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Formative Evaluation

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### One-To-One Trial

For purposes of a simple one-to-one trial, the material was tested for understanding and completeness in relation to the ‘tests’ for one of the units. The test subject was an aspiring author, twenty-two years old with very little previous publishing knowledge, which fits the parameters of the audience requirements. Due to distance problems and issues with time constraints, the one-to-one trial was held over an online videoconference. For purposes of the trial, Unit One on Traditional Publishing was tested on the learner.

#### *Process:*

For the one-on-one trial, the instructor and trial learner met in an online videoconference. Before attending the “class” with the instructor, the learner was sent a copy of the proposed handout for the Unit One Instruction to read in advance. The instructor also sent a copy of the “Pre-Test” to better understand the learner’s needs. The learner submitted her evaluation before the meeting and the instructor reviewed it for purposes of understanding question clarity and prior knowledge before entering the course.

During the course, the instructor reviewed the “Pre-Test” with the subject, to summarize what the instructor understood about the perspective author’s work before entering the class. The instructor then transitioned to the discussion portion of the instructor script. For the most part, the discussion was a question and answer session between the instructor and the learner. Most of the discussion was for the instructor to see what the recall for the learner was from the handout.

Afterwards, the instructor administered the Unit Test to the subject. The subject was able to complete the examination in a short period of time with sufficient answers.

When asked if the test was difficult, the learner said that the test was pretty straight forward after reading the handout.

Once the one-on-one trial had been completed, the following observations were made:

- In the one on one trial, it was difficult to facilitate a discussion-based lesson, since it was only the instructor and a single student. These issues should resolve themselves in the larger group trials, where students can interact with one another and provide various opinions and insight for the material.
- The “Pre-Class Handout” was emailed to the learner in advance of the lesson for their review before “class”. The learner found few errors in the worksheet, believing it was overall comprehensive and easy to follow.
- When taking the test, the trial subject found that she had an easy time recalling the information from the worksheet to give her the correct answers. When asked for if she felt the material was retained well with the help of the test, she believed that the addition of the ‘test element’ made her pay closer attention to the worksheet provided.
- When asked if she believed she knew more about Traditional Publishing, the learner stated that she “felt more comfortable in understanding how agencies worked”
- Overall, the one-on-one trial proved to be very useful in detecting immediate problems in the individual learner. The connection directly from “Instructor

Handout” to “Student Test” was strong and the test subject could quickly recall information in a useful amount of time.

### Small-Group Trial

Finding volunteers for a small group evaluation proved slightly difficult. Three individuals were found and met in another video conferencing venue (for distance and convenience reasoning again). The group consisted of both male and female learners who were interested in the publishing world. Unit One was tested again, and the Traditional Publishing Handout was emailed to the group in advance. Students were informed of the test and given adequate time to read through the material.

The primary goal of this trial was to see how discussion could be facilitated within a small group of individuals. The instructor remained (mostly) the observer for the group, however to facilitate the discussion would occasionally interject with questions or comments to put the discussion back toward the goal.

### *Process:*

Like the one-on-one trial, the small group was sent both the handout and pre-test before the conference was started. The Pre-Test was returned and the instructor analyzed the answers to find common trends in the group to better understand the group as a whole.

After explaining the observations from the Pre-Test, the instructor moved into the discussion. The small group made the conversation less like two people asking and answering question, but more of a full discussion. The students were able to carry the conversation easier on their own, but the instructor was still required to

keep the discussion on track. The instructor had to encourage certain answers out of students to encourage further discourse. The learners were still able to make intelligent comments based on the handout and kept the discussion going if there were pauses (even if it took a little coaxing).

The instructor administered the Unit Test to the group and graded their answers after the course was finished. The answers were well organized and correct. When asked about the difficulty of the test, most learners felt that the exam was manageable. They believed that the handout had given them enough prior information to take the test confidently.

After final testing, students were asked to describe the experience. Some people said that they were cautious to answer questions because they were not comfortable around the group and they were felt like they held back in the group of strangers.

The following observations were made:

- The group, for the most part, needed a lot of coaxing to get into the discussion. It was difficult bringing three, introverted strangers together for an hour (without any knowledge of the others) and force a discussion. Some individuals talked more than others and some needed to be “called on” in order to increase their participation in the discussion.
- The discussion was relatively agreed upon. The addition of more individuals to the group dynamic (different backgrounds, levels of confidence, etc.) might increase the interest of the discussion, but it is difficult to guess these from a random sampling.

- Trial learners were tested on the material and provided correct answers. When asked how the test element affected their reading of the handout, some said it did not change their reading habits, but others said it made them pay closer attention.

### Final Notes

When the trials are considered a few things come to mind to make the course slightly more interesting and increase the value for the learner. The following are notes made by the instructor of things that could have been changed or will be changed.

- The videoconference format (while convenient and cost-effective) was not the intended learning environment. For purposes of testing the material (in the one-on-one trial), the videoconference was a way to share ideas in a real-time immediate format. When it came to the group discussion in the small group trial, there was a disconnected feeling between the participants. In the future, a room would have to be accessed in order properly use the discussion.
- The groups are also smaller than intended. If the groups were larger, more people would be able to add to the discussion. It would also be easier to have a larger group, so people don't feel as put on the spot in a group of strangers. When asked if they would feel more comfortable in a larger group discussion, participants suggested that the large group setting (and having a better relationship with their classmates that would be easier to obtain through simple introductions) would increase their interaction with their fellow learners.
- The group discussion needs more encouragement. Suggestions for this problem have been to add more questions to the discussion from the instructor to facilitate further discussion. The original intent was to have the discussion led by the

group, letting the conversation go where it would, with the instructor providing the guiding questions when required. However, this model only works if there are enough questions to facilitate enough discussion. By introducing more questions, to the instructor materials that pertain directly to the student's work (i.e. "What parts of this method appeal most to you?" or "Can you see yourself publishing in this medium? Why?") would encourage further interaction between the learners. Another suggestion is to have the instructor give examples during the discussion, by going through the process of an author who went through one of these methods (giving the lesson more context). It is one thing to present the students with a list of potential agencies and publishers in the various methods, but it is another to have learners examine those in a practical application.

Levels of Effectiveness:

*Clarity:*

Learners in the program found that the information was presented in a clear way. The information in the handout was presented in a way that was easily understandable by a majority of the learners. The material is clear for the learners to the point that they can take the information they learned and put it into a test or discussion format and feel like they understand the material.

*Impact:*

Learners described the experience as informative. After the class, the students felt they were better informed about that specific method of publishing and believe that they were better prepared. When asked if they would like to learn about other

methods of publishing, the group agreed that they would like to learn about the other methods of publishing to get a better idea of what their options were.

*Feasibility:*

The course seems feasible, being both cost and time effective. All totaled, the course could be condensed into a five-day workshop/five-week class. The space could easily be acquired at a local library or community center and it would not be such a high cost outside of providing a fee for the instructor or compensation for printing of the handouts.