

In the Classroom 1

Welcome to the *In the Classroom* Podcast

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Stan Skrabut: Welcome to the podcast. I have to be honest, I'm a little nervous. I think that's because of the excitement of what we're going to do during this podcast. Today we're going to talk about a number of things, why I started this podcast, who I think it's really for, some things that I want to share with you. I want you to get to know a little bit more about me, what my teaching philosophy is, and what you can expect going forward and other episodes. Let's get started. Why did I start this podcast?

Well, I work as an instructional technologist for a community college. What I'm noticing is that the faculty that I work with don't have the time to come and sit down and learn about new technologies. I wanted to have a mechanism where I could share the things that I was doing, and provide them with ideas, and provide them with other resources that they may tap into, that they would listen to. If I capture their interest, maybe they would come and start working with me.

One of the things that I know is that things are changing constantly in the classroom, that we always have new technologies, with those new technologies there's new strategies to be applied, and we could be doing a lot better job servicing the students that we have, and helping them learn the content that we are providing in front of them. One of the things is, as I mentioned, that I don't have-- When I hold face to face classes, I'm not getting faculty to show up, they are simply just too busy.

One of the strategies was, okay, then I will create instructional material, put it onto our learning management system, and we happen to use Blackboard, and I put that information on the Blackboard, but they still were not coming in. I found another way to do it. I had taken a course by John Lee Dumas, and he's a individual that I listened to his podcast. His podcast is Entrepreneurs on Fire. Every week-- Basically every day he was putting out a new podcast, but he would also offer these courses. I signed up for one of these courses, and it happened to be delivered by email. We started creating these short email courses that would be sent out one at a time, and from there we have about 100 people signed up for those courses, which in what I was doing previously is a multiple of at least 10. With that, I decided, "Well, let me go see what I can do using the technology of a podcast. Maybe I can get faculty to sit and listen to me as they're driving to and from work, and they would pick up some new ideas and new techniques." In addition, this is also a strategy that I can use to talk to my students. I am currently teaching for the University of Wyoming. I'm starting a Multimedia Development class this week, actually. What I wanted to do is create a podcast to help support that class, and the other students who had previously gone through, and any future students, that they can pick up ideas. That's who I'm designing this course for. I'm designing it for fellow instructional technologists who are out there, just as a way to share ideas. I'm sharing ideas with the students that are in my classes, and also

sharing it with fellow instructors at all different levels. I am in higher Ed, so that's where my focus is, but I think other individuals can benefit, other teachers can benefit from what I'm sharing. What am I planning to share? Well, really as I get started here, I'm going to just share what I am doing in the class that I am presently in. Then, as you provide me with questions or ideas, things that you want me to share, then I will certainly explore those areas, and put together episodes around those particular areas. As I get started, I'm going to be teaching a Multimedia Development class, and there are so many different great topics in that particular class and the strategies that I'm using for that class, that I wanted to go out and share those with you. That's where we're going to start, and we'll just evolve from there and figure out what we're going to do. Who am I? Why do I get to do a podcast? Well, actually anybody can do a podcast. This has been one of those bucket ideas that I wanted to pursue. I just finished writing a book, so why not do a podcast? A little bit more about me. When I was finishing up high school, way, way, way back, before we were-- We probably had one of the first computers, and it was you had to put file cards in, and it had thermal imaging paper that came out, it was really prehistoric. At that time, I did not want to have anything to do with education. Matter of fact, in my senior year, the last semester of my senior year, out of eight classes I had study halls and I skipped most of them. All I wanted to do was pursue my goals, and my goal was to get into the Air Force and serve in the Air Force. That was my goal. I did that. Seven days after I got out of high school I was standing tall at Lackland Air Force base going through basic training, and then from there, I went into my specialty, which happened to be Security Forces. As the journey went on very early, I had an opportunity to go to the Air Force Academy prep school, and that Air Force Academy prep school lit a fire under me in terms of education. I finally was able to do education because I wanted to, not because I had to. High school, I had to. Now, everything that I was learning was because I wanted to. I didn't stay at the Air Force Academy prep school. Went back, enlisted into the Air Force and traveled around different parts of the world, but I was pursuing a Master's degree. That master's degree was done as a post-traditional student. I was interested in computers, and so I got a degree in Information Systems Management. That degree fit in my DNA that computers were here to help make life easier. Different ways there with doing, for example, this podcast, this allows you to be with me even though we are at a far. There's all kinds of technologies that we can leverage in the classroom. Well, in my Air Force career, my path also took me into training. I was responsible for training at one time 800 Security Force members every single month on different topics. During that time, I was trying to figure out how to leverage computers to do exactly that, going out and putting things on CD-ROMs, and distributing it. The internet was just coming about, we were trying to figure out how to do that. I was using my degree to figure out how I could do training better. Well, then I found a school, Nova Southeastern University had a degree program, a Master's degree program on Computing Technology and Education. Man, that just put it into hyperdrive for me because now I could combine the two things more properly by figuring out how to leverage technology to support, education and training, and so I started doing that. About that time I retired from the Air Force and I went to work at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, where I was hired on to be an instructional technologist, help faculty use technology in the Modern Languages department. There was a lot to learn there. Fortunately, I started to really appreciate reading, and what that could do to help my career, but that's a whole different discussion. I worked at Hobart and William Smith Colleges as an

