

# Developing and Implementing Strategies to Enhance Intellectual Capital in the Online Learning Environment

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**Abstract:** The online learning environment has become a highly competitive industry in which many stakeholders have become more interested and involved in its overall operation. One particular area that most stakeholders will agree upon is the value of human capital in this industry. Stewart (1997) classified Intellectual Capital into three key areas: human capital, structural capital, and customer capital. This paper will focus on the human capital element in the online learning environment. Human capital is explained as “the capabilities of the company’s employees necessary to provide solutions to customers, to innovate and to renew. As a result of changing technology and economic times, many organizations are realizing the need to update, innovate, and rejuvenate. InCaS (2010) noted that “As a result of constant changes caused by globalisation, emerging technologies and shorter product life-cycles, knowledge and innovation have already become the main competitive advantages of many companies. Especially European small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are highly dependent on the ability to identify changes in their global economic environment quickly and respond to these changes with suitable solutions.” (p. 4) Just like their European counterparts, American enterprises and organizations are scanning their environments and focusing on responding to potential changes in order to capture and maintain their market share and prepare for the future. In addition to individual capabilities, human capital includes the dynamics of an intelligent (learning) organization in a changing competitive environment, its creativity, and innovativeness” (Stewart, 1997, p. 13). Thus, there has been an increase in the focus as to how online learning providers are investing more money and time in preparing their online instructional staff. Sokolowska (2006) commented that “if we look at learning organizations we can see two types of trends. She stated that “such organizations are understood in dynamic organizational categories that are oriented at their development, searches for new chances on the market and continually increases their effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility. The second group of learning organizations consists of such entities that choose growth through development of their employees.” (p. 158) This paper examines the online learning environment, requirements for the online instructional staff, and strategies to help better prepare and develop their intellectual capital in this particular learning environment. Further, this paper will examine how these strategies are reinforced by the commitment of the educational institution in terms of preparing their online instructors, as well as mentoring them along the way.

**Keywords:** online learning, human capital, intellectual capital, teacher training, eLearning

## 1. The impact of organizational/environmental changes on intellectual capital

As more and more technological changes occurring both in education, work, and homes, many changes have been observed, measured, analyzed, and discussed in terms of intellectual capital. While many organizations are focusing on building best practices and setting their own benchmarks, we can see a growing focus on companies realizing the value of employees and their many contributions. As a result of changing technology and economic times, many organizations are realizing the need to update, innovate, and rejuvenate. InCaS (2010) noted that “As a result of constant changes caused by globalisation, emerging technologies and shorter product life-cycles, knowledge and innovation have already become the main competitive advantages of many companies. Especially European small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are highly dependent on the ability to identify changes in their global economic environment quickly and respond to these changes with suitable solutions.” (p. 4) Just like their European counterparts, American enterprises and organizations are scanning their environments and focusing on responding to potential changes in order to capture and maintain their market share and prepare for the future. Thus, the key question is whether we are better off today than before in terms of developing our intellectual capital? Has the onset of technological advancements really helped or hindered our learning and knowledge building process? Further, have we, as a nation, taken advantage of such development to the betterment of our own lives, as well as others in our society? As economic times vary from country to country, this has caused many to rethink how they do business, value their employees, and plan their strategic movements to compete in ever-changing, but yet turbulent times ahead of them. This paper will address various strategies used in the online learning environment to develop and enhance the online learning environment in terms of learning experience for learners, instructional staff, and support staff. Each of these noted individuals represent a vital part of the intellectual capital of the learning environment, as well as contribute to the ongoing existence and preparation for future growth in this

particular industry. Since they are members of a learning environment, or contributors to their own learning organization, they can play a vital role and function – especially if the strategic leaders begin to recognize and value these roles and functions.

