions formats are multiple choice or true/false. Polls are a great way to introduce new topics and encourage audience interaction.

11. If you receive questions from the audience, refer to the participants by first name. This puts a personal touch on the communication and lets them know that you are truly paying attention to them as individuals.

Conclusion

12. Ask for any final questions.
13. Reiterate the goal of the webinar. See minute 30:45.
14. Explain post-webinar activities such as survey, email with handouts, questions.

Post Webinar Activities

15. Send a follow up email to webinar participants
a. Include recording (if desired), handouts and links to material (or use Web Links pod in Adobe Connect).
b. Encourage participants to email webinar facilitators with any questions.

Roles needed for a successful webinar
A successful webinar generally requires several people or hosts, besides the participants. For short webinars, two people may be sufficient. According to best practices and the experience from our webinar, the presenter must be able to focus solely on presenting. This leaves at least one other host, the moderator, to make sure the polls are placed and taken down at the right time and to watch out for possible questions or comments the participants have. However, longer webinars may require another host, a facilitator and a moderator to actively engage in the chat window, to perhaps ask questions or make comments to get the participants involved, and stimulate conversation.

Key features of value in Adobe Connect

For participants
a. Join the webinar instantly by simply clicking a URL. No need to download special software to attend the webinar.
b. User interface is easy to understand. Chat window, attendee list, main window are easily accessible.
c. Immediately participate in meetings by selecting interactive features such as “raise hand, agree, disagree, step away.”
d. Access Adobe Connect and use all multimedia features from your iPhone, iPod touch, iPad, or Google Android device.
e. Enhanced audio and video controls.

For presenters
a. Feature allows you to record your webinar for future reference and to send to participants after the session.
b. Save your webinar layout as a template for future use.
c. Customizable layouts.
d. Option to create breakout sessions during your webinar.
e. What do you suggest as follow up activities after a webinar to assure its success?
f. Automate email invitations, confirmations, reminders, and post-webinar communications to your webinar attendees.
g. Manage participant’s rights in real-time (e.g., promote a participant to presenter).
Post-webinar activities to assure its success

Create a post-webinar survey to gauge the participant’s interest in the topic and if the webinar was conducted well. This feedback will help share future webinars as you learn the best techniques to conduct a webinar for your intended audience.

Send a follow up email to participants to thank them for attending. In the email, reiterate the main points of the webinar. Also, attach handouts from the webinar to the email. Provide copy of hyperlinks that were shared during the presentation. Encourage participants to email you with any additional questions on the webinar content.

Another option to provide a survey is to use the web links pod in Adobe Connect. The Web Links pod is useful on your final layout for letting attendees access a feedback form or survey implemented on the web. The presenter can open the page for attendees, or attendees can open it themselves. Attendees can fill out the requested information and close the page without affecting their status and participation in the meeting room.

Quantitative findings

Emails: 125 emails about the project between 17 March and 26 April.
Dropbox folder “Karlsruhe – Mankato Project: 36 files.

Polls

1. How often do you use Microsoft PowerPoint for work, school, or personally?

- Very often: 0
- Sometimes (manchmal): 0
- Not often: 0
- Never: 0
- Broadcast Results: 0

Prepare | Open Poll | Close Poll | 2/6
Post-webinar survey

The following email was sent to the live webinar participants to gauge the webinar’s effectiveness:

Thank you so much for participating in our live webinar! We hope that it was an enjoyable and beneficial experience.

We invite you to take a few minutes to complete a brief survey about the webinar. The feedback we receive will help us to improve our webinars and the content that we provide.

To access the survey, click or copy/paste the following link into your web browser:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J58XTMP ~no longer active~

See Appendix II for the survey questions and possible answers.
References/Works Cited


Appendix I: Live Webinar Calendar Email

Title: **SEW-Project Live Webinar: What's ...**
When: Sat Apr 21 9am – 9:30am (PDT), https://umconnect.umn.edu/r9246325/ ~not active~

To our German partners working on the SEW-Project, we welcome and thank you for setting aside some time to participate in this Saturday’s live webinar on **What's New in PowerPoint 2010: Images and Animations**. The webinar will begin at 11 a.m. CDT or 6 p.m. Karlsruhe CEST (UTC/GMT +1) time.

Please see below for further details and instructions:


Description: In this quick tutorial, we will present some of the new features offered in PowerPoint 2010, focusing on new picture editing tools, the improved animations menu, and enhanced slide transitions to help you create engaging and effective PowerPoint presentations.

Hosts: Krista Teigen, Fer O'Neil, Allison Weber
Date: Saturday, April 21
Time: 11 a.m. CDT / 6 p.m. Karlsruhe

To access the webinar, click or copy/paste the following link:
https://umconnect.umn.edu/p29589507/ ~no longer active~

If you cannot join us for the live presentation, please let us know and we will send you a link afterward to the recording.

For more information on PowerPoint 2010:

Thank you again,

Krista Teigen, Fer O'Neil, and Allison Weber
Appendix II: Post-webinar Survey Questions

1. Was the webinar better than what you expected, worse than what you expected, or about what you expected?
   a. Much better
   b. Slightly better
   c. About what was expected
   d. Slightly worse
   e. Much worse

2. How useful to your job was the information presented at the webinar?
   a. Extremely useful
   b. Very useful
   c. Moderately useful
   d. Slightly useful
   e. Not at all useful

3. Was too much information covered at the seminar, too little information covered, or about the right amount of information covered?
   a. Too much
   b. Somewhat too much
   c. About the right amount
   d. Somewhat too little
   e. Too little

4. How organized was the information presented at the webinar?
   a. Extremely organized
   b. Very organized
   c. Moderately organized
   d. Slightly organized
   e. Not at all organized

5. How clearly was the information presented at the seminar?
   a. Extremely clearly
   b. Very clearly
   c. Moderately clearly
   d. Slightly clearly
   e. Not at all clearly

6. How would you rate the level information provided?
   a. Too Complex
   b. Just About Right
   c. Too Simple