NEW TECHNOLOGY, NEW SKILLS AND A NEW WAY OF WORKING

A STUDENT GUIDE TO OPTIMISING YOUR REMOTE LEARNING

2020 has brought us many challenges along with some new opportunities, one of them being the experience of working remotely- away from our usual classroom setting. Remote working may be perceived as a potential set back but we are urging you to look at this as an exciting opportunity to gain some important life skills that will continue to boost your employability long after you graduate. This guide aims to highlight the positives that we can all take from online learning. There are many advantages to learning with new technology, studies have concluded that there is a positive relationship between online learning technology use and student engagement. It has even been found that students who avail of online technologies in their studies score higher than their peers who utilise more traditionally based methods of study (Chen et al., 2010). This guide is going to show you how remote learning will help you achieve that dream of an honours degree!

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Technologies and platforms for remote student learning

- Some our top free desktop apps

- How can your remote learning help you prepare for the future?

- What qualities will remote learning allow you to advance?

- How can your remote learning allow for professional development?

- Some of our expert tips to prepare yourself to enter the workforce

- How to stay positive throughout the ongoing changes

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE OUT THERE FOR US?

We can all take this opportunity to expand our range of learning tools to include new technologies that promote real life skills such as teamwork, communication and time keeping. Microsoft teams and Zoom are just two examples of technologies that allow for convenient communication from lecture to student and facilitate in-lecture breakout activities. We have all had to adapt to remote learning quickly and with that, adapt to these new platforms.

Did you know that during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, viral response training at a leading London hospital was facilitated via Microsoft Teams rather than face-to-face teaching (Henderson et al., 2020)? This could be your new way of training... and you will have the advantage of familiarity with these platforms already!

There are so many more collaborative platforms that students can avail of, we suggest trying out google hangouts too. Traditional communications such as email and chat or interactive documents like Google docs. promote asynchronous work, even when we're not together we are still working together (Branon and Essex, 2001). Many of our lecturers have begun to introduce new interactive online applications such as Kahoot.com, where you can participate in real-time interactive quizzes. The majority of these platforms and apps are not 'new' but may be newly utilised within your college course in this new era of social distancing (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2020). These interactive apps offer a great opportunity to promote student engagement and allow us to receive real-time responses and feedback from our educators. Something we may have missed out on without remote learning (Hunter, 2015).

Make the most out of the technology you are familiar with, but don't be afraid to embrace new technologies too. If we were to pick out a few of our all time favourite additions to remote working, we suggest that you check these- plus, they are free! (Klosowski, 2012)

- ☐ Evernote- for mastering in-class note taking.
- • Wunderlist- the ultimate 'to do' app that can sync across multiple devices.
- ☐ Get Organised- an assignments manager to make sure you never miss that deadline.
- ☐ Dropbox- a document cloud backup (because nobody wants to accidentally delete their thesis 2 hours before the deadline).
- ☐ Mendeley- your personal research assistant to keep track of your academic referencing
- ☐ Slack- for productive and collaborative team work

AN ONLINE FUTURE...

Familiarizing yourself with these new concepts of online learning can have major benefits for you in the future. You, as a student entering the workplace after your graduation, will be joining a new environment and it is up to you to adapt. Predictions have been made that remote working isn't just temporary, but that it is in fact here to stay. Remote working has been a major advantage for companies due to savings on costs and strengthened work from home policies have been implemented in order to improve efficiency and allow employees to perform up to the required standards expected of them (Parungao, 2020). Technology continues to play a significant role in remote working, allowing work to happen seamlessly, which is why it is crucial for you to adapt to this new way of working and thinking sooner rather than later.

As a result of this, companies such as Google, Paypal and Facebook have extended their remote working until at least next summer, which shows the direction these companies want to go in terms of remote work. That strategy of allowing people to work from home has been implemented by these companies for a number of reasons. A study conducted earlier this year showed that productivity has risen. People have been seen to be more productive as they spend less of their time commuting to a workplace and more time being proactive. Communication has also improved as people have been able to use new technologies such as Zoom calls and are able to speak with more people in one place which helps engagement. Hierarchies have also been flattened as a result of remote work. Decisions are being made faster and are involving more groups of people in the discussions (Whiting, 2020). By taking steps now to familiarize yourselves and embrace this new world of online working and learning, it enables you to prepare for the challenges you may encounter throughout your career.