The online learning environment has become a highly competitive industry in which many stakeholders have become more interested and involved in its overall operation. One particular area that most stakeholders will agree upon is the value of human capital in this industry. Stewart (1997) classified Intellectual Capital into three key areas: human capital, structural capital, and customer capital. This paper will focus on the human capital element in the online learning environment. Human capital is explained as “the capabilities of the company’s employees necessary to provide solutions to customers, to innovate and to renew. In addition to individual capabilities, human capital includes the dynamics of an intelligent (learning) organization in an ever-changing competitive environment, its creativity, and innovativeness” (Stewart, 1997, p. 13). As a result, many organizations are starting to invest more monies into technology, training and evaluative efforts. Thus, there has been an increase in the focus as to how online learning providers are investing more money and time in preparing their online instructional staff.

One way that online learning providers help to develop human capital is by offering quality online training for new and current instructors. Barbara Smith (2000), chief learning officer for Burson-Marsteller stated that “If we don’t have the best people creating the best product, we can’t compete. What I’m after is creating the best people in the industry. ELearning is an option that provides us with real competitive edge – it helps us maximize our intellectual capital” (para. 2). While some organizations have focused on developing the talents and skills of current staff, some innovative organizations continuously focus recruiting and hiring the best of the best in the workforce. This type of approach helps to raise the level of standards in the workplace, as well as cause more organizations to focus on their current workforce and future employee forecasting needs. Thus, there is a growing need for more investment and strategic development in the area of online learning training to help enhance the skills of online instructors and staff in general.

This paper will provide an overview of how several online universities have invested in their online instructional training, as well as creating ongoing educational opportunities, in order to develop one segment of their intellectual capital – their instructors. While online instructors have been empowered with various technological tools, as well as given the task of facilitating learning, they also serve as the frontline for customer service questions and guidance. Thus, many online schools have realized the need to develop and implement better strategies for their online intellectual capital, and some have spent extra time focused on the frontline provides to their instructors. In the next section, there will be a brief overview of what is happening with online learning in the United States. While this paper may be limited to the study of best practices held by these U.S. educational institutions, it can be used a potential blueprint for others to examine how their educational systems view, value, and maintain their own intellectual capital.

### **1.1 Current online growth in the virtual learning environment**

According to Sokolowska (2006), “if we look at learning organizations we can see two types of trends . . . such organizations are understood in dynamic organizational categories that are oriented at their development, searches for new chances on the market and continually increases their effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility. The second group of learning organizations consist of such entities that choose growth through development of their employees.” (p. 158) Along with looking at these learning organizations, we need to also focus on the need to develop core competencies, as well as being innovative. InCaS (2010) stated that “Market-oriented innovation, transparent structures as well as a strategic development of core competencies are therefore essential preconditions for sustainable growth and future competitiveness. Intellectual Capital (IC) forms the basis for high quality products and services as well as for organizational innovations. So far, conventional management instruments and balance sheets do not cover the systematic management of IC.” (p. 4) In this context, we can examine how online learning is growing and changing, as well as the need to examine more closely why innovation will be a major factor in the growth of this industry and its intellectual capital. Over the past 2 decades the world of distance education has changed drastically. With the ever-increasing varieties of technological advancements, we have seen distance education evolve into the field of online learning (virtual learning). Finally, Sokolowska (2006) commented that if we look at learning organizations we can see two types of trends. She stated that “such organizations are understood in dynamic organizational categories that are oriented at their development, searches for new chances

on the market and continually increases their effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility. The second group of learning organizations consists of such entities that choose growth through development of their employees” (p. 158). As more universities create and implement online learning programs, they may not have a current online workforce to operate and maintain such learning courses and programs. As a result, they have to invest in more training with their current staff and instructors in order to meet this growing demand for online instructional programs.

