

Preface

Objective and Background

Business organizations today are looking for work-ready graduates to whom they invest in continuing education to support employees – a quick return on investment. Concurrently, online delivery of courses and programs is on the rise benefitting both individuals and their employers. Engaging in online education often mirrors the way work is done in organizations while also containing costs. The debate about the quality of online versus on-campus business education continues to rage. While some resist the move to virtual campuses and learning, it is hard to deny the preferences of a connected population who seek increasingly flexible, accessible learning opportunities, course materials, classrooms, faculty, and associated services any-time and from anywhere. This is causing disruption to how educators do business. Business schools today are involved in the evolution of virtual courses and classrooms as an opportunity to reach remotely located and international students, as well as students in immediate vicinities given demand for greater access and opportunity without adversely disrupting careers and lives.

The intent of this edited book is to present different perspectives of *online business education* – how it is best designed and delivered and how it supports advances in management disciplines. Through the endeavor of linking theory to practice, the authors describe online platforms in their provision of timely, excellent, and relevant business education.

This book intends to contribute insights for use to business educators in design and implementation of online learning. We present and discuss technologies for class facilitation and preparation, the “secret sauce” regarding meeting and exceeding collaboration expectations, adaptive content, tools used to bring content and issues to life, disruptive approaches, and new emerging directions.

Audience for This Book

This book is targeted at business educators and administrators who have an interest in delivering high-quality business education using online platforms and tools. Lessons learned, insights, and challenges have been discussed from various perspectives for those looking to gain insight into developing new educational programs that through collaborative online learning tools create aligned knowledge and skill. This book is also intended for use of business practitioners interested in the development of work-ready graduates and further learning opportunities that may support their organizations.

Book Structure

The main theme of the book is *online business education*. The book draws from the experience of academics involved with the development and implementation of online business education, administrators, and researchers who investigate the technologies and closely watch marketplace trends. The book also presents perspective papers from individuals who are involved with the development of online learning approaches and systems as well as those who have taken online business programs. The perspective papers capture graduates and consultants from different parts of the world who provide interesting comments on their experiences of online business education. It is our premise that educators, graduates, and consultants alike have much to share and learn from one another to encourage further development of online business education.

The book is divided into three parts.

Part 1 presents papers on “why” business education is viable and sustainable in today’s context. The book starts by examining the emergence of online business education. Treating education as a service, this part describes new techniques for creating a better online business education experience. It also looks at the role advanced data analytics can play in enhancing the quality of online business education.

Part 2 delves into “how” online business education works. It presents conceptual models for teaching in specific disciplines and learning design that describes what business educators do and how programs work. This part also addresses performance assessments and quality assurance measures that help to demonstrate the efficacy of online pedagogy. Practical applied papers are used in this part to highlight the use of learning platforms, tools, and their application specific to businesses that build knowledge and skills and make students “work ready.”

Part 3 of the book addresses the “so what?” or the outcomes and impacts of online business education. This part targets where business education needs to take learning next, for example, to support sustainable business, ethical decision making, and inclusive and collaborative leadership. Papers deal with topics such as how

distributed online environments may work better to support knowledge and soft skill building directly relevant for organizations today. Other learning outcomes showing the value of online business education are discussed.

Integrated into each part are short papers that present student, consultant, or online educational user “perspectives.” These short chapters both support the content within some of the chapters and question approaches with the customer perspective. They are intended to create an ongoing conversation with interesting themes emerging to connect real-world practices and approaches.

It is our view that engaging in online business education is like a marathon where an educator must plan, pace, and manage the learning. While online business education intends to help individuals achieve personal goals, they recognize too that some may miss out on important in-person learning gained through the physical presence of other classmates. Thus, at times the need for specialized blended degrees in topics such as leadership, change management, supply chain management, project management where students benefit from face time with other students, or the broader business perspectives may be beneficial. It is important to provide opportunities for students to leverage both place-based and online business education for knowledge and skill building within a broader educational ecosystem.

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On the Line

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