

Three Major GDLN Blended Delivery Modalities

There are numerous ways to blend the ingredients discussed earlier to meet learning objectives and to fit the prevailing situation. The design of program delivery is mainly governed by the location of participants and the delivery mode selected for most of the learning process. As illustrated in Figure 1, the traditional classroom and pure e-Learning are at opposite ends of the spectrum, while various blends fall into the wide range in between. They can be categorized into three major blended delivery modalities.

- 1) F2F-based (or ICT-enhanced class or conference) delivery modality, in which most participants and resource persons remain at one place for most of the time;
- 2) VC-based delivery modality, in which participants and resource persons gather at one of the connected sites for most of the sessions;
- 3) e-Learning based delivery modality, in which participants learn in their workplace or home most of the time, but will gather at a VC site once or several times to interact;

The F2F-based blended learning is not distance learning as most participants remain in one principal location for most of the time during the learning process. However, the event is blended by adding videoconference sessions to link remote speakers or participants for the purpose of enriching learning resources and/or increasing accessibility. Email, website or some e-Learning materials may also be employed to improve communication and interaction, or for facilitating group collaboration before and/or after the class or conference. While maintaining the F2F as the dominant delivery mode, the use of ICT should be modest and easy to organize. The F2F-based blended learning can be the first step for universities and educational entities to start using GDLN with the minimum change of program content design and extra administrative work.

An example of the F2F-based GDLN blended program is the AIM 64th Management Development Program (see Box 2). Started by a few champion faculty members several years ago, AIM professors integrate videoconferencing into their traditional classroom seminars using the F2F-based blended learning approach. There is no dramatic change of the program in the curriculum. By adding one or two VC sessions, the learning resources are enriched and updated. Participants are excited about the power of technology, and appreciate the chance of interacting with leading experts and peers in other countries.

This blended approach is relatively easy and quick to implement. Compared to choosing e-Learning directly, investment and risk are both low. We recommend this blend type to faculty of an educational institute, especially to those which host a GDLN Center like AIM.

Box 2

*AIM 64th Management Development Program
A F2F-based blended learning program*

Since 2003, the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) faculty members have begun introducing videoconference and e-learning components into their traditional programs. The 64th Management Development Program (June 14 to July 22, 2004) is a six-week program, which was taught face-to-face every year. Students from all over the region traveled to Philippines and stayed on campus in Makati City, listening to and interacting with professors in the classroom.

Professor Patt Lontoc, Program Director at the AIM Executive Education and Lifelong Learning Center is a champion of using ICT in teaching. She added two videoconferencing sessions into the program to bring regional and international perspectives to students. The first VC was on “Human Capital Management in the 21st Century” which was led by Felipe Alfonso, former AIM President and current Executive Director of AIM’s Center for Governance and Corporate Responsibility. The second VC was on “Assessing Direct Foreign Investment in Japan” chaired by Toru Tokuhisa, Director General of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). The VC sessions linked to Korea and Sri Lanka through the GDLN. Furthermore, The presentations of international experts and discussion among participants generated some new learning materials for the program.

Source: Asian Institute of Management and the World Bank Development Resource Center (AIM-WB DRC)

The VC-based blended learning is networked learning in a distributed classroom model. Videoconferencing technology is a powerful tool for reaching people in different countries that allows them to communicate in real time on screen. Normally the program organizer at the initiating site sets the agenda and rules, and leads the communication and interaction. Local F2F activities led by a local facilitator at each site are designed and arranged before and/or after the VC session to capitalize on the fact that participants are all together in one place. If available, website, CD-ROM and e-discussion can provide extra content and expand the possibilities for communication and interaction.

VC-based learning is the most frequently used blend type for GDLN programs as it can meet various communication and learning needs. This blend enables regional or global dialogue or knowledge sharing and can support communications on various topics, especially in crisis situations such as, SARS and Tsunami when travel is limited or impossible. It can be used to conduct workshops, seminars and structured courses with multiple countries in order to scale up. Since about seventy percent of the cost of traditional training goes to travel, the use of VC-based blends for learning is economical.

An example of the VC-based GDLN blended program is the Total Quality Management (TQM) course of Asian Productivity Organization (APO) (see Box 3). The TQM course

is one of APO's flagship programs, which has been delivered in the F2F mode for many years. However, the knowledge and experience are still very dependent on a few famous Japanese experts, who disseminate their knowledge and experience through lectures with slides as visual aids.

The TDLC task manager and instructional designer modified the original design of the F2F seminar by shortening the lecture time to make it more focused on key topics, and by adding interaction time for Q&A and discussion. Local facilitators were hired and trained. Briefings and rehearsals were conducted for lecturers to familiarize them with the VC technology.

After converting to a distance learning course, access was easier, flexibility increased, and significant cost saving gained in terms of expenditure per participant. It also enriched the learning resources by allowing exposure to more experts, and multiple field trip venues. Participants and the APO management are positive about the pilot delivery.

