You are More Than Your Career: Finding an Inspired Work-Life Balance in the Instructional Design and Technology Field

Short description (75):
Many of us are inspired by our work in instructional design and technology, however, recent trends in the technology field like the “hustle culture” can cross over to the instructional design and technology fields, resulting in work-life balance issues. The purpose of this panel will be to share perspectives about achieving work-life balance in the instructional design and technology field. Panel members will share about experiences working both in academia and the instructional design industry.

Full description (1000):
An alarming US trend in the technology industry is the “hustle culture” which presents the message that long hours and workaholism are actually “doing what you love” and “following your dreams” (Griffith, 2019). This culture includes the expectation that workers love and derive their identity from their work and want to be engaged in it as much as possible. It’s unsurprising that these messages are promoted by business managers and owners – those not doing the actual work (Fried & Hansson, 2018). However, what is surprising and dismaying is how millennials are buying into and participating in this “hustle culture,” with advocates who vilify dissenting points of view (Griffith, 2019).

Like most ideologies, this “hustle culture” is not based in reason. Evidence shows that working long hours actually decreases productivity and health among workers (Pencavel, 2018). In addition, reductions in and flexibility with work hours, combined with workplace policies supportive of work-life balance, lead to better productivity and retention among employees (Barber, Grawitch, & Maloney, 2016). Still, highly educated workers are spending more and more time at work, and the perception remains that those who are believers in the “hustle culture” are the real doers in society (Dolton, 2017). Though these trends have taken shape among workers in the technology industry, they have implications for professionals in the instructional design and technology field.

In the instructional design and technology field, we may be more likely to view work as a calling rather than just a vocation, and to espouse a deeper more personal interest in the aspects of the field. These feelings are why many of us entered into the field and are inspired by our work in instructional design and technology, however they can also be problematic if not balanced well with other non-work-related aspects of life. There are a variety of quality activities and relationships that, if given adequate time, can contribute to our inspiration, happiness and mental well-being. These include family, exercise, travel, spiritual development, hobbies, relaxation, and sleep etc.

Work-life balance issues also exist in the academy. In general, academia can provide high opportunities for work-life balance compared to other fields, yet there are still major issues with professional burnout (Selingo, 2008). One life aspect important to professionals is family. Historically in the academy, female faculty members have battled the perception that having a family detracts from excellence as a faculty member (Smith, 2007). Female faculty may be particularly at risk for stress because of work-life balance issues (Cladellas & Castello, 2011), especially as some academic policies are built around an idealized structure in which there is a stay-at-home caregiving parent to attend to family needs (Curtis, 2004). Both male and female faculty often live in a system that mirrors the “hustle culture,” critical of family and leisure time and promoting a melding of career and identity.
The purpose of this panel will be to share perspectives about achieving work-life balance in the instructional design and technology field. The panel is comprised of early to mid-career professionals, with enough experience to provide advice and perspective on the issue of work-life balance. Panel members can share about experiences working both in academia and the instructional design industry. The panelists arranged for this session include:

- **Dr. Kristy Bloxham**
  - Professional Practice Associate professor – Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences – Utah State University
  - Former Director of Training at Entrata, VP of Training and Development at Younique, and Training Development Project Manager at Devonway

- **Dr. Heather Leary**
  - Assistant Professor of Instructional Psychology & Technology – Brigham Young University
  - Former Curriculum Designer - Curriculum Development Department - BYU-Idaho

- **Dr. Albert Ritzhaupt**
  - Associate Professor of Educational Technology and Associate Director for Graduate Studies – School of Teaching and Learning – University of Florida

- **Dr. Eunjung Grace Oh**
  - Assistant Professor Education Policy, Organization and Leadership – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
  - Former Instructional Designer at LearningPlus Inc. and HRD Specialist at Samsung SDS.

For the first 25 minutes of this panel session, the session chair will lead panelists in a discussion about some of the following questions.

- What non-work aspects of life are more important than your career in the instructional design and technology field?
- What efforts do you make to maintain a balance between your work/career and other aspects of life?
- How do you gently send the message to your administration that other aspects of life are important?
- How have you pushed back against the perception that your identity is tied into success in your career?
- What resources do you find useful to help you balance your work with other important aspects of life?
- How have you resisted the perception that devotion to other important aspects of life detracts from excellence in your career?
- How could limiting your time at work lead to a more inspired career experience in instructional design and technology?

After the panel has discussed these questions, the session will be opened up for audience questions and participation.

References


