VIRTUALLY EFFECTIVE STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

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KEY TAKEAWAY

Consider replacing traditional “face-to-face” presentations by students with online presentations
The ability to deliver an effective presentation in a virtual setting is a skill that current undergraduates need to develop (Adobe Education, 2011)
“When asked to compare different communications technologies, 52% of survey respondents state that online collaboration tools would make the greatest contribution in terms of improving educational quality over the next five years—the top response... Sophisticated learning-management systems and enhanced video and presentation tools are among other innovations that respondents say are likely to have a profound effect on the academic experience.”

[results from a global executive survey on digital communications skills conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2008)]
ADVANTAGES OF THE TRADITIONAL IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

- It helps students develop their composure and effective oral communications skills
- It requires them to “think on their feet” and respond spontaneously to questions from others
- It mirrors the situations they will often face in the workplace after graduation
DISADVANTAGES OF THE TRADITIONAL IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

- Class time is often a scarce resource
- In large classes, other students lose interest after several presentations
- Some students are nervous about public speaking
- International students may feel they are at a disadvantage when giving a presentation in a second language
RECORDED PRESENTATIONS ARE LEGITIMATE IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

- Many companies currently use videoconferencing, webinars, and other means of communication that are enhanced by technology.

- The globalization of most industries provides another impetus for using online communication.
COURSE SETTING

- Upper-level finance elective involving the student-managed stock portfolio
- Course involved two stock recommendations: One was a recorded online presentation during the fifth week of the term, and the other was a traditional live presentation during the tenth week
The presentations were recorded using technology at the website screencastle.com

Users can record their entire computer screen, accompanied by audio narration

The site then hosts the presentation on its server and provides a link for subsequent viewing

In February 2012, the site claimed that files would be hosted for an indefinite period of time

In addition, users could download the media file (in .flv format) if they wanted to post the presentation elsewhere
None of the students had prior experience with online presentations.

I required all teams to submit a one-minute sample recording three days before the online presentations were due.
Follow-up questions and answers were conducted using threaded discussions.

Each student was required to ask one question of one presentation.

This “forced” (in a gentle way) participation by all students, which is very difficult in a traditional class due to time constraints.

Students had one week to view the other groups’ presentations, review the associated reports, ask questions, and then vote on the recommendation.
Follow-Up Survey of Student Learning

- Students felt that:
  - The online presentations required the same amount of preparation as the traditional format.
  - They were more comfortable speaking during the online presentation.
  - They believed that the questions and answers after the presentation were better in the online setting.
  - The aggregate learning experience in the online presentation was somewhat better than in the traditional format.
Students’ Perceived Advantages of Online Presentations

- Being able to pause the presentation and replay selected parts while viewing
- Learning a new technology and having a deliverable that could be shared with prospective employers or others
- Greater comfort level and more time to respond thoughtfully to questions
- More flexibility regarding when the presentation is delivered (recorded)
Students’ Perceived Disadvantages of Online Presentations

- It could be boring viewing a recorded presentation due to the lack of a visible human element.
- Students could shirk their responsibility by viewing little or none of the presentations and posting a question based on their intuition or other information.
- Being able to think on one’s feet while responding to questions is a valuable skill, and the asynchronous approach does not help develop this.
- The recording process was more relaxed than a live presentation, which might result in a lower energy level by the speaker.
- Online presentations do not permit the speaker to use gestures and body language to help convey their point.
The Instructor’s Opinion

- Most appropriate for advanced courses with smaller enrollments
- The students should complete at least one other group exercise in the course, prior to this
- No dedicated technical support is required
- I would use this technology again!