“RADICAL” REDESIGN OF CLASSROOM CONNECT

by

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Our redesign of the product, Classroom Connect, includes a significant change in focus. We recommend that this product reposition itself as a service to the educators in its defined market. By recognizing that teachers are the experts in determining what they and their classrooms need, Classroom Connect should become an interactive vehicle that guides and/or delivers information, products, lessons and web resources to the teachers it serves. Thus, the subscription fee has more real value because it responds to user’s requests and preferences. It will contain many more interactive options.

When teachers subscribe to Classroom Connect, they should feel like they are joining a club or a community. A color brochure will introduce and illustrate the product and its goals in a friendly and effective manner (see attached sketch). Then as the next step in getting established as a member of the “community” there are three avenues of help to set up a personalized Home Page for each user. If a large group within a school subscribes, a representative from Classroom Connect will come to the school to personally walk-through the procedure of setting up their personal Home Page in a computer lab setting. Regional “set-up” sessions could be set up to bring new subscribers together within a localized region. This type of session will be an effective means for people to get to know other new users as well. Otherwise, a video presentation will be made available to teachers to guide them through if they are novices and leery of doing it online.

The new personalized Home Page reflects not only the grade level and information about the class, but the teacher herself. There is also an optional Smart Agent feature which profiles and stores data regarding the teacher’s interests, skills, hobbies and professional goals. Therefore, when the teacher logs on daily, there is information waiting for her that relates to either her interests specifically or answers her requests. For example, on a specific lesson idea, the program could “poll” other users and come back with ideas or addresses of others interested in discussing past experiences or sharing ideas. The Home Page will have many options for expansion for working at intermediate and expert modes. A “post-it” notepad function will be added to make it easier for a teacher to leave quick notes for herself, or to forward to students/other colleagues.

Setting up the My Classroom Today--Class Page, or lesson plan, will be guided in an obvious step-by-step tutorial. But again the focus will be shifted to responding to teachers’ requests and questions with recommended lessons and resources, and also to teaching them how to do it themselves. They can become more independent as their confidence increases. For novices, there will be more audio and large buttons. As they get more savvy, they will need less scaffolding, but Classroom Connect will still offer many opportunities for growth because, the teachers will be better able to browse and seek ideas on their own. There will be more and different modes of interactivity and customization—the teacher can grow in skill and expertise but not outgrow Classroom Connect. Therefore there will be more product loyalty and longer terms of use with the product.
Implications

We see many improvements to the success of Classroom Connect with the implementation of this redesign. There is increased value of the product: there are more services provided by the subscription. Increased product and company loyalty will lead to more purchasing of books, courses, workshops, etc. which is quite profitable for the company. Teachers can grow—through mastery of different modes of expertise—which will bring longer product use. They will get used to and comfortable with their customized, yet adaptable Home Page, which is viewed and utilized daily.

The phased introduction of the new Classroom Connect product—from brochure, to personal attention to setting up unique Home Pages, to guided tours - will successfully bridge the transition for a teacher from being technophobic to being ultimately comfortable, enthusiastic and effective in bringing technology into her classroom. And, by continuing to provide its well-selected content and at the same time promoting the individual teacher’s professional growth and expanding Web skills, Classroom Connect has the potential to be hugely successful and stand apart from its competition. The key is repositioning itself not as a tool with resources, but as a service.