Learning Circuits

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24 Hours in the Life of a New Synchronous Learner
By Jennifer Hofmann

And you thought a day in a e-trainer's life was hard.

Monday

4:00 p.m.
I install the synchronous classroom software for tomorrow's course without a problem. Or so I think. As I work through the setup wizard, I realize I forgot to order a headset from the training department.

I leave a voicemail with the training office asking whether they have an extra headset that I can borrow.

As a backup plan, I put the software and laptop in my bag and go shopping for a replacement headset. If I find one, I can test the audio at home. I guess it will be fast food for dinner.

6:00 p.m.
With my corporate credit card in hand, I arrive at the local office supply store. Unfortunately, there's a large selection of headsets. Too confused to choose a pair on my own, I ask a clerk for some assistance. After speaking with the clerk, I have more questions. Do I need two-way feedback? How much do I want to spend: $10, $20, $50. With few answers, I base my decision on price. I go home with a $20 headset, and hope it's compatible with my system.

8:00 p.m.
I finally manage to get the software installed on my laptop so I can test the audio, but the office's server is down. The headset test will have to wait until tomorrow, after all. I skim through the email messages I downloaded this afternoon and see a reminder to complete prework for the course. I draft a note to the instructor asking whether prework is mandatory.

Tuesday

8:30 a.m.
I open my email to find a message from the instructor saying that the two-hour prework is a course requirement. I have until 1 p.m. to complete the assignment. Knowing that I need plenty of energy to get so much work done, I decide to get breakfast.

8:45 a.m.
To make time to complete my prework, I cancel a 9 a.m. meeting. I reschedule for 3 p.m., when class should be over.

9:00 a.m.
I open my Web browser, log onto the prework Website, and download several plug-ins.

10:00 a.m.
I work through nearly half of the tutorial when my manager interrupts me. As usual, a fire that only I can manage needs to be put out.

10:40 a.m.
With my daily tasks for my job under control, I try to finish the course prework. I have some questions, but manage to work through them without assistance.

I send an email message to my coworkers reminding them that I will be in class from 1 to 3 p.m. and should not be disturbed.

11:00 a.m.
On my way to a staff meeting, I remember that I still need to test my audio. Then I realize that I forgot my new headset at home. Yikes!

11:30 a.m.
I duck out of my staff meeting to beg, borrow, or steal a headset. Mary, who sits in the cubicle next to me, has one I can use. I log onto the server to test the audio and find that it still doesn't work properly. I call the help desk and they talk me through uninstalling and reinstalling the program and audio setup. We manage to get everything working within 30 minutes, leaving me with time for lunch.

12:30 p.m.
After lunch, I hurry back to my desk and check my email and voicemail. Class starts at 1 p.m. sharp, so participants log on at 12:45. I should have plenty of time to return a few calls.

1:05 p.m.
Oops! I'm a little late, but people are still introducing themselves and I haven't missed much. Luckily, working with the help desk this morning, made logging on a breeze.

1:20 p.m.
My email alert is distracting, and when I toggle over to turn it off, I see there's a note marked urgent concerning a high-priority project that I'm working on. As I read the message, the instructor calls on me. Unfortunately, I have no idea how to answer his question. I turn off the email alert.

1:40 p.m.
Mary comes over to request some assistance with a mutual project. I apologize for not including her in my email that told people I couldn't be disturbed during class. She says she received the email but didn't think I would mind answering a simple question, especially since she lent me her headset. I tell her I'll have to talk to her after class.

1:45 p.m.
Another participant logs into the class a full hour late, claiming confusion over time zones. The instructor sends him away, saying he can reschedule for a new course time.

2:10 p.m.
I get kicked off the server, and it takes me several minutes to reboot my machine and log on. Back in the class, I find that the instructor has created breakout rooms and given participants an exercise to work on in groups. I email the instructor and wait in the main room for someone to notice me.

2:15 p.m.
After a couple of minutes, the instructor sends me into a breakout room. The exercise is a very hands-on skills practice. I realize that I wouldn't have been prepared for the assignment if I had skipped the prework.

2:50 p.m.
Class seems to be running long, and the instructor sends out a notice informing participants that we'll get out of class approximately 10 minutes late.

I have a 3:00 meeting and I need to speak to Mary first. I leave my desk --without logging off-- and head to Mary's desk. Hopefully, no one will notice I'm gone.

3:05 p.m.
When I return to my workstation, I notice that my message light is flashing. Tech Support has called to ask whether I was booted from the classroom again. It seems the instructor wanted to ask me a question and I didn't respond. I quickly send an apology to the instructor explaining how I hadn't planned on the class running long and had a meeting I that I needed to attend. She promises to send me a wrap-up email.

I log off and go to my meeting.

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