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### Distance Education in Tidewater Virginia

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DISTANCE EDUCATION

IN

TIDEWATER VIRGINIA

---

A RESEARCH PROJECT

PRESENTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

---

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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BY

LISA WORNOM-ZAHRALDDIN

MAY 2003

## APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Lisa Wornom-Zahraddin under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

APPROVED BY: John M. Ritz 7-27-03  
Dr. John M. Ritz, Graduate Program Director Date  
Occupational and Technical Studies

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's work environment has become a site for many Distance Education and Distance Training programs. The potential for more effective training and compelling economic factors have enhanced the growth in the Internet-delivery of learning options. The traditional classroom, as we know it, has swiftly evolved into one of a networked environment offering unlimited types of lifelong learning venues for adults. Another key reason for the phenomenal growth in this field is the need to stay competitive in one's chosen field or career. Still another factor is the reality of the flexible and very global workplace environment and its effect on employees. Many adults change careers and/or jobs every few years, therefore they become lifelong learners to remain marketable. This constant change in staffing has necessitated many organizations to create and deliver applicable training and educational programs to keep top employees as well as to recruit others. IBM Manufacturing, Prudential Insurance and Financial Services, Irving Forestry Products, and many other organizations have viable distance educational offerings (Stahmer, 1995).

Distance education and distance training programs have been proven cost effective tools for organizations. Significant reductions have been noted both directly and indirectly in travel savings. Many companies experienced a cost savings of 40-60% when transitioning to technology-delivered courses versus the instructor-led courses. For example, AT&T, reported saving more than \$20 million in travel in one fiscal year (Thompson, 1994). Both distance education and distance training programs have proven track records for success and indicators suggest that both the public and private sectors

plan to increase their use of these concepts. The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) expects that over 2.3 million US students will be taking distance-learning courses in the next few years (<http://www.usdla.org/>, March 2002).

The data on subject matter retention indicate a dramatic increase with e-learning options over traditional classroom-based models. Students in this form of distance education have greater flexibility and access to learning applications, less time away from their families, and increased availability of customized programs. A study by the Merrill Lynch organization discovered significant benefits of various cost effective distance educational programs not only for their staff but also for their customers, suppliers, and partners.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem of this study was to determine what types of distance education programs should be offered to Tidewater, Virginia, businesses.

### **RESEARCH GOALS**

The following research goals were created in order to answer this study:

- 1.) Determine if Tidewater, Virginia, business leaders were currently utilizing distance education/distance training concepts in their organizations.
- 2.) Determine if distance education/distance training programs would be beneficial for Tidewater, Virginia, businesses.
- 3.) Determine what types of distance education/distance training programs should be developed and offered to Tidewater, Virginia, businesses.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Distance education and distance training have become highly effective as well as cost effective tools for many organizations in the private, public, and government sectors. The various needs for and uses of distance education and distance training vary greatly. Very large organizations tend to utilize distance education and distance training programs to meet nationwide needs of dispersed staff members, while smaller organizations tend to use this tool to meet specific needs of smaller staffs and teams. In 1995 some 250,000 Americans enrolled in correspondence courses and another 5 million took private technical and vocational courses. However, there was no accurate data recorded on the number of Americans who chose distance education programs (Weimer et al., 1995).

Over the next few years it is expected that about 2.5 million Americans will take some type of distance education or distance training course. Because this growth is predominately market driven, organizations are beginning to take note of whether or not a program is accredited. Both the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U. S. Department of Education endorses The Distance Education and Training Council in Washington, D.C., and its seven-member “Accrediting Commission of the DETC.” The DETC, a global leader in Distance Learning, offers institutions practical solutions for those in the fields of education and training (<http://www.detc.org/content/about.html>, 2002).

A July 10, 2002, press release from West Des Moines, Iowa, stated that GeoLearning LMS had been awarded a 4-year contract by the U. S. Federal Government to deliver web-based training solutions for 1.8 million federal employees. This initiative was needed to take advantage of economies of scale in training efforts across the various



government agencies. The Director for Office of Personnel Management, Michael Fitzgerald, stated that redundant procedures and licensing costs needed to be streamlined and this was the most efficient direction for the government to implement (<http://www.geolearning.com>, 2002). Other business and organizational leaders are beginning to realize the same needs in relationship to employee retention of quality recruits and the creation of a diverse workforce.

A recent assessment study of training needs in the use of distance education for instruction offered three related topics for any program development in a local community. One was to involve all members of the distance education team in the design and implementation process that directly affects the learner, the teachers, and the community. Another was to develop a plan for formative evaluation and ongoing program revision in industries that face constant change. Still another offered the suggestion to disseminate information relating to low cost/benefit forms of delivery, ability to reach dispersed populations, equity of opportunities, relevance to the community, and benefits to all partners in the distance education team (Sherry & Morse, 1995).

The Tidewater labor market is in constant competition with the Northern Virginia market for qualified staffing solutions. Business and political leaders have formed various coalitions to promote this region, and they have publicly marketed the low cost of living and ease of traffic in the Tidewater area. The local leaders are beginning to address the value of the higher educational facilities and the options of distance education and training as an asset to the region.

The TELETECHNET program offered by Old Dominion University has received rave reviews across the nation. The remarkable growth in enrollment at Tidewater Community College's four campuses has made a positive economic impact on this region while offering much needed post-secondary, adult learning, and now Workforce Development programs. Tidewater Community College has adequate equipment and technologies to delivery distance educational programs. It also has a solid foundation of subject matter experts and curriculum developers to create, facilitate, and evaluate local training programs. Tidewater Community College also offers the accreditation respect that many local business leaders expect from distance education programs while also offering valuable products at a reasonable price. The time is right for Tidewater business leaders and the local community college leaders to develop customized distance training and distance educational programs that can benefit both partners while further enhancing the skills of the Tidewater workforce. Tidewater Community College has successfully delivered customized 'brick and mortar' programs for retail merchants and many in the medical community. This needs assessment study will further enhance the knowledge of local market needs for customized distance education and distance training programs in the Tidewater region.

