

Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant

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## **IMPACT in Public Libraries**

**(Initiative to Measure Personnel Assimilation of Computer-mediated Training)**

RE-04-07-0033-07

Final Report

October 1, 2007 through November 30, 2008

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## **Introduction**

This document provides the final status report on the IMPACT (Initiative to Measure Personnel Assimilation of Computer-mediated Training) in Public Libraries, covering the period October 1, 2007 through November 30, 2008. It addresses the accomplishments of the total reporting period as well as providing the status of the project's overall goals and objectives.

## **Project Background**

A recent study of primarily public libraries indicated that 70 percent of the library organizations surveyed plan to use E-training within the next three years. The need for increased work-related training and the use of distance learning to meet these demands has been evidenced in the increase in staff development programs for public libraries. Even with the array of E-training initiatives, quality benchmarks have yet to be established for development and implementation of e-training courses for public library personnel.

Project IMPACT (Initiative to Measure Personnel Assimilation of Computer-mediated Training) in Public Libraries was an exploratory research study proposed to investigate the impact and return on investment of various levels of implementing Web-based training in public libraries. The short and long-term e-training outcome was measured based on participants' knowledge of learning objectives, task-level self-efficacy, and self-report of on-the-job performance.

The grant provided funding for 400 scholarships for course participants in the *Managing Difficult Patrons with Confidence* LE@D continuing education course. Over 200 libraries from twenty-seven different states were represented.

## **Project Design**

Project IMPACT met the training and assessment schedule presented in the original timeline. The delayed posttest schedule was shortened from the proposed four to six months to a three month delay with the agreement of all IMPACT personnel for the following reasons:

- to coincide with the unveiling of the Staff Development Toolbox (<http://www.leadonline.info/StaffDevelopment1.cfm>),
- to generate interest in IMPACT study at the national Public Library Association conference,
- to enable discussion with other e-training discussion stakeholders at the conference (including state coordinators and Web Junction staff), and
- to allow time for focus group discussion follow up and data analysis before the project end-date.

The IMPACT Web page was pushed to later date, and delayed post-test and survey were completed ahead of schedule. Qualitative data from the focus group addressed self-efficacy and confidence issues to clarify preliminary results and were completed on schedule. Dissemination of findings were initially slated from August to December, but Project IMPACT has had a presence and distributed flyers at four library association conferences (ALA mid-winter, PLA Annual, TLA, and VLA). The principal investigator

held a workshop at the Virginia Library Association to disseminate project findings and provide hands-on training on e-training implementation practices for public library administrators and continuing education coordinators.

Project IMPACT in Public Libraries adhered to a twelve month timeline (September 2007 to October 2008). The first six months were devoted to the development of the online training evaluation tools, supplemental kit, and facilitation materials; implementation of pilot study to test course materials and evaluation tools; arrangement of the online course sections and authentication passwords; and solicitation, processing, and training of the 400 scholarship applicants. The second six months were devoted to the development and implementation of the delayed posttest, survey and assessment, the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the follow-up focus group, development of the dissemination Web pages, the incentive materials and mail out of thanks to all participants that completed all three phases (pre, post and delayed post), the development of project reports and dissemination/workshop materials, and final evaluation of data to deliver project findings . Subtasks required to accomplish these tasks were:

- (1) Compiling literature on online training evaluation, self-efficacy, and customer service/difficult patrons
- (2) Drafting, pilot-testing, and refining the web-based pre, post, and delayed posttest survey, knowledge assessment, and self-efficacy tools
- (3) Compiling and contacting e-mail list of public library administrators and state library continuing education coordinators within the United States;
- (4) Setting up the scholarship application form (available online at <http://www.leadonline.info/ScholarshipForm.cfm>) and participant processing, informed consent, and authentication procedures
- (5) Developing supplemental online training facilitation print-based guide
- (6) Administering and facilitating online course sections in two week intervals
- (7) Collecting the pre and posttest data and survey within WebCT/Blackboard Vista® (the learning management system used for delivery of the lessons) courseware and utilizing SurveyMonkey® for delayed posttest  
([https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=j4eTUS8mnIVLZCtdKa8\\_2bJA\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=j4eTUS8mnIVLZCtdKa8_2bJA_3d_3d))
- (8) Analyzing the data using SPSS® and Excel® statistical analysis tools
- (9) Developing follow-up focus group questions and collecting follow-up data
- (10) Delivering of incentive to public library staff participants that successfully completed all three assessment measures (pre, post, and delayed posttests), accepted the scholarships, and consented to the terms of participating in the study
- (11) Creating Project Web page and uploading tools/resources to LE@D Web page following final approval of findings
- (12) Publishing findings and disseminating what was learned in publications, presentations, and workshops.

