In the third semester of my program, I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Boostcamp (later changed its name to Thrive!), a local organization that designs and facilitates mindfulness workshops combined with business training. I chose this artifact because it represents putting theory into practice, which I very much enjoy. At this point, the old dog has learned to roll over, her first big trick. But she has so much more to learn to make the stunt truly amazing.

Boostcamp/Thrive’s business model is to begin training with mindfulness exercises that put participants in a relaxed, focused state of mind. This relaxation results in better learning and retention of knowledge. Plus, it teaches new mindfulness skills that attendees can use wherever and whenever they’d like, both personally and professionally.

In reality, mindfulness was a new subject in the corporate and academic world at the time, so most of the trainings offered were simply Introduction to Mindfulness workshops, without any business skills training added.

Since my practicum took place during the early stages of the business, I was able to see the company define and market itself. I was in a unique position to learn what was done right, as well as what I would do differently. For example, I learned that the sales side of a business demands a thick skin and the ability to openly ask for business, once you feel the relationship has evolved to that point. The founder and CEO of the company was fairly mild-mannered and sometimes had a hard time “going in” for the sale during my tenure.
In terms of reflection, I wish I had completed more classes in the program before the practicum. I definitely incorporated my personal philosophy of learning, by including Humanist and Knowles’ principles of andragogy into the modules I co-designed, but I learned so much more about instructional design and my own personal teaching philosophy in later semesters. The workshops would look completely different today, especially utilizing what I learned from world-renowned adult educator Jane Vella. She stresses social constructivism and believes participants can and should create knowledge by solving their own problems. Looking back, incorporating this knowledge into the designs would have resulted in much more meaningful, reflective outcomes for participants.

The practicum completely solidified why I chose Adult Education for my master’s program. I thoroughly enjoyed every workshop we conducted, although some more than others. Turns out millennials prefer learning from people their own age (we researched this after having some not-so-great programs for this age group). I learned I would like to work more with senior citizens (age 65 and older); they were so receptive and appreciative of our efforts every class.

I am so grateful I had this opportunity, and if I ever decide to start my own health coaching cottage industry, what I learned about starting a business will be invaluable. I still meet regularly with the Boostcamp/Thrive CEO. We are currently contemplating the design of an online mindful career class series.
My Fall Practicum, 2015
Susie Rearick
Indiana University

Abstract

This fall, I worked for Boostcamp, an organization that provides business training with a mindfulness foundation. Since I have an interest in teaching mindfulness techniques to adults, this was the perfect opportunity for me to learn about developing these types of programs first-hand. I gained experience in instructional design, further developed my presentation skills and learned about marketing a new business. Although every presentation was not perfect, I learned so much from each one that I can apply to future teaching endeavors. This practicum added value to my Master’s in Adult Education program, and I am very thankful for the opportunity.
If I could have developed the ideal practicum for myself, it would mirror the experience I actually had this semester with Boostcamp, a local organization that combines business training with mindfulness. I learned about instructional design; honed my facilitation skills; and worked on the development of marketing materials, as well as the coordination and logistics of workshops and trainings.

I also could not have asked for a better mentor and manager of my practicum experience. Maria Heslin, founder of Boostcamp, provided a myriad of learning opportunities for me. She was willing to let me be the lead on designing instruction on several projects; she gave me ample opportunity to strengthen my presentation skills; and she encouraged me to attend meetings with potential clients, as well as local leaders who provided insight and advice on growing a new business.

Let me now review the objectives of my Learning Contract and how I went about achieving them.

**#1. I will gain experience in instructional design of mindfulness training modules.**

**Strategy:** I will be the co-creator of at least one mindfulness module utilizing instructional design tools I researched during D506. I will read at least one book about the teaching of mindfulness that I have not read before.