The significance of this study is to determine the extent that Tidewater business leaders are utilizing distance education and distance training programs. It is also undertaken to determine what their future educational and training needs will be in order to customize programs that can be offered to the business leaders in the local marketplace.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This research study was based on the following limitations:

1. The population in this study was limited to business leaders in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, and Newport News, all in Virginia.
2. The research focused on distance education and distance training concepts.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

This research study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Tidewater business leaders are familiar with the concepts of distance education and distance training.
2. Many Tidewater businesses have utilized some types of services from local community colleges in the past.
3. Tidewater business leaders are able to forecast their industry needs as this market is heavily influenced by the long-range goals of military and government facilities.
4. The results of this research will be used to further enhance distance education and distance training programs in the Tidewater region.

## **PROCEDURES**

The data for this study were collected through a survey distributed to Tidewater area business leaders. The businesses were randomly selected from the current telephone directory and a stratified random sample was selected to accurately reflect public, private, service related, industrial, educational, and military organizations. The surveys were mailed with a cover letter clarifying the purpose of the survey, the necessity for a timely

response, while noting the respect for the business as an expert in their field, by the researcher. These data were collected, organized, tabulated, and evaluated. The findings were analyzed. A summary, a conclusion and various recommendations were presented. The results of this research and survey will be instrumental for the development of future distance education and training programs in the Tidewater region.

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The following terms were defined because of their importance to this research study and occasionally used interchangeably in this field:

1. Distance Education (DE) - The process of delivering an educational opportunity or program outside of the traditional classroom environment. Distance education is designed to create a flextime situation for the learner and is generally supported by technological systems.
2. Distance Training (DT) - The process of instruction and training in an off-site situation where the learner and trainer, who are physically in separate locations, communicate primarily via electronic media.
3. Distance Learning (DL) - The result of Distance Education, delivered by an instructor or facilitator, and experienced by the learner or participant when time, location, or both separate each party. Courses can be delivered by synchronous or asynchronous means of instruction which can include interactive TV, video-conferencing, CD-ROM, audio and videotape, and online learning applications. This definition is very broad and does not eliminate the possibility of traditional classroom settings.

4. Distance Working (DW) - The concept of working off-site from the organizational base and electronically corresponding with the main site during a regular working schedule. This concept was previously called telecommuting.
5. E-learning/Technology-Based learning - Technically advanced applications and procedures such as learning via the web, virtual classrooms, digital communities, and computer-based learning. Frequently used term associated with any and all types of electronic learning modes and processes.

## **OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter I of this study explained the growth and acceptance of distance education and distance training in the global market. The problem of this study was to determine what types of distance education programs should be offered to Tidewater, Virginia businesses. Chapter II discussed the review of literature relating to the global utilization of distance learning by public, private, and government organizations of distance education and distance training for their staffs. Chapter III outlined the procedures for conducting this study. Chapter IV contained the findings and Chapter V offered the summary, conclusions, and recommendations from this study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter will explain the worldwide growth and acceptance of distance education and distance training. It will also explain the unique market and business climate of the Tidewater region of Virginia.

#### **THE GLOBAL ACCEPTANCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AND DISTANCE TRAINING**

A recent Canadian study found that 54 percent of Canadian universities, 68 percent of Canadian community colleges, and 36 percent of large and medium businesses reported using some form of distance education (CMEC, 1994). This volume of activity is only expected to grow in the global market. In the Tidewater region there is just cause to assess the area business and industry needs of distance education and distance training. Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, has experienced phenomenal success with its TELETECHNET program. TELETECHNET is the Old Dominion University interactive distance education program that enables students in remote locations to earn their degrees from this fully accredited university (<http://web.odu.edu>, 2003). This distance education program is one of the largest in the United States. There should be no reason this success cannot be found on a community college level as well. Tidewater Community College is the state's second largest community college with over 30,000 students enrolled.

The applications for distance education and distance training have become accepted as efficient and effective mediums for businesses, government, and private

organizations for many reasons. One reason is the wealth of information available in knowledge-based programs. Another is that rapid change in the curriculum and information is an expected rule, not an exception to be avoided. Still another reason for the global acceptance and utilization of distance education and distance training is the improved access of information through resource sharing, networking, and industry partnerships (<http://www.detc.org/content/about.html>, 2002).

The growth in the availability of on-line classes is another cause for the explosion in distance learning and distance training. The majority of classes are available on the Internet 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, while other courses are delivered via e-mail applications. This flexibility further enhances the utilization by company employees who travel, who are in different time zones, and who may need access to the training and coursework in flextime.

Distance education and training applications have also become quite popular with military personnel who have very demanding and constantly changing job assignments. The on-line March 2002 issue of eLearn Magazine highlighted the launch of the Danish Electronic School for the Danish Armed Forces to train non-commissioned senior officers on a variety of topics (<http://www.elearnmag.org>, March 2002). This same issue also explained the pioneering approach to technology-based training for the Australian army that has reaped significant rewards in the ways of cost savings for the government as well as better learning for the troops (<http://www.elearnmag.org>, March 2002).

The e-learning market has also exploded in Colorado where several firms recently collaborated with a Denver software firm and a local university to deliver accredited e-College programs to over 250 schools and businesses. This unique community endeavor

also offers Internet hosting, portals, and a multitude of customized e-courses to the Rocky Mountain Region of Colorado (<http://www.elearnmag.org>, March 2002).