The table (below) enumerates the phases and major tasks of Project IMPACT in Public Libraries.

Table 1. Revised Timeline of Project Phases

Time Period	Phases & Major Tasks
September-October 2007	Development of Test Instruments Conduct Pilot Study
September-November 2007	Solicitation of Participants
October-December 2007	Process & Train 400 Participants Pretest & Posttest Data Collection in WebCT
January 2008	Develop dissemination tools - Web page template and Flyer Create Delayed Posttest/Questionnaire
February-April 2008	Administer Delayed Posttest/Questionnaire Collection Data Management and Formatting Mail incentives and follow up messages
March 2008	PLA Disseminate Informational Flyer at PLA
April-May 2008	Administer Focus Group Process Qualitative Data
May-August 2008	Statistical Software/Programming and Final Data Analysis Phase
August-November 2008	IMPACT Web page finalized Respond to CFP to Distance Learning Conference and ALA Virginia Library Association Workshop
December 2008	IMPACT Web page released
Spring 2009	Doctoral Dissertation on IMPACT findings defended

## Project Accomplishments

### A. Developed Self-Efficacy Tool, Knowledge Assessment Test, & Survey

With input from staff from the UNT Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and after a review of the literature on online training evaluation and self efficacy measures, a pilot test instrument was developed and tested on participants from LE@D's public library administrator's certification program. Project impact staff incorporated feedback in the design of the final test instrument and survey. These test instruments and development resources will be available on the final Project IMPACT Web page.

### B. Scholarship Application and Administering the Online Training

Offering scholarships to 400 participants from over 200 public libraries in our initial sample required us to work out a detailed plan for assigning four different levels of online training implementation based on the size of the library and the number of participants from any given branch library. After pilot-testing, IMPACT staff worked out a system for online scholarship application and notification for assigning section numbers, dispensing authentication codes, incorporating informed consent forms, and confirming receipt of scholarship notification. The course administration and authentication was secured through LE@D personnel and all e-mail correspondence regarding registration was initiated through LE@D. Participants were screen for public library affiliation and library size. (Library size assignment is based on IMLS Stats from the online resource:

<http://harvester.census.gov/imls/data/pls/index.asp>. Further granularity of population statistics for states with data only collected at the county level was collected from participants in the delayed posttest.)

### **C. Qualitative Data of Online Training Experience**

The consultation with the Focus Group followed-up the Public Library Association feedback and coincided with Texas Library Association convention dates. Attendance at public library conferences was used as a venue to further publicize Project IMPACT and to gather feedback to secure additional qualitative data. (Please see Appendix to view Project IMPACT informational flyer.) Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and several participants mentioned that the IMLS scholarship afforded them the opportunity to take their first online course and many libraries were enrolling in additional online courses for staff continuing education and professional development. Several mentioned the need for resources that allowed for further tailoring of training to their staff teams and desire for greater control of in-house e-training efforts. IMPACT staff distributed hundreds of brochures at national and state conferences and the principal investigator held a workshop at the Virginia Library Association, generating much interest from public library administrators and continuing education coordinator.

### **D. Survey Tools and Wrap-Up Procedures**

Staff provided an incentive (using personal funds) to encourage completion of the delayed post-test and survey. The delayed posttest was provided through SurveyMonkey® and parcel posted thank you/closing messages were sent to the participants that completed the delayed posttest.

(Appendices includes message example and survey can be accessed at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=j4eTUS8mnIVLZCtdKa8\\_2bJA\\_3d\\_3d\](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=j4eTUS8mnIVLZCtdKa8_2bJA_3d_3d\))

### **E. Collecting and Analyzing the Quantitative Data**

Staff analyzed the longitudinal quantitative data (self-efficacy and knowledge assessment for pre-, post-, and delayed posttest) collected from October 2007 to May 2008. Data collected from pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest have been formatted and statistically analyzed processed. The statistical analysis was completed using statistical software with the assistance and review from the UNT Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment in July 2008 to August 2008. The preliminary analysis of data from self efficacy scores indicated a need to collect additional focus group data in June to clarify findings.