This approach can be used to convert an existing high quality and important program into distance learning without significant investment and efforts to develop e-learning material. The traditional lecture can be quickly converted into a presentation via VC. Compared to the e-Learning based approach, the VC-based blended learning is easier and quicker to prepare. When there is an urgent learning need, or a mandatory request, a VC-based learning event with good presenters can be quickly planned and arranged.

Box 3

*Total Quality Management Course of APO
A VC-blended learning program*

On December 13, 2004, the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) launched a four-day VC-based distance learning seminar on its flagship program on Total Quality Management (TQM) via the Global Distance Learning Network. The seminar involved participants in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan who represented a broad cross section of private and public sector officers.

Three Japanese experts on productivity and management lectured on TQM concepts, applied methodologies and statistical analysis on the first and last days. They also presented Japanese case studies and conducted exercises.

The second day of the seminar included field trips to observe approaches to TQM at companies in the respective countries. The venues of field trips were selected and prepared by APO country offices, and led by a local facilitator. Survey guidelines and report templates were given in advance.

The following day, each country made a group presentation to all sites in VC to analyze and discuss the findings of their visits. Participants learned from experts, peers and themselves.

Source: Tokyo Development Learning Center, the World Bank

e-Learning based blended learning is essentially adding local F2F activities and VC sessions into e-Learning. Most contents are delivered to participants via computer and Internet. Past experience shows that a preparation VC is very useful for the organizers, local facilitators and DLCs. A VC at the beginning of the course is very helpful to all participants in understanding the methodology and organization, and most important, to establish the feeling of a learning community. Local facilitators who lead interaction at the learning sites are critical in all distance learning situations. Local facilitation is one of the best practices of GDLN. In selecting this blend type it is important that quality e-learning material should be used.

An example of e-Learning based blended learning is the Training of Trainers on Microfinance (MFTOT) course (see Box 4). The Microfinance Distance Learning (MFDL) course developed by UNCDF is a high quality e-learning course for self-study. The well designed and costly e-learning package is comprehensive and interactive and provides most of the teaching aspects of the course to all participants. At the same time, online tutoring is important to provide feedback on assignments and keep the pace of the course on schedule. The four videoconference sessions in the MFTOT course were supplementary and added extra presentations that included important debates and exposure to key issues in microfinance. Most important, they facilitated human contact and real time interaction between participants and experts. The VC sessions at the beginning, middle and the end of the course also enhanced coordination and established learning communities both within and between countries. As a consequence, the drop-out rate proved to be significantly lower than for similar courses offered in pure e-learning mode.

There are other quality e-learning materials on development that can be delivered by this type of blend approach. The Australia National University GDLN Center is organizing a similar blended learning course on “Dengue Fever” based on another quality CD-ROM reviewed by ADBI. The World Bank Institute developed many e-learning courses using WebCT, such as “The Health for the Poor”, “Fiscal Decentralization” and “Trust Fund Management”. They are delivered in an e-learning based approach.

Please note: without quality e-learning material, this approach is unlikely to succeed. Many training organizers have experienced frustration with poor e-learning courses. It is recommended that the e-Learning based blended approach be selected only when there is a well developed e-learning course available. Normally GDLN is concerned with program delivery and not with the costly and complicated content development process.

Box 4

*Training of Trainers on Microfinance (MFTOT)
An e-Learning based blended learning program*

More than a billion poor people are excluded by the formal financial system of their countries. Microfinance has evolved as an instrument for economic development and poverty reduction that ensures the provision of financial services to low-income and poor

clients. It helps poor people build their capacity to generate income, so they can improve education, health and nutrition, thus reducing vulnerability.

In 2005, the International year of Micro credit proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, three international development organizations: United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and the Tokyo Development Learning Center (TDLC) of the World Bank jointly sponsored and organized a blended ICT-based distance learning course titled “Training of Trainers on Microfinance” (MFTOT). It was delivered twice to a total of nine Asian countries drawing on the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) in an effort to build training capacity for the growing demand for microfinance in developing Asia.

The blended ICT-based learning activity combined three major types of technologies: self-paced study using CD-ROM and workbook, online tutoring and discussion, as well as two-way interactive videoconferencing. Major learning activities included:

- 1. Three months of self study using a workbook with 2 CD-ROMs of computer-based instruction comprising 11 lessons and selected readings (one lesson per week plus final examination according to a schedule with specific dates).*
- 2. Online tutoring via email is provided to TOT participants, who would complete 11 assignments, take a final exam, and participate in online discussion.*
- 3. 4 VC sessions containing 7 presentations on key issues and country cases providing supplemental contents, and opportunity for interaction with international microfinance experts. VC sessions were also used to build morale and handle administrative issues.*
- 4. Local facilitators at each site were encouraged to organize face-to-face activities before and after VCs at GDLN Centers.*

Source: Tokyo Development Learning Center, the World Bank

A useful reference for selecting appropriate blended delivery modalities can be found in Table 4, which summarizes major features and suitability of the three types describe above. In the table, from left to right, the accessibility of targeted audiences and the flexibility of learners increase. However, at the same time, the need for high quality e-Learning material, the longer preparation time and higher pre-investment costs are also increased.

Source: Guide Book on “Effective Blended Learning for Development” by Charles Maguire and Jiping Zhang, 2006.