**Criteria for Achievement:** The module will receive an average of 3 or higher from participants (on a Likert scale of 1 to 5) on question(s) regarding the effectiveness of the program design.
How I met or surpassed the criteria: I was the lead creator of the session -- Keep Calm and Lead On: Transforming the Arts Through Mindful Leadership -- which was presented to attendees at the IU Arts Administration Symposium in October. We wanted this to be a very interactive module with participants engaged in mindfulness activities they could take back to their own organizations.

What we didn’t know beforehand was how young the audience would be. Most were recent graduates and some were even still in graduate school. People of this age (born from 1982-2005) are often described as Millenials (Neilson, 2010). Had we known this, we would have conducted additional research on reaching younger audiences. But since I want to be prepared for future presentations involving this age group, I did some research post-session. I found that to Millenials, trainers or instructors “render customer service, a somewhat menial calling, to a society that doesn't value abstraction, intellectual discourse, or knowledge for knowledge's sake” (Neilson, 2010, para. 5). From this, I learned that rather than just teaching general mindfulness techniques, we should have given them very specific ideas on implementing the tools, rather than leaving the application to them, based on their individual circumstances.

The exercise that resonated with the audience most effectively was the active listening component. I had them break into pairs -- with one person speaking and the other just listening for two minutes. They then switched roles, followed by a discussion period. Maria and I noticed the attendees seemed to come alive at this point and were engaged the rest of the session. This makes perfect sense in the light of Millenials’ “collaborative inclinations” (Neilson, 2010, para. 6).
Despite our inexperience with the Millenial generation, I met my criteria for achievement with the following scores on the evaluation forms completed by 18 participants -- Likert scale of 1 [Strongly Disagree] to 5 [Strongly Agree]):

**EVALUATION QUESTION:**

**MEAN SCORE:**

- The content was organized and easy to follow. 4.22
- The balance between lecture and participation was effective. 4.11
- I enjoyed the mindfulness breaks (exercises). 3.88

I’m always surprised by the scores for the Mindfulness Breaks/Exercises question on the evaluation forms. This number is sometimes lower than the other scores, although many of the comments specifically refer to enjoying the exercises the most. I think people either really like them or are perhaps wary of meditative/contemplative activities.

What I learned most from this presentation is to always ask about the audience before creating the content.

For my reading assignment, I chose “A Clinician’s Guide to Teaching Mindfulness” written by Christiane Wolf and J. Greg Serpa. Although space constraints do not allow me to elaborate, I learned several tips I can apply to teaching mindfulness in class settings.

**#2. I will work on my presentation skills in a voluntary capacity to prove to Boostcamp owner Maria Heslin that I am ready to serve as a facilitator or co-facilitator of a paid mindfulness training module.**

**Strategy:** I will co-facilitate at least one paid mindfulness training module.
Criteria for Achievement: The module will receive an average of 3 or higher from participants (on a Likert scale of 1 to 5) on the question(s) regarding the effectiveness of the trainer.

How I met or surpassed the criteria: As I mentioned in various journal entries, I was a volunteer co-facilitator for several training sessions throughout the semester, so Maria was ready to hire me for the paid Holiday Stress Buster workshop at the City of Bloomington on December 1st. The weeks leading up to the session were packed with instructional design meetings and research on holiday stress.

All the preparation was definitely worth it because the workshop was very successful, with extremely positive evaluations. The group was small (10 participants), but the Human Resources Director had warned us that employees have rather poor participation for workshops and non-required trainings.

The small number of participants really gave us a chance to talk with the attendees, and we had some great discussion about holiday stress, as well as work stress -- mainly induced at the current time by the uncertainty of the new mayoral administration. Unfortunately, a few of the participants are losing their jobs at the end of the year; but we were able to keep the workshop positive and lively.