As these programs increase in size, many educational institutions are starting to view trends in terms of forecasting their current and future online learning needs. Greer (2010) noted that “Online college education is expanding—rapidly. More than 4.6 million college students were taking at least one online course at the start of the 2008-2009 school year. That’s more than 1 in 4 college students, and it’s a 17 percent increase from 2007.” (para. 1) In 2006, 38 states in the United States have established state-led online learning programs, policies regulating online learning, or both. Also, 25 states have state-led online learning programs, and 18 states are home to a total of 147 virtual charter schools serving over 65,000 students (<http://www.nacol.org>). In 2001, 56% of traditional learning institutions offered distance learning programs. An additional 12% of schools stated they planned on adding distance learning programs to their curriculum within the next three years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). We can see that more secondary- and post-secondary level teachers will need to seek additional education in order to obtain and master quality online teaching skills and strategies. As a result, more universities are offering online education courses and teacher training in order to help recruit and hire more online instructors. Thus, there is a growing need to increase the number of online instructors to teach at various educational institutions as more online programs are introduced into their academic offerings. In the next section of this paper, the focus will be on examining how technology has been growing and how it has affected instructors and their need to update their skills.

## **2. Updating technology, faculty, and staff**

While some instructors have not embraced online learning, and perhaps it may be due to their lack of technology or understanding of online education, many educational institutions are requiring all current and potential teaching faculty to attend some form of online training for either online or face-to-face teaching skills. CDW Government, LLC prepared the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Campus Report which showed how college faculty have been lagging far behind IT staff in their rating of online technology. According to the report, surveyed 1,000 students, faculty members, and IT professionals, they found the following.

- 68 percent of IT staff view virtual learning as an important element in higher education, while only 35 percent of the faculty feel the same.
- 72 percent of IT pros say online collaboration software is essential; 31 percent of faculty agreed.
- 61 percent of the schools surveyed offered online virtual learning.
- Students list lack of professor technology knowledge as their number one concern (named by 24 percent). Faculty and IT staff list this as their number two concern, behind budget cuts.
- Students increasingly value and expect 21st Century technology in higher education, with 93 percent of high-schoolers saying technology is important in their college choice (63 percent of current college students agreed). (Geteducated.com, 2010, para. 3-7)

While technology has become available in many parts of the globe, a new type of student population has emerged. The traditional student image of higher learning has been somewhat limited in many countries, but given the impact of the Internet, this traditional “student body” has changed to online communities. The typical average student between 18-26 years of age is becoming replaced with a more diversified population of adult learners, which includes more women, minorities, people with disabilities, and older adult learners. The barriers of a traditional learning environment are slowly fading away with the new “learning environment” of online learning. As one looks at these changes in the field of education, it becomes evident that changes have to be made both in the field of academia and the world of work. In the field of business and management, educators have recognized the demographical changes in the student population, and they have to start to make adjustments in their teaching styles and course offerings. In a virtual environment, the student is not the same traditional student seen in classrooms in previous years, but rather one that reflects a vast array of cultural differences and needs that require educators to help build “new learning paths” towards the creation of virtual learning communities.

In terms of these demographic changes, the number of students taking at least one online course continues to expand at a rate far in excess of the growth of overall higher education enrollments. The most recent estimate, for fall 2007, places this number at 3.94 million online students, an increase of 12.9 percent over fall 2006. The number of online students has more than doubled in the five years since the first Sloan survey on online learning. The growth from 1.6 million students taking at least one online course in fall 2002 to the 3.94 million for fall 2007 represents a compound annual growth rate of 19.7 percent. The overall higher education student body has grown at an annual rate of around 1.6 percent during this same period (from 16.6 million in Fall 2002 to 18.0 million for Fall 2007 - Projections of Education Statistics to 2017, National Center for Education Statistics). As the following table illustrates, over one-fifth of all higher education students are now taking at least one online course.

