



The TLT Group
Teaching, Learning, and Technology
A Non-Profit Corporation

“Why Bother?” Workshop

Small Group Activities

October 4, 2001

Goal

Enable participants to:

- Launch or accelerate their own individual efforts to improve teaching and learning with information technology.
- Identify and commit to specific next steps.
- Identify additional resources they need and who might be able to provide those resources and help them succeed.
- Establish a working partnership with one or two colleagues.
- Begin a proposal addressed to the president or Chief Academic Officer for approval/support.

And/or:

Enable a team from a single institution to launch or accelerate a program to encourage and support the efforts of individual faculty members to improve teaching and learning with information technology.

Note: This task is intended for adaptation to workshops of different compositions and purposes. It can be used for a group consisting entirely of faculty from one institution, but it is more likely to be effective for:

1. Many people from one institution – including both faculty and other academic support professionals such as librarians, faculty development professionals, technology professionals, and academic administrators.
2. Teams from many institutions – with each team including both faculty and other academic support professionals such as librarians, faculty development professionals, technology professionals, and academic administrators.

I. INSTITUTIONAL PREPARATION

[OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED; #1 is especially important!

This information can provide a useful context for individual and team planning – and enable participants to develop projects and proposals more likely to be well-received by presidents and/or CAOs.]

To be completed by the person in charge of this workshop if the workshop is for only one institution; or by each institutional contact person if the workshop includes teams from more than one institution.

Institution:

Institutional Contact Person:

Title:

Email:

Phone:

Date:

Summarize answers to the following questions and make that information available to participants from the same institution before the workshop begins.

1. President/CAO Goals or Mission

What are the goals or mission for increasing and improving the educational uses of information technology supported by your President and/or CAO? [We urge you to refer to available documents, such as your institution’s mission statement, accreditation preparation documents, etc..] Why? How fast? How wide? How deep? How expensive?

In other words, what are the main goals? How rapidly should you move? How many faculty members and others should be involved? How much change in teaching/learning should be achieved? How much money should be spent (re-allocation of internal funds vs. increasing external funding)? Are you hoping for a few big initiatives or many small steps – or some combination?

2. Related Professional Development Activities, Infrastructure

Describe some of the most significant recent professional development activities intended to help faculty, staff, and/or administrators contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning with information technology. How many participated (including adjunct faculty)? What was accomplished?

Describe the current state of professional support and technological infrastructure with respect to improving teaching and learning with information technology. List only a few noteworthy items – those widely recognized as useful and those widely experienced as frustrating.

3. Roundtable Activities

Describe the group at your institution that is most like a TLT Roundtable (includes representatives of diverse groups – faculty, library, technology, faculty development, etc.; focus on teaching, learning, and technology; advisory to high-ranking person(s); provides guidance for professional development programs; etc.). How often does it meet? In what ways have participants in *this* workshop been involved with this group? To what extent is this group aware of the goals and expectations of workshop participants?

4. Studies

Describe any surveys or other inquiries you have conducted to gather baseline data on how technology use might be contributing to the quality of teaching and learning (or to address other significant questions related to educational mission of the institution). If you haven't yet begun such a study, provide a question that you would like to answer or a decision that could be made more effectively through developing and conducting a study.

II. INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION

[IF PARTICIPANTS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOME PREPARATORY WORK, THEY CAN READ, THINK, AND WRITE SOME NOTES IN RESPONSE TO ITEMS C. & D. BELOW. Otherwise, they can do so during the workshop/session.]

A. Intended Outcomes

Establish a common pool of purposes as a basis for committing time and other resources to new projects to improve teaching and learning with information technology. Help individual participants begin to select practical, useful projects.

B. Read “Why Bother?”

[See: <http://www.tltgroup.org/gilbert/WhyBother.htm>]

C. Add any categories that should not have been omitted; i.e., additional reasons why -- in spite of many difficult obstacles -- institutions and individuals should make increasing commitments to improving teaching and learning with technology.

