

**From Coincidence to Community:  
Achieving & Supporting *Meaningful* Connection  
Online and On Campus  
[A Syllabus? Curriculum? Workshop Outline?]**

Steven W. Gilbert, The TLT Group  
Rev. May 13, 2003

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**A. Why me? Why now? Why bother?**

[See last section “Increasing Need for Lifelong Teaching/Learning”]

**I. Basic Definitions, Issues**

**II. Online vs. Face-to-Face (Never the Same).**

**III. Managing Expectations – Portfolio of Strategies for Collaborative Change**

**IV. OPTION: TLT Roundtable Model**

**V. Tools & Media**

(For achieving, supporting meaningful connections online)

**VI. Techniques**

(For achieving, supporting meaningful connections online)

**VII. OFFLINE (Face-to-Face, Paper, Etc. ) Activities and Resources**

(For complementing or supporting meaningful connections online;  
AND VICE VERSA)

**VIII. Assessment – Not Just the Numbers**

(To help improve efforts to achieve, support meaningful connections online)

**IX. Increasing Need for Lifelong Teaching/Learning:**

(Implications of achieving/supporting meaningful connections and community online and on campus)

## **A. Why me? Why now? Why bother?**

[See last section “Increasing Need for Lifelong Teaching/Learning”]

### **I. Basic Definitions, Issues**

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss:

- a. Community & Connectedness (& Collaboration, Cooperation, Networking, Parallel Play, ... “Nurturing Communities”)
- b. What do these [and related] terms mean to you?
- c. Community for whom? Connecting whom?
- d. Community where? On campus? Online? Anywhere/anytime?
- e. How can we establish some semblance of community and connectedness within a context that does NOT naturally support community and connectedness?
  - a. Context: College/university culture of individual creativity, competition, independence, academic freedom
  - b. Context: Online interaction, unfettered and unguided, can be used to hide; people are just beginning to discover/invent ways of “personalizing” communication in this new medium
- f. Who is “we”? Who is “they”?

### **II. Online vs. Face-to-Face (Never the Same).**

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss

- a. Face-to-face, distance, asynchronous: What are significant differences?
- b. Different in what ways? Along what dimensions? Advantages/disadvantages of each?
- c. Which roles/functions fundamental to traditional education in higher ed (e.g., library, counseling, ...) translate well/poorly from face-to-face to online? Which versions of these roles/functions currently available need to be improved online?
- d. Accelerating Change – Too Many New Options Too Fast  
Just beginning to learn, understand new options, new media, new dimensions

### **III. Managing Expectations – Portfolio of Strategies for Collaborative Change**

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss

- a. Widening gap between expectations for what can be accomplished with technology to improve teaching and learning and the resources available to do so.
- b. Strategies and Programs (Wide/Shallow + Narrow/Deep) for establishing, achieving, maintaining, modifying/growing, Foundation (Vision, Infrastructure, Conceptual Framework/Knowledge/Skills).
- c. Institutional educational vision: Process for establishing, modifying, agreeing upon, disseminating, embracing, implementing, ...
- d. How much, how fast? How important is being a leader, pioneer? How much can you afford – relative to other priorities? How much can you afford relative to current and anticipated financial resources? How much can you afford relative to people’s TIME available for change?
- e. How much consensus is necessary, sufficient, tolerable? To whom? Who MUST be included in consensus?

- f. How much diversity of opinion, belief, vision, practice is tolerable, necessary, sufficient?
- g. Big leaps vs. Incremental growth (Low-Threshold Activities – LTAs, LTPDAs, LT Approach)
- h. Institution vs. Sub-Units (Colleges, divisions, departments, offices) vs. Individual (faculty, courses)

**IV. OPTION: TLT Roundtable Model**

For planning and Managing Expectations.

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss

Requirements:

- a. PRIORITY AND TIME
- b. Top-level support (always listen, sometimes accept and implement recommendations; “Influence without authority”?)
- c. Commitment and availability of large, diverse group
- d. Skillful co-leaders from different areas
- e. Clarity about “advisory to whom?”
- f. Recognize need for BOTH “visionaries” and “doers”
- g. Standing sub-groups: e.g., Vision & Leadership; Curriculum (Information Literacy, Information Technology & Society); Deconstructing Instructional Tools; Technology Supporting Connectedness (in courses, in classes, on campus, with alumni, ...); Acceptable Use Policy (role of honor code, etc.)
- h. Action teams: Laptops for everyone? Student Technology Assistant Program?
- i. Initial priorities – short-term and long-term
- j. Functions: Showcase (open events, demos), Forum (exploratory discussion), Formulating Recommendations (reports, discussion, building consensus in response to work of subgroups, action teams)
- k. Schedule and agenda for three meetings in advance (begin each with faculty demo?)
- l. Institutionalization plan (terms of office for members, co-leaders)

**V. Tools & Media**

(For achieving, supporting meaningful connections online)

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss – Try to fill in this table with names or descriptions of specific tools and/or applications and/or media and then compare/contrast results. Try to include Low-Threshold Applications/Activities that support meaningful connection online.

|              | Traditional | Current (Reliable right now?) | Next? |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Synchronous  |             |                               |       |
| Asynchronous |             |                               |       |

## **VI. Techniques**

(For achieving, supporting meaningful connections online)

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss:

- a. Matching kinds of: Teaching, Learning, and Technology
- b. Emphasize, include Low-Threshold Applications/Activities that support meaningful connection offline
- c. Who is responsible for finding, evaluating, adapting new options?
- d. How? How much time, effort is reasonable to match T-L-T without going crazy?
- e. Who is responsible for adapting/adjusting the resources and conditions?
- f. Who is responsible for adapting/adjusting themselves?
- g. Who is responsible for finding, evaluating, understanding successful OLD techniques and then determining how, if at all, they can be used/adapted to new online environment(s)?

## **VII. OFFLINE (Face-to-Face, Paper, Etc. ) Activities and Resources**

(For complementing or supporting meaningful connections online;  
AND VICE VERSA)

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss:

- a. Variety of good, successful teaching, teachers, learning, learners [See “Personalizing Pedagogy”]
- b. Favorite successful “Offline” practices of good teachers, teaching that achieve or support meaningful connections
- c. Low-Threshold Applications/Activities that support meaningful connection offline

## **VIII. Assessment – Not Just the Numbers**

(To help improve efforts to achieve, support meaningful connections online)

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss:

- a. How do you know its working? How can you keep improving?
- b. Data in usual sense: surveys, quantifiable, ...
- c. Data in unusual sense: What kinds of things can you (some people more than others) perceive face-to-face that you cannot perceive any other way? Almost any other way?

## **IX. Increasing Need for Lifelong Teaching/Learning:**

(Implications of achieving/supporting meaningful connections and community online and on campus)

Elicit/Identify/Describe/Discuss:

- a. Why is the need for Lifelong Teaching/Learning increasing/accelerating?
- b. What are the resource implications of this increase? Why are they being ignored? Can everyone (students, retirees, ...) be an adjunct teacher some of the time?
- c. Role of LTAs, LTPDAs (Low-Threshold Professional Development Activities)
- d. Role of Compassionate Pioneers: How much do you trust your faculty? Staff?
- e. Role of Student Technology Assistants, student workers: How much do you trust your students? [Service learning?]
- f. Role of Nurturing Communities: How much do you trust each other?