PERSONAL QUALITIES YOU CAN DEVELOP FROM THIS SITUATION

Don't give up... here are some great qualities you can develop
from remote learning

Motivation is very important when working from home as well as in the physical- office work environment. We should pay attention to our break times so that you can always keep your concentration and motivation at the top. Physical exercise is also very important. Participating in various training will be beneficial to help you keep your body healthy.

'Possessing strong communication skills- not just interpersonally but digitally'
It is important to establish healthy communication while using corporate mail and message applications. The punctuation marks, spelling rules, and forms of address we use to explain your requests or give information can affect your career positively or negatively.
Virtual teams, lacking contextual cues may result in the other person hasn't understood what
we're trying to say, although we may think that what we are trying to say was obvious (Keith Ferrazzi,2013). precisely because of that we need to learn and adapt to the digital communication language. The punctuation marks can change the meaning of the sentence considerably. For example 'This is a terrible idea.','This is a terrible idea!

Effective Time Management
Working from home eliminates commute time, we can all put this additional time to good use in our educational courses. We can take the opportunity to establish a timetable and stick to a plan. Time management is a very important quality for us all to develop. We can use this quality to inform our colleagues in the future about our daily work routine to keep on track. Time awareness is a good opportunity to increase productivity. As mentioned in our first section, you can use some of our recommended apps to aid your time keeping. These apps offer an opportunity for us to estimate how long things will take in advance and then reflect on how long they actually took in reality. Doing this for a few weeks can make you far more aware of what you commit to and also increase your ability to actually deliver. (Jennifer Dowling,2020)

Learning at home and improving ourselves
Working from home gives us extra time. Since the tiredness of the journey has disappeared, we will have plenty of energy to improve ourselves, to refresh our knowledge and to gain new knowledge. In this rapidly changing working environment, we need to
identify the skills necessary to advance our career and show the necessary attention. Online education and certification programs are a good resource both to improve ourselves and to show people that we are open and curious to learn.

 Improve your self-motivation
Motivation is very important in the home-working environment as well as in the physical work environment. We should pay attention to our break times so that you can always keep your concentration and motivation at a desired level. Secondly, we must use our physical exercise skills. Participating in various training to specialize in this subject will be beneficial to protect our body's health.

KEY STEPS TO PREPARE FOR FUTURE REMOTE WORKING

Here are some key steps you can take to use your experience at college this year to adapt to the modern workplace you are likely to join in future.

1. Positive attitude

Motivation, as well as perseverance and belief in one's own abilities precede the academic training when it comes to individual's business success (Villarán, 2009). Your attitude is therefore, the fundamental key to make the most out of this year's educational work style.

2. Practice

Studies show that while practice may not make you perfect as the age- old saying suggests, it definitely make you better at the skill you are practicing (Macnamara, Hambrick and Oswald, 2014)

This is why we encourage you to take part in all mediums of your studies available to you right now: webinars, online discussions, virtual meetings, chats and video calls with classmates add practice using all the various tools available to you throughout your time at Maynooth University. Remember that teamworking takes practice too. Make sure you will establish communication norms and be clear and concise with your written messages to avoid miscommunication (Dhawan and Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018).

3. Adapt to your new surroundings

Being able to adapt to your new way of learning is important.

In the world where frequent career changes are common, individuals are exposed to more unfamiliarity and unexpected situations where they are expected to show resilience in order to succeed. Adaptability is therefore a vital element of career success (David J. O'Connell, Eileen McNeely and Douglas T. Hall 2008).

Become an adaptability ninja!

4. Learn to enjoy the rocky ride

Current COVID 19 situation is constantly changing; treat it as a practice to work with ambiguity

Being able to cope with the ambiguity of constantly changing environment and learning how to quickly adapt to a new direction is the trick that will turn you into an asset to every modern company. Most workplaces collaborate on projects that are dependent on many changeable factors. This means that one variable can seriously impact or deprecate the project and leave a team who worked on it at a loss. The trick is to learn how to watch out for signs of any potential changes that may arise and learn how to manage them.