### **F. IMPACT Resources to be maintained on LE@D Website**

The Web page project template was approved in April and project resources will be loaded as part of the project dissemination effort in December 2008 and January 2009. Project IMPACT for Public Libraries findings and resources will be integrated into the current LE@D website at [www.LEADonline.info](http://www.LEADonline.info), which continues to be the primary source of detailed information about all LE@D research and enhancement projects.

### **G. IMPACT Goal Accomplishment**

Project IMPACT explored the impact of implementing Web-based training in public libraries at various levels of facilitation. The study's goals were to:

- Model practical, yet theoretically based, e-training implementation levels
- Investigate assessment measures for e-training using these models
- Create tools that inform stakeholders of short and long-term outcomes of the library's investment in staff e-training courses
- Inform library administrators of the impact of their implementation decisions
- Contribute to the library literature on establishing best practices in delivery of computer-mediated courses for continuing education and training in public libraries; and
- Disseminate practical tools to provide administrative support of E-training initiatives and to allow stakeholders to measure e-training impact.

The results of IMPACT in Public Libraries were intended to inform public library administrators and e-training stakeholders of optimal online training implementation strategies. The findings were in some ways quite surprising, and often times the data raised additional questions that would benefit from continued e-training evaluation and implementation research. The results are discussed below in digest/abridged format. The full study's findings with detailed statistical analysis are slated to be defended and published in a doctoral dissertation early next year. Once published, the dissertation will be submitted to IMLS as a supporting document and a digital copy of the full text will be linked from the IMPACT Web page. IMPACT staff members anticipate publication of articles in scholarly journals and have submitted proposals to present at both state and national conferences.

## **Project Findings**

E-training is available from any modern computer on the internet anytime, 24/7. The convenience is undeniable. Since it is so easily accessible, it is not surprising that 70% of public have plans to purchase e-training for staff members. But there is little research on the integration of e-training into the workplace. Researchers are just beginning to work out the factors that affect workplace learning and create measures of e-training that assess levels of staff performance enhancement following training initiative. The following are a list of "IMPACT Findings" that speak to what was discovered from this exploratory research project.

### **FINDING #1: LONG TERM RESULTS IN: FACILITATION IS SUPERIOR FOR CONTENT ACQUISITION TO CANNED, SELF-PACED E-TRAINING.**

Facilitated training, whether online-outsourced or in-house, has more long-term impact than solo, self-paced "canned" training. When participants were tested for long term learning, the only group that did not show long term significant improvement was the group that participated in the "canned" training with no facilitation. Although they showed improvement in knowledge immediately following taking the course, delayed post test knowledge assessment scores dropped to a level that showed no significant gain from their pre-training knowledge assessed based on a twenty item multiple choice assessment of course learning objectives. Facilitated groups had significant gains both short and long-term based on these knowledge assessment scores.

### **FINDING #2: THE EXPRESSION "TWO-HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE" IS NOT NECESSARILY TRUE FOR FACILITATION.**

The initial thought was that if online, outsourced facilitation improved learning and in-library facilitation also improved learning, then providing both an outsourced, in-course facilitator and an in-library, e-training leader would have a multiplier effect. This didn't happen. What did happen? The trainees, given both types of facilitation, chose to interact in the workplace, not online. This was most evident in the fact that the online facilitator did not generate online discussion postings as was the case when the course was just facilitated online (not in-library), while the overwhelming response from both facilitated groups was that the training was a great topic for discussion and the training was discussed by participants in staff meetings or in conversations with peers and supervisors. The knowledge, self-efficacy, and performance scores were not significantly higher with duo-facilitation than either single form of facilitation; and the only advantage appears to be that completion rates were highest for duo facilitation, so for library administrators that are concerned with staff training drop-outs, duo facilitation does have that advantage. Not surprisingly, the highest attrition rate occurred for participants in the solo, self-paced "canned" e-training than any other section.

