



Lacey Daniel...a Life Long Learner

by Lacey Daniel

As my journey of my Masters at Michigan State University comes to an end I find myself reflecting on all the things that have influenced and changed me. I am not sure if it is just my current stage in life or if it was due to the challenges and accomplishments of my formal education, maybe both, that have cause a great change and maturity in me.

My interest and knowledge of technology was acquired during my bachelor degree. My undergrad degree is in Network Security and Biometrics. Sounds really cool and like a degree a spy would need. It might be, but I unfortunately was not so great at it nor did I like the theoretical professional life it was going to lend me. However I really enjoyed using the different technologies and became what some call a Power User. As most of my coworkers have, I fell into the world of Training & eLearning.

I don't consider myself an academic person. You would never guess by my grades or degrees achieved. I have pursued education because it was experience I could guarantee. Experience I needed to not only qualify me but set me aside from others to achieve my professional goals. With that being said, something that I have learned the true value of is Life Long Learning.

In less than 4 months I will not have a hard working professor to go out and research trends or technologies for me. I will be left to spark my own mind and interests. If I do not stay updated on educational technologies I will miss opportunities and become complacent. Luckily, during my MAET journey I learned about great tools, great companies and helpful resources and communities that will help me continue to gain the information I need to succeed.

Since the start of my career, which occurred during my time in the MAET program, I have set aside an hour each week to go out and research any new trends or developments in my field of Training & Education. I am proud of myself for actually scheduling and sticking to the simplest yet incredibly useful form of Professional Development. I may find just a new place to find images, or a site that's design inspires me or a new tool that I can play with and possibly utilize in my work or process.

Another great tool that continues my education, in everything, is TED Talks. I watch these for fun or I go out and do a search for a specific topic. This rich community has become a great tool for professionals and classrooms.

Although I have never been a huge Twitter fan, the MAET program has shed light on what a great resource Twitter can be. I find it incredibly useful for finding out about new tools that pertain to my career. I don't really use Twitter for any personal interests but I would highly suggest that anyone working in Training or Education or Design to use it on a weekly basis.

Lastly, once my classes come to an end and after a short breather I would like to attend some of the free online courses offered by Coursera.

There are some really great courses being held by talented educators passionate about their subject, all for free. Typically held in some sort of MOOC style, these courses will be a great asset for me in between degrees.

Of course there will be opportunities to attend conferences or trainings and these will be useful. But these morsels are not quite enough for a life long learners appetite. I would encourage my coworkers and classmates to use conferences and training to network and ask others what tools they use. Think of it as a live Twitter feed.

What I find so cool and privileged to be apart of is the effect that social media has had in learning. Not just its technology but the way it has altered how we learn. With social media we have better discovered how influential and important an informal environment or collaboration can be. Something very important that social media has helped me understand is a learners attention span in relation to what they will retain. As I am creating training I have to be aware of what my learner has become familiar with. It is typical for the majority of us to go out to YouTube and find a short (very short) tutorial of something we need to learn. The learner can get what they need, in a timely fashion, when they need it. This concept is what I am striving to replicate in my training. Daily, I convince my clients that their learners will retain nothing from an hour long recorded webinar. Information now needs to be more consumable and available than ever.

My MAET experience has sparked an interest in teaching. Whether it is actual students (collegiate level) or teaching teachers about how they can better engage their students with the use of technology in their classroom. I find it really rewarding and enjoyable. In the meantime I have learned that although I do not have a classroom, I am a teacher. In fact I am often dealt with tougher logistics and more variables as I do not meet

my learner face-to-face. I have to factor in their individual environments and an extremely wide range of ages/skills/experiences and technology.

This program has helped me better understand the psyche of my learners. I now create training with them in mind. As I work with a lot of compliance related topics it is easy to create inconsumable training. During the program I gained a better understanding of lesson plans and how they build, pedagogy, technology, tools, design and exercising my creative muscle. The tools I have learned will help me turn those hour or more long trainings into lean, engaging and meaningful training that will not just change what the user knows but rather what they do.

Although I am really looking forward to a formal education break, and Pinteresting everything in my house, this is just the midway point for my education. Eventually I would like to earn my Doctorate but I haven't decided in what yet. I am going to let life play out for a while, continuing education on my own, and hopefully stumble on the opportunity to earn that degree for free.

I have a new found passion for not just educating others but continuing to educate myself. I look forward to learning new things and keeping life interesting.