D. Preparation for Small Group Discussion

- i. *On one side of a 3X5 card, write your name, institution, and answers to B above.*
- ii. *Select only one of the following 4 options to think about and work on for the remainder of this activity.*
 - iii. *On the same 3X5 card, write a very brief description of the technology application you have selected and some of the “Why Bother?” categories it demonstrates or addresses. [If you have some extra time, think about next steps you might take with respect to this application, obstacles you anticipate, resources you might need, and a partner with whom you would like to work.]*

CHOOSE AND DO ONLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING FOUR:**1. Current Application/Approach****[For Faculty; Ongoing Activity]**

Identify an application of information technology (and the teaching/learning approach involved in its use) that you have already begun to integrate successfully into your own teaching. Describe this application and how it demonstrates one of the “Why Bother?” categories. Try to include something about the issues or topics covered, ways in which teaching and learning are being done, and something about the intended results. How does this use of technology and this teaching/learning approach enable different students to learn in different ways – even a little -- in this course? How does this use of technology and this teaching/learning approach build on one of your own special interests or abilities? *In what ways would you like to improve your use of this application – based on what you have already learned from your experience with it?*

2. Bottleneck: Future Application/Approach**[For Faculty; New Activity]**

Select and describe an issue or topic (or “instructional bottleneck”) in a course you will be teaching this coming academic year. Explain how you hope to be able to use information technology (and a related teaching/learning approach) to help improve teaching and learning with this issue/topic to achieve some of the benefits listed in the “Why Bother?” paper. How will this use of technology and this teaching/learning approach enable different students to learn in different ways – even a little -- in this course? How will this use of technology and this teaching/learning approach build on one of your own special interests or abilities?

3. Current Support Activity:**[For Academic Support Professionals or Administrators]**

Identify an activity in your own work that already successfully supports some effort to use information technology to improve teaching and learning. Describe how this activity fits with one or more of the “Why Bother?” categories. Try to include something about the ways in which teaching and learning are being improved by your activity and something about your intended results. How does this activity build on one of your own special interests or abilities? *In what ways would you like to improve this activity – based on what you have already learned from your experience with it?*

4. Future Support Activity**[For Academic Support Professionals or Administrators]**

Identify a new activity in your own work that could support some effort to use information technology to improve teaching and learning. Describe how this activity fits with one or more of the “Why Bother?” categories. Try to include something about the ways in which teaching and learning might be improved by your activity and something about your intended results. How will this activity build on one of your own special interests or abilities?

III. IN SMALL GROUPS – FIRST ROUND

A. Intended Outcomes

Begin to design projects and identify specific next steps. Prepare to write related proposals to the president or Chief Academic Officer.

Individuals

Each individual participant begins to design a modest project and produces a schedule of next steps for it that will contribute to improving teaching and learning with information technology. For faculty members, the project should focus within one course. For academic support professionals, the project should focus on helping a small number of faculty members who share a common interest or need (or a larger number of faculty members who share a very small need). In each case, participants should favor projects that benefit from a collaborative effort of at least one faculty leader, librarian, faculty development professional and technology professional from that institution.

AND/OR

Institutional Teams

Each institutional team produces a schedule of next steps for at least one [probably professional development] project that depends on a collaborative effort of at least one faculty leader, librarian, faculty development professional and technology professional from that institution. This project should:

- respect and build on recent professional development activities at your institution;
- get the support of the nearest approximation of the local TLT Roundtable for acquiring resources and scheduling events; and
- include a Flashlight-style study to obtain feedback to help guide some decisions about a sequence of activities.

More generally, institutional teams will develop the basis (past successes, anticipated obstacles, resources needed, possible studies, possible “TLT Coaching Partnerships”) and plans for their own specific next steps. Teams will plan effective linkages among faculty leaders, librarians, faculty development professionals, and technology professionals, et al. – focused on specific next steps for each individual participant. It will be especially useful for teams to identify concerns shared by all team members – concerns that have implications for institutional policies, procedures, and infrastructure (especially support resources needed). These concerns might become messages appropriate to deliver to the local TLT Roundtable and then to the President or Chief Academic Officer of the institution.