### **THE TIDEWATER REGION'S MARKET NEEDS**

The Tidewater business arena offers a diverse blend of military branches, contractors, public and private higher education institutions, an abundance of small businesses, and Fortune 500 firms. The population is culturally diverse and several languages are present in Tidewater. This predominately blue-collar population is also transient as military movement and operations greatly affect the Tidewater region. Thus, the demand for flexible and diverse educational and training programs is great. This transient and diverse populous is accustomed to the nuances of distance education and distance training. This same populous also supports the community college programs as well as other higher education and technical institutions.

In 2001, Tidewater Community College received federal grant monies to both develop and expand several program areas that could enhance the region's offering of distance education and distance training programs. The community college has also experienced increased attention by local business leaders for its advancement in technical program offerings and its effort to create specific training programs for the health care and retail industries.

In 2000, a Tidewater region pilot program, in distance training, was offered to a single homebound individual. This unique concept has since gained attention from several Tidewater business leaders. Some business leaders are currently entertaining the concept of distance working options for their staff members. This pilot program has since



been expanded and thus far all distance trainees have obtained employment in their selected fields. A successful collaboration by local web-design firms and a medical transcription service, along with a vocational trainer from Tidewater Community College, has led other local leaders to inquire about potential customized educational and training programs. Therefore, the researcher chose to develop this needs assessment model to specifically address local market demands in the Tidewater area by government and business leaders. This researcher also discovered that few distance-learning organizations around the world actually perform needs assessments study prior to developing their training curricula (Sherry, 1995).

A Dean of Workforce Development at a local community college admitted that there was currently a lacking of funding and staff needed to do a college wide and Tidewater region needs assessment study for distance education and distance training and thus fully supported the efforts of this researcher.

The successful development of valuable skills and abilities for the Tidewater region is critical to the future development of the business market as Tidewater is in constant competition for skilled labor with the higher paying region of Northern Virginia. The Virginia Department of Business Assistance's Workforce Services Division offers a no-cost training analysis to start-up and expanding companies within in the Commonwealth of Virginia (<http://www.dba.state.us/workforce>, 2002). Any qualifying Tidewater regional business can apply for this analysis. After receiving the evaluation, businesses could collaborate with the local community college for the development and coordination of customized distance training and educational programs.

## **SUMMARY**

Chapter II discussed both the value and the acceptance of distance education and distance training programs in the global society. This chapter also explained the unique diversity of the Tidewater region and the business environment in this area. The Dean of Workforce Development at a local community college validated the need for such an assessment of local business needs for distance educational opportunities. Thus, the review of literature in this chapter lends support to this research assessment in the distance education and training field which is becoming an industry standard for all types of organizations. Chapter III will focus on the methods of data collection and procedures, instrument design, and statistical analysis of the distance education and distance training needs assessment study in the Tidewater region.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

This chapter will explain the methods and procedures that were implemented in the needs assessment survey of Tidewater, Virginia, businesses in their goals for distance education and distance training programs. It was determined that a survey would be the most appropriate method of data collection. The survey was a collaboration of key questions created by a staff of vocational trainers and this researcher, who is a vocational distance trainer. Thus, this chapter will detail the population, instrument design, method of data collection, statistical analysis, and summary.

### **POPULATION**

The population of this study consisted of Tidewater, Virginia, area business leaders in the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, and Newport News. The businesses were randomly selected from the current telephone directories for those areas and a stratified random sample was selected to accurately reflect the sub-groups of public, private, industrial, service related, educational, and military organizations. The sample for this study is listed in the Appendix A. The survey was sent out to 50 businesses and governmental institutions from the Tidewater area.

### **INSTRUMENT DESIGN**

The survey in this research study was developed and conducted to determine:

1. If Tidewater, Virginia, business leaders were currently utilizing distance education/distance training concepts in their organizations.
2. If distance education/distance training programs would be beneficial for Tidewater businesses.
3. What types of distance education/distance training programs should be developed and offered to Tidewater businesses.

The survey is provided in Appendix B. This survey contained both open-form and close-form questions. The close-form questions increased the level of accuracy in the statistical analysis while the one open-form question allowed valuable input from each respondent on customized needs for their distance education and distance training goals.

### **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The survey (Appendix B) and cover letter (Appendix C) were mailed to respondents on May 30, 2002. A follow-up letter (Appendix D) was mailed on June 15, 2002. All completed surveys returned within a month of the initial mailing were tabulated and summarized in this study. The protection of human subjects was clearly explained in each cover letter as well as in the actual instrument. This research project followed all guidelines set forth by the Old Dominion University Human Subject Review Committee.

## **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

Software tabulation of each response in the questionnaire provided the data for the summary and conclusion section of this study. Both frequency and percentage of responses per question were reported.

## **SUMMARY**

Chapter III contained the methods and procedures used in this research study. It described the population targeted, the instrument design, the data collection methods, and the statistical analysis of responses. The findings are presented in Chapter IV, which also re-examines the goals and objectives of the study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

The problem of this study was to determine what types of distance education programs should be offered to the Tidewater, Virginia, businesses. This chapter includes the findings of this research study. It presents the results in table format and it also offers comments made by respondents for the only open-ended question in the survey.

The findings presented represent data collected from the instrument titled “Distance Education Survey.” The purpose of this survey was to meet three distinct goals: (1) if Tidewater, Virginia, business leaders were currently utilizing distance education/distance training concepts in their organizations, (2) if distance education an/or distance training programs would be beneficial for Tidewater businesses, and (3) what types of distance education/distance training programs should be developed and offered to Tidewater businesses.