Who are these 3.9 million students? The overwhelmingly majority (over 80 percent) are studying at the undergraduate level with only 14 percent taking graduate level courses and the remainder in some other for-credit course. Using survey results and figures from the most recent federal data (Digest of Education Statistics: 2007, National Center for Education Statistics) to compare enrollment patterns shows only slight variations in the proportions of students by education type. The proportion of undergraduates in online education (83.9 percent) is slightly below that of the total population of higher education students (85.6 percent). (Allen & Seaman, 2008)

Since technology has provided a powerful infrastructure, the emerging technologies have allowed educational institutions, educators, and students to provide education on a much higher playing field – in a virtual learning environment. Consequently, the business world has also worked with technology in this venture to help assist educational institutions in becoming more modern and adaptive for change. The business community has made an impact on the course offerings for many universities as they invite more and more business leaders and managers to participate in their Curriculum Advisory Committees (CACs). One key item that both of these environments can agree upon quickly is the impact of technology and how they need to harness it to their advantage. As a result, these changes only signify to the educational and learning communities that technology recognizes a need for change – but do we, as educators, recognize the need for change completely? Finally, many educational institutions, as well as the business world, are focusing on the learning process and its impact on their organizational structure and employees.

Finally, more people have considered online learning to be a new academic challenge, and they have realized that the next step for college graduates is the world of work. In this regard, the corporate environment may differ from the academic setting; however, the need to learn and grow is equally important in the world of business and academia. While online learning has been focused more on the academic setting, many companies are learning that online learning has many benefits in the corporate/business environments. Thus, many companies and organizations are focusing on the “learning” element of their employees’ daily work lives, as well as helping to build their knowledge management with a concentration on helping the organization learn from previous and current experiences. Thompson (1995) stated that “organizational learning involves the acquisition of new information and the ability to analyze that information creatively, learn from it, and apply that learning in useful ways.” (p. 95). As organizations realize that there is a need to “capture” and “utilize” this type of learning, they also realize the need for the organization, as a whole, to concentrate on building up this learning element to include everyone in their respective organization, as well as setting up informal and formal learning center or circles. While organizations and communities view the impact of online learning in the U.S., we also have to look at how type of learning is impacting the world and our global capital. While many companies are realizing the need to compete with both domestic and international firms, they do realize that such a growing needs means that they have to invest both in technology, as well as their intellectual capital equally.

### **3. Online learning and its global impact on the world of work**

As more organizations consider the movement towards more global ventures and expansion, they have also realized that such movement involves more than just mere investment dollars – they have to think globally and competitively. In the business world, when “a brand expands its reach around the globe, it achieves favored perceptions that are greater than the sum of its national parts” (Holt, Quelch, and Taylor, 2004, p. 191). This branding, known as global branding, relies on the input of the various stakeholders and how their cultural differences can enhance the quality and acceptance of such a brand. In the field of education, one needs to understand how these new virtual learning

communities have created a new type of global branding of education in terms of linking various stakeholders throughout the world into a stronger and more diversified learning environment. Contextually, one can see a new, global branding of course management systems, which affects and supplements the needs of growing, virtual learning communities. An example of these virtual learning communities may be viewed a form of supported organization learning known as communities of practice.

#### **4. Online communities of practice**

A community of practice can be defined as “groups of people who share similar goals and interests. In pursuit of these goals and interest, they employ common practices, work with the same tools, and express themselves in common language. Though such common activity, they come to hold similar benefits and value systems.” (Collaborative Visualization Project, n.d., para. 4). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), situated learning is a typed of learning that takes place in the workplace. One way to view this is in the lens of an apprentice learning on the job for use later in their professional profession. As one continues to work in a given environment, skills and experiences are learned or shared, as well as contributions to the collective whole can occur. While it may not be on the same level at more experienced, skilled, or educated professionals, this type of experience does demonstrate the beginnings of one’s contribution and participation in knowledge management in one sense or another. Consequently, we can see participation in the workplace, academia or even in a virtual gather (learning situation) as a form of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), as described by Lave and Wenger (1991). In this type of participation, we can view it as a social process in these described environments, whereas people join together for a common goal(s) and proceed to build upon each other’s participation, contributions, and experiences. In fact, this is their “own” community of practice starting to be built by them, which tell not only a story about them and their interactions – but also how they create, value, and share their knowledge gained.

