

INTEGRATING
SERVICE-LEARNING
AND CONSULTING IN
DISTANCE EDUCATION

Service-learning pedagogy and online learning methodology have been classified as ‘a way of the future’ when it comes to learning. Both have become so deeply rooted into our teaching and learning lexicon and praxis that they are in fact the way of the present. E-service-learning meets students where they already are and encourages and facilitates their journey to where they need to be – engaged in and learning with the community. If done well, like Dr. Germain describes, positive, relevant, and real world learning can occur and both students and partners can benefit in positive ways. Additionally, the scalability of learning well while doing good has not yet been realized in our on and offline learning environments. I believe that the consulting model offered in this book can push us further.

– Lane Graves Perry, Executive Director,
Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning,
Western Carolina University.

The online consulting program gave me the confidence and practical skills to navigate a corporate environment, identify and research complex problems and deliver above the clients’ expectations.

– Alex Hall, Western Carolina University Alumni 2014.

The online service-learning/consulting initiative presented in this book pairs business results with learning outcomes using an innovative model designed to maximize the benefit for all parties involved. It’s a game changer for organizations and educational institutions alike.

– Rachel Sossoman, Director of Human Resources,
Mercy Urgent Care.

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BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To my family. And to those who continue to make my professional journey worthwhile: my graduate students and our consulting clients.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Marie-Line Germain is a research, teaching, and service award-winning Associate Professor of Human Resources and Leadership at Western Carolina University (The University of North Carolina System). Her PhD is in Leadership with a specialization in Human Resource Development. She is the Author of two books, *Narcissism at Work: Personality Disorders of Corporate Leaders*, and *Integrating Service-Learning and Consulting in Distance Education*. She has published over three dozen research articles in journals and presented over 50 research papers internationally (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, France, India, Peru, The Netherlands, Scotland, and Spain). Germain has received several national awards and competitive grants, including a Fulbright from the US Department of State. She holds several leadership roles at Research and Professional Associations nationally and internationally, and has been a Visiting Scholar-professor in China, Finland, Ghana, Japan, and South Korea. In 2011, she founded the HR Consulting Initiative, which provides pro bono HR consulting nationwide, entirely online. She is also a consultant for Fortune 500 and CAC 40 companies. She has lived and worked in France, England, and Scotland.

PREFACE

The field of higher education, student demographics, and employers' demands for a highly skilled workforce are constantly evolving.

The workplace evolution stems from organizations with demanding business imperatives and an increasing need for a skilled workforce within them. Meanwhile, the student demographic is undergoing vast changes; students are often older than the traditional 18 years of age, and many of these older students are parents working full- or part-time jobs in addition to schooling, and thus need to balance work and school life more than ever before.

These non-traditional students seek more relevance to their work outside of schooling and want to feel that their education is making a difference in their own lives and the lives of those around them. In essence, today's students seek relevance and want their education to be an *experience*. Also, there has been a change in course delivery format, with a distinct focus on the business imperative and the demand for certain qualities and qualifications in the workplace. This change in focus carries with it the expectation from students that universities will help meet these demands while delivering a quality education and offering opportunities to engage in their community.

Additionally, online learning has grown significantly in the last decade and e-service-learning addresses the growing

demand for flexibly delivered online courses and programs. The average annual growth rate of online enrollments in the past decade was nearly 20% in higher learning institutions. Traditional schools overwhelmingly agree that online education is critical to their future-class offerings. Meanwhile, technology is increasingly ubiquitous throughout personal and work life as the main source to deliver and share information. Online instruction has redefined higher education teaching and traditional community service has only begun adapting to this change. The geographical boundaries set by traditional community service prevent most colleges and universities from offering online students the opportunity to be engaged in community service. Online service-learning responds to this limitation by making the transfer of on-campus community service to the online environment possible.

Written by a professor and researcher with eight years of successful service-learning and consulting integration in online environments, this book presents a model and instructions for faculty to successfully integrate a remote service-learning and consulting component in an online course. The book explores best practices, limitations, and the benefits of e-service-learning/consulting for students, faculty, universities, client-organizations, and the community-at-large.

E-service-learning responds to the needs of multiple groups, including students, faculty, and the universities they represent. Students seek a sense of purpose in their coursework and value the social responsibility of community service. E-service-learning provides the opportunity for students to build their résumés with real-work experience while strengthening their confidence and enhancing their communication and virtual teamwork skills. Faculty who want to go beyond theory while building their service requirements may use e-service-learning to apply the theoretical knowledge students acquire in courses, and offer relevant and real-world

applications and hands-on experience. In addition, universities are able to fulfill their strategic goals, serve the community-at-large, and grow their online programs by offering students a unique online course experience.

Online service-learning and consulting transforms traditional community service, student engagement, and the online learning landscape.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of eight years overseeing consulting projects with close to 700 master's degree students for over 170 organizations in 17 US states. It is a resource for those who are passionate about service-learning, consulting, and distance education, as well as those who are interested in making a positive impact on students, universities, and communities. I am grateful to my graduate students and to my colleagues for their constructive feedback while developing this e-consulting initiative.

If you want to be a true professional, you will do something outside yourself. Something to repair tears in your community. Something to make life a little better for people less fortunate than you. That's what I think a meaningful life is – living not for oneself, but for one's community.

– Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg