How do I…? Using Adobe Spark Video to Create Explainer Videos

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Introduction/Need for Innovation

Researchers have demonstrated the value of the learning by teaching effect, exhibiting how spending time teaching nurtures a greater understanding and knowledge retention of a subject (Fionella & Mayer, 2013; Graesser et al., 1995; Roscoe & Chi, 2007; Webb, 1982) because the practice encourages reflective thought, a pivotal component of the learning process (Roberts, 2006). Educators have sought creative ways to integrate learning by teaching into their practices to enhance comprehension of classroom material (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo & Miller, 2003). One approach to do this is the creation of explainer videos. An explainer video conveys "complex facts to a target group within a very short time" (Kramer & Bohrs, 2017, p. 254). Additionally, the emergence of search engines has prompted society to increasingly pursue answers online, often in the form of brief videos (Nagy, 2018; Livingstone, Bober, & Helsper, 2005). As individuals search for information, videos have emerged as a compelling format to engross audiences and visually illustrate solutions or concepts (Kramer & Bohrs, 2017).

Although many programs exist to create videos, these often require time and expertise to use effectively. One option to create explainer videos that requires little pre-existing knowledge is Adobe Spark Video. This cloud-hosted program encourages users to quickly create brief videos using a combination of text, icons, photos, videos, and narration. The structured nature of Spark Video makes it an ideal channel for crafting explainer videos, which inherently rely on a structural step-by-step process. The purpose of this innovative idea was to integrate this program in an advanced agricultural communications course as an assignment for students to create explainer videos thereby demonstrating the learning by teaching effect.

How it Works

Students in the course were provided with an assignment sheet explaining the purpose and steps to complete. They had to propose a topic for their explainer video that provided advice for how to create better online content. This could be for a specific social media platform, blogging, website design, online video, online strategy, or other relevant topic area. The goal of the brief video was to provide advice about a specific concept, technique, or skill.

After they received instructor approval for the topic, students used online resources and their own experience to write a script that contained both the visual and audio aspects of the video. This was submitted as a Word document and evaluated prior to completing the video. Students used the feedback from the script to gather necessary materials for the video such as photos, icons, and screencasts.

Within Adobe Spark Video, they created videos no more than 3 minutes in length. To do this, students went to adobe.spark.com and chose to create a video project. They then selected options from a wide array of templates and customized the video with color schemes, layout patterns, graphics, fonts, icons, transitions, and background music. The videos are a compilation of slides similar to a PowerPoint. Each slide is limited to 10 seconds unless it contains video or voiceover narration. In that case, the slide can be up to 30 seconds long. After the slides were complete, they recorded a voiceover narration to accompany the visual elements. Finally, the finished video

project was “shared” to generate a URL that could be submitted to the learning management system and shared with others. The videos were evaluated on effectiveness of the advice and/or instructions, use of visuals, and accompanying voiceover.

Results to Date/Implications

The course had 50 students resulting in 50 explainer videos on topics relevant to online communication. Content presented in the videos ranged from coordinating social media accounts with Hootsuite and Loomly to creating engaging content for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Some videos addressed skills such as photography, and social media analytics while others providing advice for Canva and LinkedIn

While using Adobe Spark Video, students learned about a specific topic and gained experience creating brief videos. For students acclimated to the more advanced features of Adobe Premiere, Adobe Spark Video’s template was sometimes viewed as a limitation, but others recognized it forced them to be more creative to accomplish the overall purpose. Complex content and topics may benefit from a more sophisticated program that allows for advanced customization.

The videos can be widely disseminated beyond the classroom environment and serve as a product for their portfolios. Additionally, these videos can be shared on the department’s social media presence to demonstrate the expertise students are developing and provide valuable content for audience members.

Future Plans/Advice To Others

Adobe Spark Video will continue to be used in this course and can be implemented in other agricultural communication classes to have students develop explainer videos about photography techniques, journalistic interviewing, or graphic design. Additionally, explainer videos documenting a timely agricultural issue could challenge students to research and summarize a complex topic and engage audiences using a novel approach.

The value of Adobe Spark Video reaches beyond agricultural communication classrooms, holding potential to be integrated in agricultural education courses. The program enables students to creatively share information on a breadth of topics, from floral design techniques to synthesizing an animal’s digestive system track.

Students wrote scripts to plan and organize their voiceovers of the content, and many students expressed the helpful nature of the written narrative. Investing time to thoughtfully craft a detailed script is recommended to streamline the assembly of Adobe Spark videos.

Costs/Resources Needed

Adobe Spark Video is user-friendly and does not require technical expertise or training. The Adobe Spark Starter Plan, which also includes Spark Post and Spark Page, is offered as a free service. While users can create, share, and post content, slides are watermarked with #AdobeSpark. The full version of the software is available as part of the Adobe Creative Cloud package or as a stand-alone plan for $9.99 a month. The paid service enables the creation of branded stories with the user’s logos, color, and fonts. As Adobe Spark is a cloud-based service, internet connection is required.

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