### **REPORT OF THE FINDINGS**

The survey was sent to fifty different businesses and government institutions in the Tidewater region. Thirty-four responses, from the fifty mailed, were returned after the second mailing was completed. The response rate for this Tidewater area Distance Education Survey was 64 percent. Table 1 represents the breakdown of the population that responded by the classification of organization.

Eight of the thirty-two respondents, or 25 percent, represented the service sector. The federal government, the private sector, and the public sector each represented four respondents, or 12.5 percent. The industrial and educational classifications each had two,

or 6.3 percent. One state agency was represented and the remaining seven respondents, or 21.9 percent, classified their organizations as ‘other’. One respondent represented Virginia state government, or 3.1 percent of those surveyed. The military and the tourism industry were not represented in this survey. Table 1 represents the population that responded by the classification of organization.

**Table 1: Survey Response / Question 1**

How would you classify your organization?

Question # 1	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Federal Government	4	12.5%
Tourism	0	0%
State Government	1	3.1%
Service	8	25.0%
Industrial	2	6.3%
Private	4	12.5%
Military	0	0%
Educational	2	6.3%
Public	4	12.5%
Other	7	21.9%
Total	32	100%

Fifteen of the thirty-two respondents, or 46.9 percent, stated that they had used distance education in the last twelve months. Thirteen, or 40.6 percent, stated that they had not. The four remaining respondents, or 12.6 percent, either were not aware or did not answer. Table 2 represents the results from the distance education utilization question for Tidewater businesses and organizations.

**Table 2: Survey Response / Question 2**

Has your organization tried any form of distance education in the past 12 months?

Question #2

	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
No	13	40.6%
Yes	15	46.9%
Not Aware	2	6.3%
No Answer	2	6.3%
Total	32	100%



Eleven of the thirty-two respondents, or 34.4 percent, have developed in-house distance education and/or distance training curriculums. Eighteen, or 56.3 percent, had not done so. Three, or 9.4 percent, replied that they were unaware of this action. Table 3 represents the survey results from the question on in-house development of distance education and distance training programs.

**Table 3: Survey Response / Question 3A**

Has your organization ever developed a distance education or distance training curriculum, in-house, with your own full-time subject matter experts?

Question #3	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Yes	11	34.4%
No	18	56.3%
Not Aware	3	9.4%
Total	32	100%

Eleven of the thirty-two respondents, or 34.4 percent, answered that the in-house development of their programs were considered successful. Three respondents, or 9.4 percent, stated the programs were not considered successful. Another three respondents, or 9.4 percent, stated the programs were unaware of this action. Fifteen respondents, or 46.9 percent, did not answer. Table 4 represents the survey results from the question on the level of success with in-house development of distance education and distance training programs.

**Table 4: Survey Response / Question 3B**

If your organization has ever developed a distance education or distance training curriculum, in-house, with your own full-time subject matter experts, was it considered successful?

Question # 3B

	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Yes	11	34.4%
No	3	9.4%
Not Aware	3	9.4%
No Answer	15	46.9%
Total	32	100%

Twenty-three of the thirty-two respondents, or 71.9 percent, stated that their organization had used “off-the-shelf”, or prepackaged/canned training programs in the past. Seven respondents, or 21.9 percent, stated they had not used “off-the-shelf” programs. The remaining two respondents, or 3.1 percent each, were either unaware or did not answer. Table 5 represents the survey results from the question utilization of canned or “off-the-shelf” versions of distance education and distance training programs.

**Table 5: Survey Response / Question 4A**

Have you or your organization ever purchased and used "canned" or "off-the-shelf" training programs for your staff's educational and training needs?

Question #4	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Yes	23	71.9%
No	7	21.9%
Not Aware	1	3.1%
No Answer	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

Nineteen of the thirty-two respondents, or 59.4 percent, felt the off-the-shelf training programs were successful in their organization. Three respondents, or 9.4 percent, stated that “off-the-shelf” programs were not successful and three more, or 9.4 percent, were unaware of any success with these programs. Seven respondents, or 21.9 percent, chose not to answer this survey question. Table 6 represents the survey results from the question on the level of success with canned or “off-the-shelf” training programs.

**Table 6: Survey Response / Question 4B**

If so, was it considered successful?

Question # 4B		
	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Responded	32	64%
Yes	19	59.4%
No	3	9.4%
Not Aware	3	9.4%
No Answer	7	21.9%
Total	32	100%

Nine of the thirty-two respondents, or 28.1 percent, stated they never use outside consultants or trainers to fill the organization's distance education needs. Seventeen respondents, or 53.1 percent, stated they use outside sources between 1-20% of the time. Two respondents, or 6.3 percent, use outside sources between 21-40% of the time. Another two respondents, or 6.3 percent, use outside sources for training needs between 41-60% of the time. One respondent, or 3.1 percent, uses outside training sources 61-80% of the time and one more respondent, or 3.1 percent did not answer. Table 7 represents the survey results from the question on the percentage of time outside resources or vendors are contracted for distance education training programs.

**Table 7: Survey Response / Question 5**

What percentage of the time do you contract with outside consultants and/or trainers to fill your organizational distance education needs?

Question #5	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
0% of the time	9	28.1%
1-20% of the time	17	53.1%
21-40% of the time	2	6.3%
41-60% of the time	2	6.3%
61-80% of the time	1	3.1%
81-100% of the time	0	0%
No answer	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

Seventeen of the thirty-two respondents, or 53.1 percent, have not worked with local community colleges in the past twelve months with regard to developing training programs. Nine respondents, or 28.1 percent, had worked with local community colleges 1-2 times in the past twelve months. Four respondents, or 12.5 percent, had worked with local community colleges 3-4 times in the past twelve months. One respondent, or 3.1 percent, had worked with the local community college between 5-6 times in the last twelve months. One other, or 3.1 percent, had worked with the college more than six times in the last twelve months. Table 8 represents the survey results from the question on the frequency in working with local community colleges for distance education and distance training programs in the last 12-month period.

