

Blended Learning is a Success for Ecumen's Leaders

A day in the life of a manager can't be predicted or scripted. So, even though annual leadership training is vital to an organization's success, it's often not convenient for managers and administrators to take time away from their duties for it – especially if they have to travel from a hundred different locations around the state.

Shoreview-based Ecumen is one of the country's largest non-profit senior housing, aging services and housing development companies. Its 4,000 employees work in a variety of housing operations from senior independent living communities to assisted-living, home care and care centers.

Ecumen's Director of Training and Development, Carolyn Perron, typically provided a minimum of a full day of internally-based training once a year for the company's management team. The idea of

a blended learning approach for this year's training came from Perron's own experience with an online training and instructional development course she had recently completed herself.

"I believed we could use the concept of online modules, combined with a webinar and workshops, for a blended learning experience at Ecumen," says Perron.

Perron had worked with the customized training department at North Hennepin Community College before, so she turned to Nerita Hughes, NHCC's Customized Training Program Director, to develop an interactive blended learning solution for Ecumen.

As Hughes explained, "Blended learning meant Ecumen's managers could access the custom online modules from anywhere, complete them at their own pace, and have frequent contact with the instructor via email."



Four 50-minute modules were at the core of the training: Team Leadership, Personality Styles, Goal Setting and Critical Decision Making. Because each of the modules was combined with an application exercise, the participants could take the theory from the modules and incorporate it into their everyday experiences.

People were enthusiastic about applying what they learned. Soon after the conclusion of the blended learning, Ecumen's leaders were dealing with their 2009 budgets. There was more partnering with department heads during this process due in part to what they learned about personality styles and working with others.

One Ecumen manager says, "As I create my new team at Luther Park, I plan to put these tools to use right away – from scheduling to planning."

For more information on North Hennepin's Customized Training, contact Nerita Hughes at 763-488-0272 or email nerita.hughes@nhcc.edu.