Expecting the unexpected: planning ahead for every eventuality will help you continue to steer your studies in the right direction. Being in college during the pandemic can provide you with a great learning ground to plan ahead of the constantly changing situation. For example, if you normally study at the library, make sure you have access to everything you need to finish your next assignment from home, in case you will be asked to study from home due to changes in the governmental health advice.

In Conclusion..

This guide has provided you with the relevant knowledge to optimize your remote learning experience. Embracing new technologies now can aid you into becoming more productive in the future. Personal qualities can be developed in this current remote learning climate and then implemented in the future so that you are fully prepared for the changing workplace environment. Remote learning requires you to adapt, but new skills and opportunities for professional development are offered along the way. New technologies have been introduced, new skills will be developed and a new way of working has been created!

REFERENCES

Chen, P. S. D., Lambert, A. D., & Guidry, K. R. (2010). Engaging online learners: The impact of Web-based learning technology on college student engagement. Computers and Education, 54(4), 1222–1232. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2009.11.008

Henderson, D., Woodcock, H., Mehta, J., Khan, N., Shivji, V., Richardson, C., Aya, H., Shier Ziser, F., Pollara, G., & Burns, A. (2020). COVID-19 Keep calm and carry on learning: using Microsoft Teams to deliver a medical education programme during the COVID-19 pandemic Responding to the pandemic and identification of educational needs. Future Healthcare Journal, 7(3). https://doi.org/10.7861/fhj.2020-0071

Hunter, P. (2015). The virtual university Digital tools for e-learning and remote learning are becoming an increasingly important tool for teaching at universities. EMBO Reports, 16(2), 146–148. https://doi.org/10.15252/embr.201440016

Branon, R. and Essex, C. (2001). Synchronous and asynchronous communication tools in distance learning, *Tech Trends, 45(1), 36.*

Mukhopadhyay, S., Booth, A. L., Calkins, S. M., Doxtader, E. E., Fine, S. W., Gardner, J. M., Gonzalez, R. S., Mirza, K. M., Jiang, X., & Carolina, N. (2020). Leveraging Technology for Remote Education and. Arch Pathol Lab Med, 144, 1027. https://doi.org/10.5858/arpa.2020-0201-ED

Klosowski, T. (2006) The best windows apps for college (and they're free), viewed 22nd October 2020 http://www.nbcnews.com/id/48627357/ns/technology_and_science-back_to_school/t/best-windows-apps-college-theyre-free/#.X5GgUIhKjcs

Parungao, A., 2020. *The Future Of Remote Work After COVID-19. [online] Ekoapp.com. Available at: <https://www.ekoapp.com/blog/the-future-of-remote-work-after-covid-19-3-common-predictions> [Accessed 19 October 2020].*

Whiting, K., 2020. *The Future Of Flexible Working, According To 6 Companies. [online] World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/flexible-remote-working-post-covid19-company-predictions/> [Accessed 20 October 2020].*

Keith Ferrazzi (2013). 'How to Avoid Virtual Miscommunication',p.3 https://2uzkee3eob510v4rszskfx11-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HBR_How_to_Avoid_Virtual_Miscommunication-1.pdf

Jennifer Dowling (2020).' Adjusting to Remote Working during Covid' https://www.trainremote.ie/post/cutting-costs-maximizing-results

Dhawan, E. and Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (no date) 'How to Collaborate Effectively If Your Team Is Remote', p. 5.

Gale General OneFile - Document - Unpacking personal adaptability at work (no date). Available at: https://go-gale-com.jproxy.nuim.ie/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&u=nuim&id=GALE%7CA174010006&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon (Accessed: 21 October 2020).

Macnamara, B. N., Hambrick, D. Z. and Oswald, F. L. (2014) 'Deliberate Practice and Performance in Music, Games, Sports, Education, and Professions: A Meta-Analysis', *Psychological Science, 25(8), pp. 1608–1618. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24543592 (Accessed: 22 October 2020).*

Villarán, K. W. (2009) 'Actitudes personales fundamentales para alcanzar el éxito empresarial en el Perú', *Journal of Business, Universidad del Pacífico (Lima, Peru), 1(1), pp. 20–36. doi: 10.21678/jb.2009.14.*