**Table 8: Survey Response / Question 6**

How often have you or your organization collaborated with the local community college(s) for staff training and educational needs in the past 12 months?

Question # 6

	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Never	17	53.1%
1-2 times	9	28.1%
3-4 times	4	12.5%
5-6 times	1	3.1%
> 6 times	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

Seven respondents, or 21.9 percent, offer educational and training programs to their staff 1-2 times each year. Six respondents, or 18.8 percent, stated they offer programs 3-4 times each year. Seventeen respondents, or 53.1 percent, stated they offer training and educational programs more than six times a year. One respondent, or 3.1 percent, offers no such training and one, or 3.1 percent, chose not to answer. Table 9 represents the survey results from the question on the frequency in offering training programs to the staff each year.

**Table 9: Survey Response / Question 7**

How frequently do you offer training and educational programs to your staff each year?

**Question # 7**

	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Never	1	3.1%
1-2 times	7	21.9%
3-4 times	6	18.8%
5-6 times	0	0%
> 6 times	17	53.1%
No answer	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

When asked about the fact of travel expenses being a deterrent to offering training and educational programs to the organization, fifteen respondents, or 46.9 percent, replied it was a deterrent and fifteen, also 46.9 percent, replied it was not a deterrent. One respondent, or 3.1 percent, had no opinion and one more, or 3.1 percent, chose not to answer. Table 10 represents the survey results from the question on the expense of travel as a deterrent for staff members in utilizing distance education and distance training programs.

**Table 10: Survey Response / Question 8**

Is the expense of travel a deterrent to your organization's decision to offer various training and educational programs to the staff?

Question #8	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Yes	15	46.9%
No	15	46.9%
No Opinion	1	3.1%
No Answer	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%



Twenty-two respondents, or 68.8 percent, believed that distance education programs are valuable for professional development purposes. One respondent, or 3.1 percent, did not believe these programs offered value at all. Eight respondents, or 25 percent, felt value was possible and one respondent, or 3.1 percent, was not sure if these programs offered value. Table 11 represents the survey results from the question on the perceived value distance education and distance training programs for staff development.

**Table 11: Survey Response / Question 9**

Do you believe that there is value in distance education programs for staff and professional development?

Question # 9	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Respondents	32	64%
Yes	22	68.8%
No	1	3.1%
Possibly	8	25%
Not Sure	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

Survey participants were asked to check and list particular distance education and distance training programs they felt that their organizations could benefit from and the results were as follows. Seventeen of the thirty-two, or 53.1 percent, checked technology skills as beneficial. Sixteen, or 50 percent, checked management, fourteen, or 43.8 percent, checked professional certifications and twelve of the thirty-two respondents, or

37.5 percent, marked team building as beneficial. Eleven respondents, or 34.4 percent, checked human resource/benefits as beneficial to their organization, while time management received 28.1 percent, or nine marks. Customer relations and safety loss and prevention each received eight marks, or 25 percent. Cultural diversity, general education, and mentoring each received seven marks, or 21.9 percent, for value to organizations. Six of the thirty-two respondents, or 18.8 percent, checked crisis management and technical writing skills as valuable programs. Financial management and risk management each received five marks, or 15.6 percent, for being beneficial programs. There were seven programs that each received four marks, or a 12.5 percent response, as beneficial organizational programs. They were: anger management, corporate policy, ethics, grant writing, higher education, ISO 9000, and vocational training. Debt reduction received three of the thirty-two respondents, or 9.4 percent, as a beneficial organizational program. Two respondents, or 6.3 percent, marked factory automation, resource allocation, ship building and repair, as well as technical research methods. Living wills and simulation and gaming each received one mark or 3.1 percent.

There were three write-in responses for the open-ended question in the survey. One participant wrote, “Our agency has chosen distance learning as the way to go. We have contracted with colleges to provide an Online University to employees after hours.” Still another wrote “Project Management” as a suggested program with value to organizations. The final write in comment offered “Employee Orientation” as a suggested program. Table 12 represents the survey results from the question that asked the respondents to mark any and all types of listed programs that they felt could benefit their organization.

**Table 12: Survey Response / Question 10**

If you feel that your organization could benefit from distance education and/or distance training programs please check all that apply below.

Question # 10	Frequency	Percentage
Sent	50	100%
Responded	32	64%
Anger Management	4	12.5%
Corporate Policy	4	12.5%
Crisis Management	6	18.8%
Cultural Diversity	7	21.9%
Customer Relations	8	25%
Debt Reduction	3	9.4%
Ethics	4	12.5%
Factory Automation	2	6.3%
Financial Management	5	15.6%
General Education	7	21.9%
Grant Writing	4	12.5%
Higher Education	4	12.5%
Human Resource/Benefits	11	34.4%
ISO 9000	4	12.5%
Living Wills	1	3.1%
Management	16	50%
Mentoring	7	21.9%
Professional Certifications	14	43.8%
Resource Allocation	2	6.3%
Risk Management	5	15.6%
Safety/Loss Prevention	8	25%
Ship Building and Repair	2	6.3%
Simulation and Gaming	1	3.1%
Team Building	12	37.5%
Technical Research Methods	2	6.3%
Technical Writing Skills	6	18.8%
Technology Skills	17	53.1%
Time Management	9	28.1%
Vocational Training	4	12.5%

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the findings of the survey instrument are presented. These findings offer a description of each question presented as well as the responses, which demonstrated a 64 percent rate of participation. The findings are the basis of the summary, conclusions, and recommendations in the next and final chapter.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this chapter was to summarize the chapters, state conclusions based on data collected, and offer recommendations based on the study.

