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SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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5 Tips for Going Digital

Having to navigate the unknown can leave many nervous and unsure about how to approach it. Educators, faculty, and leaders can keep these five things in mind as they begin to educate in the digital new normal.

1. Continue social etiquette and social cohesion.

It's easy to forget politeness, social graces, and even friendliness online; we almost start to see others as avatars or part of the tech. One thing internet trolls and online bullies have taught us is that we can be quick to lose our sense of humanity in a digital world where physical or face to face interaction doesn't exist. But this means there is a need for humanness and social grace more than ever. There is no need for stiffness or formality within digital classrooms. There is ample room for conversation and niceties. Instead of going straight to the point, start by asking each individual in the class how they are doing, offering the appropriate level of care and concern that you would have the chance to show in a live setting. Make the little extra effort to keep humanity not just in spite of but especially because we lose physical proximity to other human beings.

2. Reduce what you are saying by one-third.

In a live classroom, a typical lecture might last 60 minutes. But people process things differently while online and attention spans falter more quickly. That means that a 60-minute live lecture should now be 40 minutes online. Don't dilute your message or leave out important information, instead make it more concentrated and poignant. That will allow for the lecture to be shortened without losing its punch.

3. Lead from the back.

Most educators, leaders, and faculty lead from the literal front of the classroom and metaphorically from the front in terms of doing most of the talking. Though teaching is still an essential component, digital classrooms are a prime opportunity for students to shine and take the lead. Allow for student discussions while listening, encouraging, congratulating, and re-directing when necessary. Here is the chance to begin the new normal of educators doing more listening and less talking and of students doing more learning.

4. Have empathy for "digital dinosaurs."

Not everyone has the same comfort level with digital technology, and different people come along at their own speeds. Our knee-jerk reaction might be frustration with those lagging behind, but really, it's not much different than teaching a live class where everyone learns and comprehends the information at different rates. In a live classroom, would students who had trouble comprehending the information cause you to openly express anger and frustration at slower students as you try to force them along? In real life, most educators wouldn't dream of treating students that way. They look for ways to help their students connect with the very important information they need to succeed. A digital classroom should be no different, even if it's the technology that is causing the slowdown.

5. Have Fun!

A new type of environment might cause stiff seriousness to reign as you concentrate hard on making it all work. But lighten it up. Have fun, engage with students, and encourage them to engage with one another. Foster an atmosphere that lends itself to social interaction and human connection even in a non-human environment.

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