Ellumination!
Team e-moderating helps in live interviews...but how?

In late 2003, the use of blogging and Rich Site Syndication (RSS) was still quite new to Australian educators, so I'd been trying to arrange a recorded video conference interview/discussion for *The Knowledge Tree* e-journal, with Alan Levine, of cogdogblog fame and Gary Putland from education.au. However, I hadn't been able to record a two-way videoconference successfully. I wanted to get a digital copy to upload into the e-journal for others to see, but I couldn't seem to record visuals and audio from both ends, from one location.

I started editing copy for *The Knowledge Tree* Edition 05 in early 2004 with a great article on using voice online technologies by Michael Coghlan. The nub of an idea formed in my mind. I had already commissioned a critique of blogging for teaching and learning from Michael Chalk and asked if he was game to try an interview with both Alan and Gary using Elluminate *Live!* I was prepared to facilitate, so I asked Michael Coghlan if he could help me. He offered access to an Elluminate *Live!* room in learningtimes.org – a learning community which uses voice online technologies as well as standard asynchronous collaboration tools, like forums and text chat.

I'd been wondering how I was going to launch *The Knowledge Tree's* latest edition globally, with an engrossing topic and speakers, and incorporate innovative new technology.

I had my answer…. now I just had to make it happen.

E-moderating a session in Elluminate *Live!* took lots of advanced preparation… especially because it was a marketing event designed to reach people spread all over the globe, as well as an international online presentation and interview. But that's the beauty of Elluminate *Live!*...it can be a very powerful tool for online collaboration, sharing of knowledge and real time communication, if you've got eight arms!! (Just joking!)

The whole process took about 6 weeks to get up and every step of the way was crucial to the overall success of the event.

Here are the lessons I've drawn from my experience in bringing the whole thing together.

1. Select your time, confirm with guests and book your room, Thursday and Friday are good days.
2. Prepare your e-moderating team and guests to be interviewed…get them to download and check software installation, test firewalls and arrange alternative access if needed, do audio tuning adjustments etc
3. Schedule test runs, upload your presenters' slides and your session management slides (welcome and process). Get comfortable with all the functions and consider how they may be useful in your interview/presentation. Familiarise yourselves with using direct messaging, i.e learn how to select certain members, select all members, select moderators only, select individuals. NB. Take special care when switching between All and Selected, so you don't inadvertently speak/chat publically when you intend to speak/chat privately.
4. Allow at least two separate 1 hour sessions, a week apart, for this familiarisation. Request your guests attend these sessions.
5. Prepare your introductions and guest background statements and have guests approve these by email.

6. Prepare your interview questions and anticipate the time required for decent answers, allowing time for open discussion.
7. Prepare your welcome and protocols screens eg. examples of slides we used

8. Agree on ground rules i.e. time limitations on answers, order of process, content of slides.

9. Prepare a running sheet of what's going to happen when and who's responsible and email that out to the team. Eg:

10. Prepare your audience – through advertising emails prior to the event. Encourage booking.
11. Ask participants to download and check software installation, test firewalls, do audio tuning adjustments etc.
12. Share out the tasks across e-moderating/e-facilitating team. This is how we did it, for example:
    - one team member welcomes everyone, gets people to check bandwidth (a function in Elluminate *Live!*), solves access problems through direct messaging questions and responding. This person also manages the slide show, flicking between process and welcome slides, during the introduction and whenever it's appropriate during the interview
    - another team member hosts the interview , engages with the guests and selects questions from the audience, through direct messaging or through voice, if agreed
    - another team member keeps time and lets guests know when time limit is approaching, through direct message feature. This person also watches direct messaging interplay for people who can bring additional interest into the discussion and direct messages the interviewer about them
13. Run through process as planned and stick to time.
14. Involve/engage the audience…. allow file sharing, group browsing etc. it's amazing what's happening out there.

So…to wrap up…what do you need in a team?
A group of people who were prepared to collaborate, experiment and be VERY well organised.

It is also very exciting hearing and seeing (in text form) people from Brasil, New York, Norway and various places across Australia converge and collaborate on sharing knowledge and experiences!

It is achievable.

Useful Links

The online event is recorded and archived at learningtimes.org
See what you think! Take this link from Edition 05 of the Knowledge Tree

http://flexiblelearning.net.au/knowledgetree/edition05/html/cri_chalk.html

Check out Michael Coghlan's article on voice online at:
http://flexiblelearning.net.au/knowledgetree/edition05/html/npra_michael_coghlan.html

Pelion Consulting Pty. Ltd. web site - Jo Murray's company
http://www.pelion.com.au/moodle

Elluminate
http://www.elluminate.com/

Learning Times Community
http://www.learningtimes.org

Alan Levine's blog
http://www.cogdogblog.com

Michael Chalk's blog
http://www.prace.vic.edu.au/pd/flex/

Michael Coghlan's blog
http://users.chariot.net.au/~michaelc/fll/blog.htm