#### **SUMMARY**

The problem of this study was to determine what types of distance education programs should be offered to the Tidewater, Virginia, businesses. To research this problem, three research goals were established in order to create a valid instrument for data collection purposes. These three goals were:

- 1.) Determine if Tidewater, Virginia, business leaders were currently utilizing distance education/distance training concepts in their organizations.
- 2.) Determine if distance education/distance training programs would be beneficial for Tidewater businesses.
- 3.) Determine what types of distance education/distance training programs should be developed and offered to Tidewater businesses.

Phenomenal growth in the areas of distance education and distance training were discovered through the literature review. This research study was based on two essential limitations: that the population in this study was limited to Tidewater, Virginia, business leaders in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, and Newport News, and the research focused on distance education and distance training concepts. Unlimited applications and global utilization for this flexible learning mode were also apparent. The financial benefit of reduced travel expenses were a key element that was

attributed to the growth in the marketplace for various distance education and distance training programs. A twelve-question survey was mailed to fifty businesses across the Tidewater area. The thirty-two participants who returned this instrument represented a sixty-four percent response rate.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions are made based on the responses of the participants in this distance education and distance training survey of Tidewater area businesses.

1.) **Determine if Tidewater, Virginia, business leaders were currently utilizing distance education/distance training concepts in their organizations.** A large sample of respondents has used distance education and/or distance training programs in the last 12 months. At least 71.9 percent have used canned or “off-the-shelf” programs with a 59.4 percent success rate with those programs. Thirty-four and 4/10ths percent of respondents have used in-house programs with a 100 percent success rate on those customized programs. Over 53.1 percent of respondents have contracted with outside consultants for distance educational programs 1-20% of the time. Additionally, 53.1 percent of respondents have never collaborated with local community colleges in the past 12 months on distance education/distance training programs.

It can be concluded that Tidewater businesses are utilizing distance education and distance training programs that are canned, “off-the-shelf”, and in-house programs. The “off-the-shelf” programs demonstrate an above average rate of success, while the in-house training programs fare lower than average success rates within the organizations.

The majority of Tidewater businesses are not utilizing services at the local community colleges.

2.) **Determine if distance education/distance training programs would be beneficial for Tidewater businesses.** A majority of those surveyed responded that there is value in distance education programs for their staff and professional development goals. Twenty-two respondents, or 68.8 percent, answered that distance education and distance training is beneficial to their organizations.

It can be concluded that various distance education and distance training programs create value and benefit within organizations.

3.) **Determine what types of distance education/distance training programs should be developed and offered to Tidewater businesses.** Technology skills training were selected as a value added program by 53.1 percent of the respondents. Management training was selected by 50 percent of those surveyed. Professional certifications were selected by 43.8 percent of the sample, while team building was selected by 37.5 percent of the respondents. Human resource/benefit programs received 34.4 percent of the response, while time management training was selected by 28.1 percent of the survey respondents.

It can be concluded that Tidewater area businesses seek training and educational programs focused on both technology and management as the first priority in their corporate and professional development goals. The Tidewater regional businesses tend to follow the lead of the Northern Virginia region in prioritizing technology, so this response accurately reflects this initiative. Management training and professional certificate programs were also selected as top categories for preference by Tidewater

businesses. These distance education and distance training programs support the popularity of the technology training selected above. The majority of respondents utilizing “off-the-shelf” training programs demonstrated this. More management, technology, and professional certifications programs can be found in the marketplace as the curriculum in each of these categories lends themselves to a more standardized product such as canned training and educational programs.

Team building and human resource/benefit programs were selected at a marginally lower than average percentage. These programs still remain valuable and in demand to many organizations in the Tidewater region even though these same types of programs can be selected in an “off-the-shelf” product or developed internally by the organization.

Time management and customer relations were selected by an average of one quarter of the sample. These two programs would lend themselves to a customized in-house training program that can accurately pinpoint organizational goals. Eight of the thirty-two respondents, or 25 percent, are in the service industry. It can be concluded that time management and customer relations training programs would also offer value to the Tidewater businesses in this study.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based upon the findings presented, professional and personal observations in the Tidewater business region, and the conclusions stated above, this researcher submits the following recommendations:



1. It is the recommendation of this researcher that follow-up studies examine the level of training offered and provided for distance educators in the Tidewater region as well as the media options for delivering distance education and distance training programs. It can be challenging for educators in a traditional classroom setting to transition into an e-learning situation. In many instances, training and/or support is not always offered to the educator or facilitator making this change. An added burden could be placed on facilitators to deliver an e-learning program in an area where they are not considered a subject matter expert. This factor could affect the level of knowledge transfer. The media or technology needed or available may not be adequate or compatible with the audiences' needs or skills level. The situation of firewalls, differences in software applications, and the hidden curriculum of expected technical skills can hinder some learners in the distance education and distance training field.

2. It is also recommended that further studies be developed that address the barriers to change in current pedagogical methods and procedures by existing educators in the Tidewater market. The field of distance education and distance training is a vast and constantly changing delivery method. More support for transitioning into this field should be offered to local educators and trainers. Prices need to be reduced for distance educational programs in the Tidewater market. The availability of "off-the-shelf" programs should increase as the Tidewater business leaders seek to develop these programs with local community college leaders. The unity and respect between Tidewater business leaders and the community college programs can be enhanced. Better public relations and marketing can be initiated by local community colleges to reach out

to Tidewater business leaders to service any and all distance education and distance training needs.