Who are these contributors to the community of practice? If we look at the academic approach to communities of practice, there seem to be a growing eagerness to form such communities of various reasons. However, one key reason for academic groups to form such communities to help pair up new faculty members with seasoned faculty to help learn from them and perhaps build their own “form of expertise” within their group. Spased, Bessant, Partington, Tranfield, and Young (2002) noted that “academic communities typify the dynamics of collectively sharing identity, know-how, and ways of working independently of local contact” (p. 79). Besides having this sharing only focused on new technology, as we seen with the advent and implement of online learning, many face-to-face and online groups are forming such communities.

Consequently, we need to look at the value to the individual contributors of creating and maintaining knowledge within their groups and organizations, as well as working with external groups in efforts to improve their company goals internally and externally. While shared knowledge is beneficial to individuals, groups, and the organization as a whole, one needs to consider the importance of it and how the various members are rewarded and given recognition for their efforts. Davidson and Voss (2002) noted that “a knowledge management initiative will not get very far if – however actively you champion knowledge sharing – the existing remuneration system rewards knowledge hoarding” (p. 146). As a result, educational institutions are focusing on help teambuilding within their organizations and helping individuals and groups learn and grow from each other’s experiences, as well as the richness of opportunities being afforded to them by technology and their respective institution. Thus, this leads us to the next part of this paper’s focus, the European and American approaches towards Intellectual Capital.

#### **5. European and U.S. approaches to intellectual capital**

According to Answers.com, “*Intellectual capital* collectively refers to all resources that determine the value and the competitiveness of an enterprise. As such, it includes as subsets the attributes that concur to building all financial statements as well as the balance sheet.” (para. 1) While intellectual capital can be examined and discussed in terms of employees, organizational capabilities or customers, the main focus of this paper will focus on the area of human capital. Stewart (1997) classified Intellectual Capital into three identified areas in the following:

*Human Capital: The capabilities of the company’s employees necessary to provide solutions to customers, to innovate and to renew. In addition to individual capabilities,*

*human capital includes the dynamics of an intelligent (learning) organization in a changing competitive environment, its creativity, and innovativeness.*

*Structural Capital: The infrastructure of human capital, including the organizational capabilities to meet market requirements. Infrastructure includes the quality and reach of information technology systems, company images, databases, organizational concept and documentation.*

*Customer Capital: The relationships with people with whom a company does business. Although this usually means clients and customers, it can also mean suppliers. It has also been referred to as relationship capital. (cited in <http://www.cpavision.org/vision/wpaper05b.cfm>)*

In order to manage Human Capital, management needs to measure various factors to determine whether employees are benefitting the organization and to what degree. How can they be measure? Here are some items that management can evaluate in this area.

- Training programs
- Credentials
- Experience
- Competence
- Recruitment
- Mentoring
- Learning programs
- Individual potential
- Personality (cited in <http://www.cpavision.org/vision/wpaper05b.cfm>)

Since many companies may promote the importance of training and education, many entities are rethinking and re-evaluating the use of their funds to help support their employees. Further, while they consider the impact and relevance of intellectual capital in their organizations, they are also realizing the importance of social capital.

According to Daniel, Schwier and McCalla (2003), “Social capital is an imprecise social construct that has emerged from a rather murky swamp of terminology, but it is still useful for exploring culture, society and social networks. The notion of social capital originated from studies of conventional or temporal communities. Social capital highlights the central importance of networks of strong personal relationships that develop over a period of time.” (p. 2) As organizations continue to grow and invest in technology, sometimes workers feel a disconnect between them and their own network of family, friends, and colleagues. As they start to interface more with technology, they tend to question their worth and value in their respective places of employment. In this regard, they may feel a need to network more with internal and external parties. As educational institutions help to prepare students for their future career endeavors, they have been searching for ways to achieve both assessment, but yet also to help provide meaning to a student’s academic endeavors. One way that they have been able to achieve both goals is through the use of electronic portfolios.