**FINDING #3: ETRAINING IS A TOOL, NOT A SOLUTION.**

The findings on self-efficacy speak to the fact that E-training, even with facilitation, is not effective as a "one-shot" inoculation to boost staff confidence, especially as it relates to a complex topic, such as managing difficult patrons. It appears that there is no one-shot e-training inoculation or instant quick fix for building long-term confidence for complex tasks on-the-job. All facilitated participants knew more about the topic of managing difficult patrons following the e-training and their confidence (self-efficacy) in their ability to use their training on the job did increase significantly immediately following training. Ninety percent of participants had higher self-efficacy immediately following the course as measured by the posttest score. While they were actively engaged in the learning, students felt confident about their skills. Comments received also indicated that participants felt the materials and support found in the training was helpful. Three months after the training ended, facilitated trainees still knew significantly more than before they took the training about the complex topic of managing difficult patrons... so, one might think that they would maintain or increase their post-training levels of confidence, but this did not prove to be the case. Three months after the online training, the number of participants feeling more confident than before training dropped from 90% to 66%. In fact, 25% of the participants who received the online outsourced facilitated lesson felt even less confident about difficult patron issues than prior to taking the training. Their specific task level self efficacy (belief in their skills and abilities about managing difficult patron situations) dropped significantly, even though their general self-efficacy about life remained constant and they maintained a significant increase in knowledge related to course content on managing difficult patrons. This revelation was so unexpected that the researchers probed a bit further to ask the participants why they may have felt this way. Managing difficult patrons was viewed as an especially emotive task, requiring a complex skill set and clear library administration support. The responses received indicated that for complex topics and "big picture" learning, E-training can be an effective and efficient tool for management to engage staff in communication, but not a substitute for long-term leadership and support in this tumultuous area of librarianship. So, to make an analogy to sports, a single e-training lesson can have a similar positive effect as a locker room pep talk. e-training was shown to have a significant impact on attitudes and knowledge immediately following the

"rally," but without continued intervention the long term benefits diminish and the belief of the individual team member in their own abilities was not sustained. In reviewing comments from focus groups and survey questions, it was clear that most participants viewed formal training for managing difficult patron situations as representing only a single facet of an expertise that must be built up over time, individually with the support of and within the dictums of the library leadership with the prudent application of "common sense," etiquette, and knowledge of legal ramifications when interacting with patrons. There was a perception among the participants in this study of the balancing act that exists between quality front-line customer service and policy implementation. Further research is needed to discover the role of e-training reinforcement and follow-up on long-term staff member self-efficacy, knowledge acquisition, and workplace learning integration of training.

**FINDING #4: JUST BECAUSE WE KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD DO, DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN WE'LL DO IT.**

The results from self-report of on-the-job performance related to managing difficult patrons are inconclusive. Reviewing, revising, or creating policy manuals related to managing difficult patrons was a task recommended within the training materials and a task used to assess if training impacted job performance. Only 31% of training participants stated that they reviewed, revised, or created policy manuals at their library since participating in the training, with no single group reporting significantly higher levels of on-the-job integration. This surprisingly phenomenon of limited workplace application of learning aligns with Miller's Simple Model of Competence, a model in the literature that assesses levels of competence for workplace learning along a continuum of four levels: (1) knowing, (2) knows how, (3) shows how, and (4) does. Further investigation is recommended to integrate IMPACT's evaluation framework with Miller's Simple Model of Competence. Preliminary investigation of data collection methods and evaluation correlates is underway. IMPACT did find a positive correlation between delayed post test self-efficacy (staff confidence) and using the training materials on the job. Ways of maintaining and improving task level self-efficacy by initiating e-training follow-up activities should be investigated with an eye toward increasing workplace competence of staff members from a level of knowing what to do to actually enhancing job performance and doing what needs to be done in the workplace. IMPACT identified roles of e-training stakeholders for implementing and integrating e-training initiative; future research should include identification of roles for workplace learning within the continuing education certification environment and librarianship field.

## **Future Plans**

Project IMPACT in Public Libraries has completed data collection and analysis. Appropriate statistical analysis tools were identified, with preference for solutions that will best fit the needs of public libraries desiring to assess impact of online training outcomes in three areas, knowledge acquisition, self-efficacy, and on-the-job performance. Project staff computed the statistical significance of the quantitative data and coded additional qualitative data from the focus group communications and survey questionnaire. All statistical analysis was completed using readily available commercial software and free online statistical analysis tools.