3. Another recommendation by this researcher would be to address the need for a diverse advisory board to offer structure and support to the development of distance training and distance educational offerings in the Tidewater area. This advisory board should consist of experts in the field of distance education and training, workforce development members, business leaders, higher education administrators, community college faculty members, commercial real estate leaders, economic development leaders, Virginia Employment Commission directors, and Chamber of Commerce members.

With regards to this specific survey and research project as it relates to the Tidewater, Virginia, business needs, several recommendations are explained. If local community colleges are considered a low-cost option for post-secondary education, and a majority of businesses in Tidewater are utilizing distance education, why are many local businesses not utilizing the community colleges more often? Local post-secondary institutions should consider offering an open house or symposium on the utilization of distance education worldwide. This open house or symposium could also explain the possible return on investment that these programs can offer any business or organization. A survey of all participants at this open house or symposium could reveal immediate and direct distance education and training needs. Local community colleges could be represented; one-on-one discussions could take place and the network for Tidewater e-learning alliances could begin.

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**APPENDIX A**

**SURVEY MAILING LIST**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Comp.</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City/State</b>	<b>Postal Code</b>
Administrator	The City Of Portsmouth	Department of Human Resource Management 801 Crawford Street	Portsmouth, VA	23704-3822
Affirmative Action Director	Sentara Healthcare	6015 Poplar Hall Drive Suite 314	Norfolk, VA	23502
Staffing and Placement Specialist	City of Virginia Beach	2424 Courthouse Drive	Virginia Beach, VA	23456-9056
Director	Riverside Regional Medical Center	500 J. Clyde Morris Boulevard	Newport News, VA	23601
Principal	Norfolk Public Schools	1511 Willow Wood Drive	Norfolk, VA	23502
Employee Benefits	Taylor Johnson Group	831 Seahawk Circle Suite 101	Virginia Beach, VA	23509
Assistant Warehouse Manager	COSTCO Wholesale	850 Glenrock Road	Norfolk, VA	23452
Recruiter	COX Communications	225 Clearfield Avenue	Virginia Beach, VA	23462
Recruiter	NEXTEL Communications	400 Butler Farm Road	Hampton, VA	23666
Director of Training & Recruitment	E. V. Williams	925 Military Highway	Virginia Beach, VA	23464
Director of Training and Recruitment	Tidewater Community College	7000 College Drive	Portsmouth, VA	23703
Consultant/Trainer	NetWalkWay.com	802 Marley Court	Newport News, VA	23608
Principal	Ocean View Maritime Elementary School	9501 Mason Creek Road	Norfolk, VA	23507
Mid-Atlantic District Manager	SAIC	2829 Guardian Lane	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
Manager	Glass Baron, Inc.	1601 Diamond Springs Road	Virginia Beach, VA	23455
Director	BUSCH, INC.	516 Viking Drive	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
General Manager	BOX USA	723 Fenway Avenue	Chesapeake, VA	23323

Vice-President	AGI	2655 International Parkway	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
Plant Superintendent	RADVA	2211 Elliott Avenue	Portsmouth, VA	23702
Regional Personnel Manager	Merchant's Tire & Auto	1805 N. Battlefield Boulevard	Chesapeake, VA	23320
Recruiter	USAA Mid-Atlantic Region	5800 Northampton Blvd.	Norfolk, VA	23520-5514
Director Volunteer Services	Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital	1060 First Colonial Road	Virginia Beach, VA	23454
District Manager	Social Security Administration	Airline Business Park 3305 Airline Blvd.	Portsmouth, VA	23710
Executive Director	Manorhouse Assisted Living	655 Denbigh Blvd.	Newport News, VA	23608
Recruiter	Children's Hospital of the King's Daughter's	601 Children's Lane	Norfolk, VA	23510
President	Milcom Systems Corporation	532 Viking Drive	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
Software Analyst	AMSEC	2829 Guardian Lane	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
Director	Veterans Administration Hospital	100 Emancipation Drive	Hampton, VA	23667
Recruiter	Issues and Answers	5151 Bonney Road	Virginia Beach, VA	23462
Recruiter	WR Systems, Ltd.	2500 Alameda Avenue-Suite 214	Norfolk, VA	23513-2403
Consultant	Drucker & Falk, LLC	11828 Fishing Point Drive -Suite 102	Newport News, VA	23606
President	All Trades	1016 Green Street	Norfolk, VA	23513
General Manager	Hutchens Chevrolet	12920 Jefferson Avenue	Newport News, VA	23608
Recruiter	Electronic Systems	361 Southport Circle	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
Vice-President	Hermes Abrasives Ltd.	524 Viking Drive	Virginia Beach, VA	23452
Director	AMERIGROUP	318 Constitution Avenue	Virginia Beach, VA	23462
Director	Langley Federal Credit Union	1055 W. Mercury Blvd.	Hampton, VA	23666
Director	American Red Cross	611 W. Brambleton Avenue	Norfolk, VA	23510
Director	The City of Newport News	2400 Washington Avenue	Newport News, VA	23607
Instructor/Trainer	ECPI	5555 Greenwich Road	Virginia Beach, VA	23462
Director	Chesapeake General Hospital	736 Battlefield Boulevard North	Chesapeake, VA	23320
General Manager	Beach Ford	2717 Virginia Beach Boulevard	Virginia Beach, VA	23452