B. Form Small Groups

One or two institutional teams per group.

If time permits, collect the 3x5 cards and use them during a break to match institutional teams in ways likely to encourage individuals to work together after this event – because of their geography, common interest in specific technology applications, and/or “Why Bother?” categories.

C. Develop Individual and/or Institutional Team Schedules for Specific Next Steps

Individuals

Discuss your answers to Part II. C and D above. [Begin to use the Individual Worksheet – attached.] Help each other by asking questions and making suggestions for improving plans or for taking next steps. As you describe to each other various technology applications and teaching/learning approaches you have selected, try to work together to **help each participant develop a personal schedule of very specific next steps**. Each participant’s first steps should be quite modest – very likely to be accomplished successfully and on schedule. [Later steps might be more challenging and uncertain.]

Discuss related past successes and anticipated obstacles. Discuss ways of applying specific support processes and practices that have already been successful at your own institution. Help each other identify any support resources that will be needed and where/how they might be obtained. What kinds of easy-to-observe or easy-to-collect evidence would confirm that your steps are succeeding? [What questions or “triads” could be the basis for developing a Flashlight study?]

Institutional Teams

Use the Institutional Team Project Worksheet (attached) to develop a schedule of next steps for at least one project that depends on a collaborative effort of at least one faculty leader, the librarian, and the technology professional from your institution. Try to indicate how this project will obtain and benefit from the advice or support of your local TLT Roundtable or equivalent. Try to indicate how you will develop and use a Flashlight study to obtain useful feedback to help guide decisions about the further development of this project. Try to indicate the ways in which this project includes some of the ideas or structures or materials from recently successful professional development programs at your institution.

IV. IN SMALL GROUPS – SECOND ROUND

A. Intended Outcomes

Plan how members of your small group can continue working together (and, possibly, with others). Begin work on project proposals to the president or Chief Academic Officer. Prepare reports for the closing session.

B. How to Continue Working Together

Discuss how you might continue working together after this workshop/session. What kinds of guidelines, schedules, external reminders, or communications vehicles would be especially likely to enable you to serve effectively as “coaches” for each other? For colleagues who are not present? How can the workshop leaders and/or consultants support your collaborative efforts?

C. Specific Partnerships

Can you identify specific partners – forming groups of 2 or 3 from among those present? (Or forming groups of 2 or 3 that also include some people who are well known to the participants, but who are not present at this event.)

D. Project Proposals

Write a brief (1-3 pages) proposal to your president and/or Chief Academic Officer about the individual or Institutional Team Project that you have been working on for this activity. You might include these elements:

- Accomplishments.
Related things you have already accomplished.
- Additional Needs and Goals.
Relate these to what you learned about the goals and mission for improving educational uses of information technology supported by your President and/or CAO.
- Obstacles.
Anticipated or current obstacles. What’s getting in your way?
- Resources Needed.
What additional resources does your project need? What are you requesting from the president and/or CAO? Are you being realistic?
- Resources Available.
Which people within your institution -- in addition to your team members -- can provide some of the help or other resources you need?

E. Reports

Prepare to report a summary of your plans during the closing session of this workshop. Also consider how (campus or regional meeting? telecommunications?) you might provide a progress report to your colleagues from this workshop in a few weeks or months.

V-A. INDIVIDUAL WORKSHEET

[For TLT Group’s “Why Bother?” Activity]

Name:

Date:

Institution:

Application(s) of information technology:

“Why Bother?” categories addressed:

Issues or topics covered:

Teaching/Learning approach(es) used:

Intended teaching/learning results:

How different students will be enabled to learn in different ways:

Related previous success(es):

Related special interests or abilities of project leader(s):

Goals for implementing or improving this project:

Anticipated obstacles:

Resources needed:

Evaluation/Assessment Topic/Question/”Triad”:

Schedule Of Next Steps (First few should be very modest):

Possible partners:

V-B. INSTITUTIONAL TEAM PROJECT WORKSHEET

[For TLT Group’s “Why Bother?” Activity]

Institution:

