

Open Forum 2

Web Site Transcript

Chapter 10

A = Rick

B = James

A: Hey, James . . . what are you reading?

B: Oh . . . it's the course catalog for the community college.

A: Are you signing up for classes?

B: I'm trying to sign up. It's really difficult trying to work full-time here and complete my degree. I find it really frustrating. Most of the classes necessary to complete my B.A. meet during the day—during work hours. Or, if they meet in the evening, I end up missing too many classes because of last minute sales trips or something keeps me late at work. I mean, I need this degree to get ahead here at the company, but it seems nearly impossible!

A: Why not take the classes over the Internet? I've started taking classes online, and I completed six hours over the past couple of months. So far I've taken Beginning Accounting, Business Law, and Economics.

B: Online? I've thought about that, but . . . I don't know . . . Don't you miss the real relationships and contacts with your professor and other students?

A: I'll admit, it's not quite the same as sitting next to other people who share the same interests . . . but there are many advantages. Take scheduling, for example.

B: How does it work? I mean, how do you attend class?

A: It is pretty simple, really. Have you ever used an online discussion board?

B: Sure, who hasn't?

A: Well, attending class is basically like that. You are required to post four messages a day to a message board which is monitored by your professor.

B: What about lectures? Does the professor give lectures?

A: Those are posted online, too. Then you need to post your comments. I participate—share my opinions—much more than I ever did in a traditional class.

B: Really?

A: Yes . . . and the best part is that I can do it any time. In fact, I usually participate in a discussion during my morning coffee break . . . and then again at lunch. That fulfills my required participation for one day. You could say I've attended class that day.

B: Do you do this for a full semester?

A: Each three unit class I've taken so far lasts for a single month.

B: That's great! Can you really finish a class in only thirty days?

A: Yes. But it can get pretty intense . . . you really have to keep up with the work. You can't fall behind because there is no time to catch up.

B: What about the assignments? Are they similar to traditional class assignments? Do you write reviews and papers and turn them in over the Internet? Do you take tests online?

A: Yes, all that is done online . . . or completed at home and then sent to the professor over the Internet.

B: What about the reading. You don't read entire textbooks on the computer, do you? I don't think I'd like that.

A: Reading is a little different. Some materials, like journal articles and class lectures, are available online. The university has an online library.

B: What about the textbook. There is a textbook, isn't there?

A: Yes, it's a traditional text—you have to get it ahead of time. A buddy told me to get it in advance and start reading, because after the class begins, it is really hard to keep up on the reading. I found that to be true.

B: Is it rigorous? I don't want to offend you, but I've heard that these classes aren't as serious as real . . . I mean traditional classes. A friend told me that the online university tells students that their classes are as thorough, but it isn't true.

A: I think there probably are some online universities that don't really provide serious classes . . . but I have to say, the classes I've taken have been real challenges, and I feel I did all the work any student does in any classroom.

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B: But a classroom is more than just lectures and texts and assignments . . . Do you remember how we met?

A: How could I forget? In our Introduction to Statistics class at the community college.

B: We had to work on that group project with that guy who basically did nothing but complain . . . what was his name?

A: Ethan.

B: Ethan. Anyway, the best part was working together, learning from each other, and getting to know one another. I really valued that. I wouldn't have this job if we hadn't become friends.

A: I'll admit . . . there is nothing quite like that in my online class. I never see my classmates, and besides, they live thousands of miles away.

B: Hey look at the time. We need to get back to work!

A: And I need to get back to class!

B: I'd like to talk to you more about this later.

A: Of course, but right now . . .