Consequently, European companies have taken a more concentrated effort towards examining their Intellectual Capital in terms of a series of questions, which constitutes what is called the Intellectual Capital Summary (ICS). According to InCaS (2010), “An Intellectual Capital Statement (hereafter referred to as ICS) is a strategic management instrument for assessing and developing the Intellectual Capital (IC) of an organisation. It shows how Intellectual Capital is linked to corporate goals, business processes and the business success of an organization using indicators to measure these elements” (p. 7). Which leads us to the next step – how do we create an Intellectual Capital Statement for a company – especially for an online learning institution? InCaS (2010) offers the following guidance:

- Helps you determine strengths and weaknesses of strategic IC factors (diagnosis)
- Prioritises improvement opportunities with the highest impact (decision support)
- Supports the implementation of actions for organizational development (optimisation and innovation)

- Enhances transparency and the involvement of employees (internal communication)
- Diminishes strategic risks and controls the success of actions (monitoring)
- Facilitates the communication of corporate value towards stakeholders (reporting) (p. 8).

If we look at the above questions, this will help us to understand why constant review and update of employees' skills and abilities are important not only to the organization and its future, but also to the employee. The following section will examine the characteristics of an online instructor, as well as examine the technological and skills requirements needed by instructors.

## **6. Characteristics and skills sets of online instructors**

In today's learning environment, many candidates have a variety of reasons for applying or online teaching jobs. For some individuals, online teaching is a wave of the future, and yet for others, it may be a more convenient option for a teaching career. Here are some characteristics of online instructors.

- Many online teaching positions are being filled by part-time instructors.
- Many colleges and universities have found that this helps to reduce some administration of benefits and pay – so part-time faculty have been a “quick fix” for their current need.
- Part-time adjuncts are used more than full-time faculty.
- They usually work a full-time job, along with teaching part-time for one or more online programs.
- There has been an increase of instructors teaching online that have online degrees themselves.

In addition, many universities and colleges with online course offerings are filling their online teaching positions with adjuncts in order to meet the growing demand for online courses. Rather than recruiting full-time, permanent instructors, these educational institutions are seeking a contingent workforce to fill the immediate needs. Another key reason why they find adjunct instructors to be a more viable solution is the fact that they do not have to offer any benefits to these part-time instructors. This can be quite a cost-savings for many educational institutions.

While many people may not enjoy driving to a physical classroom or lecturing for periods of 2-3 hours straight, some see the opportunity to teach in their own home or office on an arranged scheduled. However, before one can consider such an opportunity, there needs to be an assessment of one's skills sets in order to determine if a candidate possesses the necessary skills to become an online instructor. Some of these skills range from technological, educational, teaching and/or relevant work experience. Listed below are some questions to quickly overview some of the skills necessary in each of these areas.

### Technological Skills

- Is the candidate computer literate?
- Can the candidate use email, word processing, and spreadsheet software?

### Educational Skills

- Does the instructor have a master's degree with at least 18 graduate credits in the given subject area?

### Teaching Skills

- Has the candidate taught before (private or public sectors)?

### Work Experience

- Does the candidate have work/industry experience?

As noted in previous sections, in order to sustain growth and future competitiveness many organizations need to strive for high quality products and services. In terms of online learning, educational institutions need to offer high-quality teacher training order to ensure that they are hiring, training, and retaining the best instructional staff. As a result, it is this emphasis on the development of the human capital side of their intellectual capital that will be noticed by their students, accrediting bodies, and community in general. Students want experienced instructors, but yet they want instructors who are forward thinkers who embrace new technology and can prepare them for such rapid growth and changes in their chosen field of study.

As a result of the various learning environments, most educational institutions have realized the need to invest more time and money in instructor training to help enhance and develop their intellectual capital. Thus, this training approach may vary in terms of duration of the training, as well as the topics covered. In the following section, the author has examined how one educational institution, offering both face-to-face and online courses, approaches their training program for current and potential instructors.

