

## On the Line

Anshuman Khare • Deborah Hurst  
Editors

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Business Education in the Digital Age

 Springer

*Editors*

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# Preface

## Objective and Background

Business organizations today are looking for work-ready graduates to whom they invest in continuing education to support employees – a quick return on investment. Concurrently, online delivery of courses and programs is on the rise benefitting both individuals and their employers. Engaging in online education often mirrors the way work is done in organizations while also containing costs. The debate about the quality of online versus on-campus business education continues to rage. While some resist the move to virtual campuses and learning, it is hard to deny the preferences of a connected population who seek increasingly flexible, accessible learning opportunities, course materials, classrooms, faculty, and associated services anytime and from anywhere. This is causing disruption to how educators do business. Business schools today are involved in the evolution of virtual courses and classrooms as an opportunity to reach remotely located and international students, as well as students in immediate vicinities given demand for greater access and opportunity without adversely disrupting careers and lives.

The intent of this edited book is to present different perspectives of *online business education* – how it is best designed and delivered and how it supports advances in management disciplines. Through the endeavor of linking theory to practice, the authors describe online platforms in their provision of timely, excellent, and relevant business education.

This book intends to contribute insights for use to business educators in design and implementation of online learning. We present and discuss technologies for class facilitation and preparation, the “secret sauce” regarding meeting and exceeding collaboration expectations, adaptive content, tools used to bring content and issues to life, disruptive approaches, and new emerging directions.

## Audience for This Book

This book is targeted at business educators and administrators who have an interest in delivering high-quality business education using online platforms and tools. Lessons learned, insights, and challenges have been discussed from various perspectives for those looking to gain insight into developing new educational programs that through collaborative online learning tools create aligned knowledge and skill. This book is also intended for use of business practitioners interested in the development of work-ready graduates and further learning opportunities that may support their organizations.

## Book Structure

The main theme of the book is *online business education*. The book draws from the experience of academics involved with the development and implementation of online business education, administrators, and researchers who investigate the technologies and closely watch marketplace trends. The book also presents perspective papers from individuals who are involved with the development of online learning approaches and systems as well as those who have taken online business programs. The perspective papers capture graduates and consultants from different parts of the world who provide interesting comments on their experiences of online business education. It is our premise that educators, graduates, and consultants alike have much to share and learn from one another to encourage further development of online business education.

The book is divided into three parts.

Part 1 presents papers on “why” business education is viable and sustainable in today’s context. The book starts by examining the emergence of online business education. Treating education as a service, this part describes new techniques for creating a better online business education experience. It also looks at the role advanced data analytics can play in enhancing the quality of online business education.

Part 2 delves into “how” online business education works. It presents conceptual models for teaching in specific disciplines and learning design that describes what business educators do and how programs work. This part also addresses performance assessments and quality assurance measures that help to demonstrate the efficacy of online pedagogy. Practical applied papers are used in this part to highlight the use of learning platforms, tools, and their application specific to businesses that build knowledge and skills and make students “work ready.”

Part 3 of the book addresses the “so what?” or the outcomes and impacts of online business education. This part targets where business education needs to take learning next, for example, to support sustainable business, ethical decision making, and inclusive and collaborative leadership. Papers deal with topics such as how

distributed online environments may work better to support knowledge and soft skill building directly relevant for organizations today. Other learning outcomes showing the value of online business education are discussed.

Integrated into each part are short papers that present student, consultant, or online educational user “perspectives.” These short chapters both support the content within some of the chapters and question approaches with the customer perspective. They are intended to create an ongoing conversation with interesting themes emerging to connect real-world practices and approaches.

It is our view that engaging in online business education is like a marathon where an educator must plan, pace, and manage the learning. While online business education intends to help individuals achieve personal goals, they recognize too that some may miss out on important in-person learning gained through the physical presence of other classmates. Thus, at times the need for specialized blended degrees in topics such as leadership, change management, supply chain management, project management where students benefit from face time with other students, or the broader business perspectives may be beneficial. It is important to provide opportunities for students to leverage both place-based and online business education for knowledge and skill building within a broader educational ecosystem.

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# Review Process

Proposals submitted were reviewed by the editors, and an initial structure of the book was created. After a shortlisting process, selected authors were invited to submit full papers. Research and perspective papers submitted were double peer-reviewed by a team of academics and practitioners from around the world. The review process was coordinated by the editors and an editorial board. The editors and the editorial board members are introduced later in this book.

The editors would like to thank all those involved in peer-reviewed process for their timely and constructive feedback that challenged the authors to raise the quality of their chapter.

# Acknowledgments

The editors are thankful to the contributors to this book (editorial board members and the authors) who helped to showcase the excellent work being done in online business education in institutions across the world.



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## About the Editors

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**Deborah Hurst** is dean, Faculty of Business, and associate professor of organization studies, Athabasca University, Canada. She joined Athabasca University in 1995 as an academic coach in the world's first online M.B.A. She later joined AU full time as an associate professor in January 2001, and since that time she has held veracious roles including associate dean and new business development and M.B.A. program director. Deborah obtained her B.A. from the University of Toronto and her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Alberta. Prior to obtaining her graduate education, Deborah worked for General Motors of Canada Limited. Her time over a 10-year period included experience within the departments of material control, parts distribution, export operations, and traffic. During her M.A. studies, she worked for a summer at the nonprofit organization, Edmonton Social Planning Council, as a research assistant and later during her Ph.D. for the Alberta Public

Service as a human resource consultant and manager over a 4-year period. All of these private, nonprofit, and public sector work experiences continue to inform Deborah's research, teaching, and administrative duties. Deborah's guiding career vision and goals have always been focused on improving the human experience of workplaces through a better understanding of the cultural aspects of organization life. She is interested in how to best design online learning to develop excellence in graduate knowledge and professional skill as leaders and in business disciplines to directly support and mirror current workplace requirements. In her role as dean, Deborah draws from her background in organization behavior/theory, work and organizational sociology, leadership development, and management education to lead the creation and provision of highly relevant, transformative, and accessible online management education.