<b>Recruiter/ Manager</b>	<b>Hall Auto World</b>	<b>3152 Virginia Beach Boulevard</b>	<b>Virginia Beach, VA</b>	<b>23452</b>
<b>Director/ Recruiter</b>	<b>Camber Corporation</b>	<b>Six Manhattan Square Suite 100</b>	<b>Hampton, VA</b>	<b>23666</b>
<b>Manager</b>	<b>The Virginian-Pilot</b>	<b>150 W. Brambleton Avenue</b>	<b>Norfolk, VA</b>	<b>23510</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>Carter Machinery Company, Inc.</b>	<b>1712 S. Military Highway</b>	<b>Chesapeake, VA</b>	<b>23320</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>Chartway Federal Credit Union</b>	<b>160 Newtown Road</b>	<b>Virginia Beach, VA</b>	<b>23462</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>Bon Secours Maryview Medical Center</b>	<b>3636 High Street</b>	<b>Portsmouth, VA</b>	<b>23707</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>Bon Secours DePaul Medical Center</b>	<b>150 Kingsley Lane</b>	<b>Norfolk, VA</b>	<b>23505</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>LifeNet</b>	<b>5809 Ward Court</b>	<b>Virginia Beach, VA</b>	<b>23455</b>
<b>General Sales Manager</b>	<b>Trader Publishing Company</b>	<b>2nd Floor West 100 W. Plume Street</b>	<b>Norfolk, VA</b>	<b>23510</b>

## APPENDIX B

### DISTANCE EDUCATION SURVEY

**General Instructions** Each survey has been given an identification code for tabulation purposes only. All answers and responses will remain anonymous and this survey is directly related to a Master's thesis for Old Dominion University. Please complete the survey, by circling the appropriate answer for each question. Please return this survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. If you have any questions please contact: < [Lisa Wornom-Zahraddin @ lisaz3@yahoo.com](mailto:Lisa.Wornom-Zahraddin@lisaz3@yahoo.com) or P. O. Box 3236 – Norfolk, VA 23514-3236. >

1.)	<b>How would you classify your organization?</b>				
	Federal Government	State Government	Military	Service	Industrial
	Tourism	Educational	Public	Private	Other
2.)	<b>Has your organization tried any form of Distance Education in the past 12 months?</b>				
	Yes	No	Not Aware		
3.)	<b>Has your organization ever developed a Distance Education or Distance Training Curriculum, in-house, with your own Full-time Subject Matter Experts?</b>				
	Yes	No	Not Aware		
3B.)	<b>If so, was this process considered successful?</b>				
	Yes	No	Not Aware		
4.)	<b>Have you or your organization ever purchased and used "canned" or "off the shelf" training programs for your staff's educational and training needs?</b>				
	Yes	No	Not Aware		
4B.)	<b>If so, was this process considered successful?</b>				
	Yes	No	Not Aware		
5.)	<b>What percentage of the time do you contract with outside consultants and/or trainers to fill your organizational Distance Education needs?</b>				
0 %	1-20 %	21- 40 %	41 – 60 %	61 – 80 %	81-100 %
6.)	<b>How often have you or your organization collaborated with the local community college(s) for staff training and educational needs in the past 12 months?</b>				
	Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	>6 times
7.)	<b>How frequently do you offer training and educational programs to your staff each year?</b>				
	Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	>6 times
8.)	<b>Is the expense of travel a deterrent to your organization's decision to offer various training and educational programs to the staff?</b>				
	Yes	No	No Opinion		
9.)	<b>Do you believe that there is value in Distance Education programs for staff and professional development?</b>				
	Yes	No	Possibly	Not Sure	
10.)	<b>If you feel that your organization could benefit from Distance Education and/or Distance Training programs, please check <u>all</u> that apply below.</b>				
	Safety/Loss Prevention	Professional Certifications	General Education	Cultural Diversity	
	Management	Grant Writing	Team Building	Resource Allocation	
	HR/Benefits	Ethics	Time Management	Simulation and Gaming	
	Technical Research Methods	Ship Building and Repair	Financial Management	Technical Writing Skills	
	Factory Automation	Living Wills	ISO 9000	Risk Management	
	Customer Relations	Crisis Management	Mentoring	Higher Education	
	Technology Skills	Anger Management	Corporate Policy	Vocational Training	
	Debt Reduction	Other	Comments:		

**APPENDIX C**  
**COVER LETTER**

P. O. Box 3236  
Norfolk, VA 23514-3236

May 30, 2002

Dear Tidewater Business Leader:

My name is Lisa Wornom-Zahraddin and I am a graduate student in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University. I am a Trainer and Instructor II for a unique statewide program, and I am interested in the growth of Distance Education as new methods are implemented in the field. The title of the research study is "Distance Education in Tidewater Virginia".

Your organization has been randomly selected and represents a specific industry in the Tidewater region. All responses will remain anonymous and all compiled data will be used for educational purposes only. After responses have been tabulated all surveys will be destroyed.

***Please take a few moments right now to complete the enclosed survey and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope by June 15, 2002.*** Your prompt response is appreciated.

If your organization is interested in the results of this research study, I would be happy to provide this data upon request. I can be reached at [lisaz3@yahoo.com](mailto:lisaz3@yahoo.com)

Thank you for both your input and cooperation in this survey.

Sincerely,

Lisa Wornom-Zahraddin, Graduate Student  
Old Dominion University



**APPENDIX D**  
**FOLLOW-UP LETTER**

P. O. Box 3236  
Norfolk, VA 23514-3236

June 15, 2002

Dear Tidewater Business Leader:

Several days ago, you should have received a survey on "Distance Education in Tidewater Virginia". If you have already completed and mailed your response, I thank you. Your professional expertise is valued in this research study.

*If you have not completed and returned the survey please do so this week.* I need your response by **June 28, 2002**.

Thank you once again for your assistance in this graduate research study.

Sincerely,

Lisa Wornom-Zahraiddin, Graduate Student  
Old Dominion University