## 7. Training program and strategies for online instructor

The following section outlines a typical training program for online instructors. While many university teacher training programs can last as short as 1 hour, some programs will require instructors to take training programs as long as 3 months. In this section of the paper, the author will look at the six-week program that he is in charge of offering at a major university.

- Module 1 – Teaching and Learning

In this module, students learn about the various communications tools used in the online learning environment. Potential instructors examine and discuss how adults learn. Also, they explore how teach and learning are connected.

- Module 2 – Teaching Strategies

During this module, students learn the important of time management and how to effectively plan their teaching schedules. A key focus is on team facilitation and conflict management strategies. While we hope that all learning experiences are positive, instructors need to know how to handle conflicts that may occur.

- Module 3 – Helping Students to Think Critically

In this module, students will look at Bloom's Taxonomy and how it is used in course design and curricula. There is a key discussion on the connections between teaching and learning theories. Finally, potential instructors will discuss how critical thinking is used in the classroom.

- Module 4 – Providing Feedback

During this module, students will look at sample student work and critique it with the use of a standard rubric. They will focus on various criteria, as well as applying comments on APA style and format.

- Module 5 – Ethical Issues

Why is confidentiality important in the learning environment? Students will look at the problems associated with plagiarism and learn how to use a plagiarism database. Finally, the class will explore critical issues of disability, harassment, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- Module 6 – University Teaching – Policies and Procedures

During this final module, students will learn more about their role and function as a facilitator in online learning. A key discussion will be held on the university's mission and how it reflects the university's culture. Finally, the instructor will lead a discussion on how to follow correct procedures when certain policy issues arise.

Upon completion of these modules, the course facilitator prepares an evaluation form for each enrolled student. Should the facilitator determine that a candidate would benefit from additional mentorship or coaching, he or she will indicate this on the evaluation form, as well as discussing these facts with the program manager? As a form of reinforcement and development of the instructional staff, some educational institutions uses coaches to help mentor their intellectual capital. Mentors may be assigned for the first 1 or 2 courses that a new online instructor is assigned to (a good measure, which is another Industry Standard). In any event, seasoned instructors are recruited to fill these positions, in order to help work with various new instructors to help guide them during the early part of their online teaching careers.

## 8. Conclusion

While many companies may promote the importance of training and education, many entities are rethinking and re-evaluating their investment in training and career development opportunities for their employees. Educational institutions, like other businesses and organizations, are taking note of their various resources that determine the value and competitiveness in their industry. While they examine what works and does not function, they are starting to look more at their assessment and evaluation

methods used to determine if there is something else they should be examining from within their educational facilities. However, it is equally important to also understand what is required of an online instructor, as well as the skills requirements for these individuals in order to see what they need and what can be offered to develop their skills.

Finally, InCaS (2010) suggested the following questions to help capture the value creating model for companies.

- What product or service does the business offer?
- How can customers benefit from this product or service?
- Which market segments / groups of customers are targeted?
- To whom will the proposition be appealing?
- From whom will resources be received?
- How are the products or services created?
- How are they going to be delivered to the customers?
- How will the customer pay for the product or service?
- What is the price/margin for the product or service offered to the customer? (p. 19)

As we can see more educational institutions offering additional programs in the online learning environment, they will need to consider all aspects of their Intellectual Capital, especially the human capital element. Even though many companies are experiencing various levels of economic pressure, they have also realized a need to offer a little more to their employees in order to motivate and retain them. Now, more than any other time in history, employee mobility is a key issue that many employers have to consider – but it is one item that they can work towards controlling, as well as focusing on helping their employees see that they are valued and needed. Thus, their investment and valuing of their instructors and staff will help them to compete and sustain their stance in the marketplace – as well as learn from others in how to create and implement better strategies in these areas.

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