Date:

Team Contact Person:

Name:

Title:

Email:

Phone:

Team Members

Name:

Title:

Name:

Title:

Name:

Title:

Name:

Title:

Name:

Title:

Descriptive Name for Team Project:

Application(s) of information technology used:

“Why Bother?” categories addressed:

“Content” (Issues or topics covered):

Teaching/Learning approach(es) used:

Intended teaching/learning results:

How different students will be enabled to learn in different ways:

Related previous success(es):

Related special interests or abilities of project leader(s) and other team members:

Goals for implementing or improving this project:

Anticipated obstacles:

Additional resources needed:

Evaluation/Assessment Topic/Question/”Triad”:

Schedule Of Next Steps (First few should be very modest):

1. Action:

Intended Completion Date:

Person Primarily Responsible:

2. Action:

Intended Completion Date:

Person Primarily Responsible:

3. Action:

Intended Completion Date:

Person Primarily Responsible:

4. Action:

Intended Completion Date:

Person Primarily Responsible:

Possible partners (other individuals who might be encouraged to join the project):

VI. FOLLOW-UP, EXTENDING THIS WORK

SEE WWW.TLTGROUP.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MOST OF THE TOPICS BELOW.

- **Goals:** Develop a “Why Bother?” document that better reflects the goals and resources of your own institution. Launch a local TLT Coaching Partnership Program. [At least form a few TLT Coaching Partnerships and get them committed to a schedule of some specific next steps.]
- **TLT Coaching Partnerships:** Develop guidelines, schedules, external reminders, or communications vehicles that enable those who participated in this event to establish new “TLT Coaching Partnerships” with individuals who were NOT present. A “TLT Coaching Partnership” is a pair of people who help each other take one step at a time to improve teaching and learning with technology. The top priority for a TLT Coaching Partnership is the pair’s comfort and willingness to work together. Sharing some common instructional goals is also helpful (e.g., interests in using the same technology applications or teaching/learning approaches, teaching similar courses, etc.).
 - **Outreach:** Ask each participant to identify one person (not present at this event) who is highly likely to become an effective TLT Coaching Partner. Ask each participant to contact this person and invite him/her to form a Coaching Partnership.
 - **Alternative Outreach:** Develop guidelines, schedules, external reminders, or communications vehicles that enable those who participated in very small groups to continue serving effectively as “coaches” for each other.
- **Local Linkage:** Link the activities of TLT Coaching Partners to the ongoing work or the launching of a local TLT Roundtable, a local (V)TLT Center.
 - **Support:** Develop a structure to encourage and support the progress of TLT Coaching Partnerships. Identify objectives, topics, or tasks in which several TLT Coaching Partnerships share an interest. Develop mechanisms for helping Partners to establish and maintain progress on a schedule of incremental steps.
 - **Curriculum & Workshops:** Develop a “curriculum” of supportive activities to help the Partnerships. Build on what you can learn about local faculty development program activities – workshops, tutorials, online services, etc. – at your own institution and at similar institutions.

- **TLT Fire Circles for TLT Roundtable:** Develop an ongoing process – a series of meetings – in which faculty members and others describe to each other recent individual efforts that are achieving some of the benefits listed in your own “Why Bother?” document. Ideally, participants describe the accomplishments of others – and when appropriate, publicly thank them for their accomplishments. [This could be a regular activity of a local TLT Roundtable or similar group. For an explanation of the “Fire Circle” idea, see: <<http://www.tltgroup.org/gilbert/FireCircles9-7-01.htm>>]
- **Evaluation/Assessment [Flashlight Program]:** Provide training and support to enable participating faculty members and other academic support professionals to design and conduct studies to collect information that can help make decisions about how to improve current efforts and modify plans for succeeding steps and projects.
- **Inter-Institutional Linkage:** Link the activities of TLT Coaching Partners within your own institution to inter-institutional efforts. Consider getting your institution to participate in inter-institutional efforts to develop and share instructional resources and professional development resources. See <<http://www.tltgroup.org/OpenSource/Base.htm>>.

What else?