## About the Editorial Board

**Maria Argyropoulou\***, Ph.D., is a program director at Laureate Online Education and holds the title of honorary lecturer in the University of Liverpool in UK for online programs. She is also adjunct faculty at the Hellenic Open University. She received her Ph.D. from Brunel Business School, UK, and her M.B.A. from the Strathclyde University, Scotland. She also holds an M.Sc. in decision science from the Athens University of Economics and Business. She obtained her B.Sc. degree from the Physics and Mathematics School, University of Athens. Her research and teaching interests focus on operations/supply chain management, project management, and IT systems implementation and evaluation. Her work has appeared in various peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and conference proceedings. She has been involved in several EU research projects with the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB). Apart from her academic career, she is also a consultant with extensive experience in business process reengineering and information systems implementation. She has worked for international companies for more than 10 years specializing in operations management, global supply chains, and international trade. She has consulted for many companies and public organizations and was responsible for executive and educational seminars in her areas of expertise.

**Will Baber** has combined education with business throughout his career, teaching business students in Japan and Europe and working in economic development for the State of Maryland and language services in Washington, DC. In his work he has frequently encountered cross-cultural conflicts and synergies. He studies these issues as an associate professor in the Graduate School of Management of Kyoto University. Research interests include cross-cultural adaptation and the impact of expatriates on the workplace.

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\*Indicates members who also contributed a chapter.

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**Joyce Fortune** is emeritus professor of technology management at the Open University in the UK. She has worked for the institution for over 30 years, designing, writing, and presenting distance-teaching materials at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Originally these materials were in print but switched to online as the technology developed. This change has not only brought the advantages associated with blended learning but also meant that study materials can be updated very regularly and any problems rectified very quickly. Joyce obtained a B.Sc. from Loughborough University and a Ph.D. from Nottingham University's Faculty of Engineering and went on to work in industry before becoming a career academic. Her main subject areas are systems thinking, project management, and quality management, and in much of her teaching and research, she brings together all three of these subject areas. She has supervised a number of students to successful completion of their Ph.D. and has published widely in journals as well as coauthored three books. Her recent externally funded research looks at the adoption of technological innovations in healthcare and at policing in the UK.

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**Dana Coble** is a consultant who has been privileged to work with several exceptional companies in the development and implementation of their growth and sustainability strategies, particularly emphasizing operational efficiency, process improvement, change management, and succession planning. After having completed her M.B.A., obtained online from the Centre for Innovative Management (Athabasca University), Dana has been focused on economic development and capacity building in developing and emerging economies through enterprise feasibility assessments, business advising, and the building of collaborative networks to support the creation and development of innovative solutions and sustainable approaches.

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**Deborah Dull** started her supply chain career in the Microsoft supply chain, first learning the operations of warehousing and logistics through data analysis and then through building and geo-expanding the Microsoft retail store supply chain. Experiences in these roles, as well as in the digital supply chain and channel operations, highlighted the importance of the customer voice. She uses her experience in incubation, launch, and corresponding change management as a health supply chain program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where supply chain constraints range from lack of infrastructure and power to complex stakeholder dynamics. The reward for incremental improvements, however, means lives saved and improved.

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**Terri Hinkley** is the workforce innovation officer at the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) with responsibility for leading ACRP initiatives to define and shape the future of the clinical research workforce and to support professionals in their career growth and development. Terri joined ACRP in September of 2013 after 18 years in the clinical research industry. In addition to working in the clinical research industry, Terri has experience as an educator, working as an instructor for the Michener Institute's Clinical Research Associate Program and as an adjunct instructor in the Clinical Research and Leadership graduate program at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Terri graduated from Centennial College's Diploma Nursing program in 1986 and completed her B.Sc.N. at York University in 2000 and her M.B.A. from Athabasca University in 2005. She is currently enrolled in the Doctorate in Human and Organizational Learning, Executive Leadership Program, at George Washington University.

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**Michael Stein** was born in Hamburg, Germany. After school and military service, he studied electrical engineering at the RWTH Aachen. He started his working life as a project and maintenance engineer and in 1998 was transferred to Canada, working as a process engineer, maintenance manager, and finally operations manager in Toronto. In 2005 he started work as site manager in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. At the same time he pursued an online Executive M.B.A. at Athabasca University with emphasis on sustainability, which he finished in 2009. Since 2013 Michael has been working as a manufacturing manager near Toronto. He is a registered professional engineer in Ontario.



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**René Vossen** is managing director of the Institute for Management Cybernetics (IfU) at RWTH Aachen University. Dr. Vossen has been working at the institute cluster IMA/ZLW & IfU as research assistant and research group leader since 2008. After completing his studies in 2006 at the RWTH Aachen University, he worked for the West German Broadcasting and a local newspaper publishing company as an online editor and writer. In December 2012, he completed his doctorate (Ph.D.) in the field of applied research on the intellectual capital of clusters of excellence successfully. In addition, his main areas of research are cybernetic knowledge management, the optimization of cooperation, communication and networking processes in knowledge-intensive research networks, quality management, performance measurement, metrics development and benchmarking, as well as the research network management of inter- and transdisciplinary projects.

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