Transcript of the Talk, "Management of MOOC"

Venkataraman Balaji, COL, Vancouver BC, Canada
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A MOOC is as much about interactions as about content and its presentation. Together, they constitute the basis for a good learning experience. It is important therefore to maintain a strategy for communication with joiners. This starts at the registration step. This needs to be a robust and highly reliable arrangement, also secure from attacks and compromises. It is important to keep the registration process up and running a few weeks before the start of the course.

Communication with joiners needs to be very systematic and not sporadic. It is good to have an email account dedicated to the course. It is good to access it regularly and frequently and respond promptly. A number of participants may like to bring up questions on this channel rather than via the forum or chat spaces.
Use of social media is also a good practice. Effectiveness of this is dependent upon the type of audience you have in the MOOC.
Use of bulk email is advised only where absolutely necessary. Spam filters are in wider use now and bulk mail has a risk of getting filtered out of primary inboxes. Critical information for the course is best made available in multiple modes.

We saw that facilitating interactions is a key matter in any MOOC. This is where the course manager has an important role. Faculty lead and content specialists are very good for managing content and presentation. The course manager thus can focus on facilitating interactions. It is good for the course manager to be seen regularly and frequently in the Forum and chat spaces. She can monitor queries coming up and alert faculty and specialists about unanswered queries. Spot participants facing difficulties and alert the team.

There is always a possibility in any cyber space event that a small group is not abiding by the codes of honor. The course manager should play the role of alerting the faculty about that and may even have to play a frontline role if the conduct is causing serious concerns.

Assignments require careful planning and preparation and can significantly enhance the value of a MOOC. So are tests. However, non-branded MOOC platforms tend to offer fewer options for assignments or tests. This is one limitation when we try to keep the costs low!
Tests need to be planned for both content and must be managed carefully for technology. Inability of a learner to access the test in a promised time is a risk to the reputation of the course and the provider. This is why test processes should be checked in advance for reliable performance.

Although this sounds trivial, in practice the values of punctuality and regularity need to emphasized again and again. Entire team is committed to the schedule without fail. This is an important consideration for success in MOOC. The team, even from different locations should frequently review delivery schedules and commitments. And ensure that services are delivered as promised and according to schedule.
It is also important to be observant of emerging concerns among participants and be responsive to them. Where required, schedules can be adjusted while keeping the public in the course informed of the reasons. Ensuring wide participation is a primary objective of any MOOC effort.

Data security: this is also a point worth repeating. Data security breaches massive scale are being reported world over. Tens of millions of accounts are compromised in a very short time and even large organizations appear helpless. Basic methods coupled with keen watch can make a difference.
Every user is entitled to integrity of her or his data from unauthorised access. This must be ensured at all times in a MOOC.
It is also important to have a policy of leaving user data for access after the course is over.
We make the learning materials available to the global public and remove all user data from online public access. Such data held secure and offline may be useful should there be queries about grades and certificates. It is good to move them to secure location offline.

In summary: successful conduct of a MOOC requires a manager responsible for monitoring and facilitating interactions. This role ensures that any participant facing a challenge is attended to in a reasonable manner. Manager should also watch out for developments that can lead to disharmony or security violations and alert the team and faculty lead when necessary.