I am very pleased with the evaluation scores regarding my and Maria’s effectiveness as facilitators (Likert scale 1-5):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION QUESTION:</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ideas and concepts were explained well.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The trainers were knowledgeable about the</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trainers were well prepared. 4.9

Participation and interaction were encouraged. 4.9

#3. I will work with Maria Heslin, owner of Boostcamp, on marketing and promoting programs, assisting with logistics and collaborating on the creation of a Likert scale evaluation for our classes.

**Strategy:** 1) Boostcamp will successfully present a mindfulness module to a business audience. 2) I will be the lead designer of an evaluation form.

**Criteria for Achievement:** 1) I will receive positive feedback from Maria Heslin regarding my participation in the promotion and logistical planning of our programs. 2) The evaluation form will be utilized at the end of the module; the results will be evaluated by the Boostcamp team.

**How I met or surpassed the criteria:** I very much enjoyed learning more about the promotion of Boostcamp’s programs, as well as helping with the logistical components of our booked sessions. My favorite part was helping with marketing. I was an English undergraduate major and have worked as a professional writer and editor at times during my career, so having the chance to write copy for flyers and scripts for videos was especially fun for me. Earlier in the semester, I sent you a video I scripted for marketing Boostcamp’s programs to sororities (per my Learning Contract).

Developing evaluation forms is something I have done sporadically in my Human Resources career, so the concept wasn’t completely new to me. With each training session we
facilitated, I worked to match the questions to the content as closely as possible. Attached is the evaluation form we utilized for the Holiday Stress Buster workshop at the city.

Also attached is an email from Maria regarding my performance throughout the practicum, which includes my involvement in promotion and planning.

**Final Project**

As we discussed earlier in the semester, my original idea for presenting a mindfulness module to disadvantaged women was not met with enthusiasm from organizations serving this population. So with your approval, I moved my focus to designing an introduction to mindfulness module tailored to a senior citizen audience. I discovered from my research that presenting to this audience would be very beneficial since “there are a number of characteristics of the older adult population that make this group very suitable for mindfulness-based interventions” (Malzfeldt, 2013, par. 4).

In my instructional design, I began with a mindful eating exercise before any definitive explanation of mindfulness or its benefits. This concept, which Gagné describes in his Nine Events of Instruction as Gaining Attention of the Students, works to “stimulate students with novelty, uncertainty and surprise” (“Gagné’s Nine Events of Instruction,” n. d., para. 2). I wanted them to experience mindfulness first-hand with definitions and technical information to follow.

I knew somatic exercises would be a definite inclusion in my instructional design since “mindfulness focuses on the interconnectedness of mind and body, thus making it relevant to
older people who are more likely than their juniors to experience physical health problems” (Malzfeldt, 2013, para. 4).

My somatic exercises included mindful eating, deep breathing and a body scan guided meditation, in which I asked participants to focus on the various parts of their bodies, including any existing pain. The key to a successful body scan is to view sensations and pain from an observer’s role -- a disinterested third party. This technique correlates with results from a recent German study which:

suggests that pain and anxiety modulation through mindfulness involves a unique neural mechanism in the brain, characterized by an increased sensory processing of the pain sensation itself and by replacing typical attempts to exert more cognitive control over the pain with a distinct brain state of cognitive disengagement (Gard et al., 2012, Discussion section, paragraph 12).

Participants thoroughly enjoyed this exercise and told us after the session and on the evaluation forms that this was their favorite part of the workshop.

On the evaluation form for this session, I learned some questions need follow-up information. One of the questions -- The time allotted for the training was sufficient. -- should have been accompanied by a space for participants to indicate whether they thought the presentation should be longer or shorter.

Attached are the Likert scores and the comments from participants, as well as the PowerPoint presentation Maria and I followed for the workshop.

Conclusion
I am sad that my practicum is coming to an end, but I hope to continue as a paid lead presenter for Boostcamp next year. My first assignment will be as co-facilitator of an introduction to mindfulness module to be delivered to a sorority in February.

References

Gagnés nine events of instruction (n. d.). Retrieved from: www.niu.edu/facdev

