Online course learning design – Collaborative learning decision worksheet

Your online learning course may be a powerful learning tool that encourage your participants to collaborate and share. Or not. Here are some criteria to consider.

You'll need to do this exercise with each offering in your product funnel.

	Thoughts?	To collaborate or Not – for/against
What is the **purpose** of this offering?		
At the end of this product, participants will **be able to** …..		
Is collaboration, connection, sharing, and involvement in community important to what you are **working toward**. That is, is this really part of your message and not an option for exclusion?		
How important is collaboration/connection between participants/sharing of ideas/debriefing as they progress toward their solution. Ie important **learning tool.**		
Do you value the idea of creating a **community of practice** between your learners that will hopefully create ongoing ties or co-creation – even after the course is finished?		
Timing Eg Launch and work through together v open access course (Collaboration is tricky for open access courses – much easier for courses where everyone is on the same path at similar time)		
How involved do **you** want to be in the course? (Lead and moderate discussions? Or on holidays and still having the course ticking along. Of course you can be on holidays and moderate!)		
Is your **Ideal Customer likely to engage** in online collaboration ie do they have the skills, time, motivation? What would you need to		

	Thoughts?	To collaborate or Not – for/against
do to upskill if necessary? How might this impact the method you use?		
What is your **budget** to create collaboration? (Custom members only platform v Facebook)		
What **skills do you need/professional** do you need to hire - to develop to create and facilitate collaborative learning?		

Designing for successful online collaboration

Ok you've decided to use collaboration as a learning tool. How do you design the product so that collaboration is valued and integrated seamlessly?

Here are some criteria for success in designing online collaboration. Use it to make decisions and identify things you want to know more about.

	Thoughts	Need to ……
Set appropriate **ground rules** - expectations regarding tone, support, complaints (direct to team not on forum), responsibility for own learning, honesty with kindness, generousity of sharing, restrict advice giving, no selling your own products etc You can start it off … then ask the group to contribute and agree in the first week/session.		
Are participants really just talking with you, or do you really want participants to engage and support each other? **Peer to peer** support is great in collaboration. Peer to leader can be done via email.		
Seamless integration of independent activities and online activities/opportunities. Set tasks for discussion, reflection, share experiences/concerns/observations etc according to the current topic – **Design this into**		

	Thoughts	Need to ……
your product from the start. Don't make it feel like an add-on – diminishes value.		
Scheduled online community events or **24/7 access** to submit comments that anyone can reply to? Webinars with mics open/chat open. Skype calls. FB pages. Private members only platform. Members only web page. Blend of these?		
Personality in language – Your course instructions and emails will explain how to use and engage with the online community. Your tone, language, clarity will impact how well this works. Consciously decide what language you use. Your way of addressing people. Kylie Patchett can get away with calling everyone 'honey' and 'gorgeous' but not everyone can pull this off ☺ Your guidance provided in your notes and on the site will set the tone. Make it deliberate and true to your brand and style.		
Site design – Whichever platform you decide to use, make sure it is easy to navigate (intuitive) and reflects your brand when possible. (fun/professional/creative) **Easy to use!**		
Lead and **moderate** – set the tone and the example. Encourage and support. Uplift and be vulnerable. Moderate through professional interventions and having side conversations where necessary (for those not playing nicely or dominating). Steer conversations. **Refocus.**		
Will you be available all the time? Hope not. Set assigned times when you will be active in the forum.		

	Thoughts	Need to ……
Will you lead and moderate all of the time or could you use graduates?		
Trust – how will you build and maintain trust in this environment?		
Shared purpose – ensure the activities work toward a shared purpose. This is critical to creating a sense of community. We're in it together.		
About me – do you want participants to have an about me page and create subgroups?		
Be **identifiable** – How will people identify themselves in the forum? Choose their own identifier? Allow Alias? Create an environment of safety but be able to identify anyone who is not playing nicely. How will you identify the learner (alias logged against enrolment – important for side conversations/corrections)		
Be engaged – your excitement, commitment, sharing will encourage participants and make it safe. Schedule your time and activity on the forum.		
Be supportive – encourage. Acknowledge.		
Will learners continue to have access at the end of the course? What are the costs of retaining the platform? What are the benefits? What are the expectations regarding your involvement?		
When to use collaborative methods? Difficult to use prior to course start as the tone and rules aren't established. Throughout the course. Just in one section. Just after the course (may be useful if you are doing a face-to-face element and		

	Thoughts	Need to ……
participants are working on some outcomes they want to share or if you're linking with mentors/coaches)?		

Next question.

Which tool is right for your purpose?

Well that's another worksheet!