instructional technologist, helped set up learning management systems, and using all kinds of interesting technologies to support the languages. That was a lot of fun. From there, I went to the university of Wyoming, and during that time I finished my doctorate. It was a doctorate in Instructional Technology, really focusing on informal learning and distance education. This opened up additional doors, but it really just kept reinforcing what I did. Now I am working-- Well, while I was at the university of Wyoming, I worked for a cooperative extension and trying to help the educators there be able to-- push out instruction to the individuals that they were responsible for. Now, I am a director of technology-enhanced instruction at Jamestown Community College. It's in the far western corner of New York, just near Erie and Buffalo. Right now, as I looking out my window, it's snowing. It's a beautiful, beautiful snowy day. Right now, I'm just continuing on to help faculty wherever possible to implement technology into their instruction. I'm just trying to find different ways of being able to do this and I think a podcast is a good tool to be able to do that.

A little bit about my ideas of education. First of all, I am a huge fan of learning. I have to be honest, I'm not necessarily a huge fan of the education system. I don't think they necessarily go well together. As you listen to the podcast, you'll come to understand where I'm coming from, that individuals love to learn, right? When they're faced with a problem, they will explore it endlessly until they find a solution to those problems.

This is happening every day. Then we get into the education system and we use these tests and assessments and what we end up doing is we end up sorting that individuals have the capacity to learn, it may not necessarily be as fast as what the system requires. When we have a 16-week block, not everybody gets it in 16 weeks. Some people are held back, some people are they're not allowed to progress as fast as they want.

My ideas of the education system and learning, that's where the conflict is. I think learning should be messy and challenging that students should not necessarily be spoon-fed all this information. We have so much information on the internet, what we need to do is teach them to be lifelong learners to be able to go out and hunt out that information and be able to put it together in new and meaningful ways that make a difference.

Some of the classes that I teach at the Jamestown Community College, I teach a student success class and students are very reluctant to go out on a limb and very reluctant to share and engage and it takes a while to break down those barriers. We conditioned them to do this, they're afraid to fail and learning is about failing, right? You learn more when you fail than if you get it right every single time. If you get it right, you're really not learning anything.

The science around the brain proving that, that we need to make it messy and we need to make it challenging and that's where the greatest learning comes about. I'm also a believer that learning is all about dialogue and what I mean with this is that it's about conversation that I'm hoping even through this podcast that you'll get out and add comments.

You don't may not agree with me, that's absolutely fine, hopefully, that we can have a respectful conversation about it. The best learning that I've seen is when there is dialogue when there's an opportunity for individuals to share what they know to create something new. Now, part of the dialogue is that you may be seeing content whether watching a video or reading a book or something like this but ideally, you're entering a dialogue and not just passively consuming it but that you're challenging what you're seeing and questioning how you can use it and apply it so I'm totally into this idea about be in a dialogue.

I also think learning should be as fun as possible, I believe in game-based learning or gamification where you're trying to create a condition where they want to learn the different difference between want to and have to. If I tell you I have to do something, usually I get a lot of pushback but if I can create the conditions where you want to do it then we can really have a lot of fun. I think gamification helps with this, the point systems.

For one example, that in order to finish one of my courses, that is the matter of accumulating points. I will never take points away where at least I certainly try not to take points away but I tried to create the conditions where I'm giving you points to help you get your goals and such. That's a little bit of how I think about this, how I designed my courses so that's what we're going to be doing.

What can you expect going forward? One of the things I'm going to do is share what's going on in my class. I won't get into the nitty-gritty of who said what but I'm going to share the articles that we're reading. I'm going to share the different topics that we are discussing. Share the strategies that I use to put the course together and that's going to be in the next episode, actually.

I just launched the course, the students are allowed to go into the course to get started but I'm going to talk about what I do to prep my courses, what teaching strategies that I have chosen. I am also going to share other podcasts, other books, things I'm reading, things that excite me, things that I think are important to this overall conversation for this podcast, in the classroom, right?

Let's have a dialogue, let's have fun. I can assure you that it's going to be a little messy but that's okay, that's where learning happens. That's what you can expect for it as we move on. Before I tie this up, I want to make a quick plug for my book. I just finished a book, it's called *Read to Succeed* and here's a little more about that.