Project IMPACT staff developed a Web resource that will be loaded on the LE@D Website to communicate findings, dispense online training evaluation templates and tools, promote workshop materials, invite comment, and encourage shared learning for those considering and using e-training. The Web resource will be available January, 2009 at [www.leadonline.info/research-impact/index.htm](http://www.leadonline.info/research-impact/index.htm) .

The home page of the IMPACT Web resources is divided into five sections providing key project information: About (Project Overview); Results (Brief description of findings); Documents (Presentations, Brochures, Reports; Toolkits); and Resources (Bibliography, Additional Web Resources, E-training Assessment Resource Overview). Examples of tools and resources that will be available from the Project IMPACT Web resources include:

- Project Findings and link to UNT dissertation based on Project IMPACT research
- Online Training Toolkit and two-week Timeline for facilitating “Managing Difficult Patrons with Confidence Course”
- Self-efficacy and Knowledge Assessment Tools that were used for research
- Online Training Evaluation Statistical Analysis and Return-on-Investment Tools
- Recommended Facilitation and Discussion Resources for “Managing Difficult Patrons with Confidence Course”
- Selective Bibliography of Online Training Implementation and Evaluation Resources

### **Project Awareness and Promotion**

Project IMPACT is being promoted in the same manner as other LE@D research projects, focusing on disseminating status and finding through LE@D newsletters, publishing research materials in the research arena (in the form of dissertation), and promoting free resources online via a project Web page. In addition, the principal investigator has presented e-training facilitation resources developed in conjunction with the IMPACT implementation framework in the form of preconference workshops that educate key stakeholders of IMPACT results and inform their e-training implementation and evaluation practices. This is a successful approach that reaches individual potential public library e-training implementers and provides these key stakeholders with hands-on e-training implementation and evaluation training. In addition, the staff has submitted proposals and awaiting approval to present at one state and one national conference. Additional venues for presentation and publication of IMPACT findings and workshop materials will be investigated.

## **Appendices**

Attached are appendices noted in the final report. The dissertation and print out of final IMPACT Web resources will be submitted following senior researcher's dissertation defense in February.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW



The University of North Texas was awarded a research grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to study the impact of implementing Web-based training in public libraries. The grant provided funding for 400 scholarships for course participants in the *Managing Difficult Patrons with Confidence* LE@D continuing education course. Over 200 libraries from twenty-seven different states were represented.

## RESEARCH GOALS

The University of North Texas is studying the impact of implementing Web-based training in public libraries. The study will

- Model practical, yet theoretically based, implementation practices and assessment measures of online training
- Inform library administrators of both implementation practices and measures of staff and organizational impacts of investment in staff e-training courses
- Contribute to the library literature on establishing best practices in delivery of computer-mediated courses for continuing education and training in public libraries; and
- Provide practical tools to calculate return on investment and outcomes for administrative support of e-training initiatives.

## IMPACT

*in Public Libraries*

For additional information on continuing education and professional development courses available at the University of North Texas, please visit our LE@D website at:

[www.leadonline.info](http://www.leadonline.info)



## **A Joint IMLS & UNT LE@D Research Project**

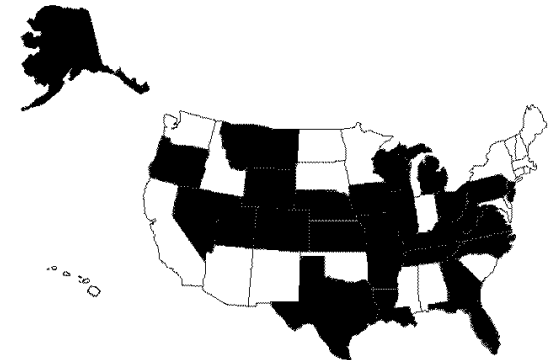
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**IMPACT (Initiative to Measure Personnel  
Assimilation of Computer-based Training)**



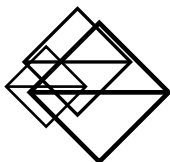
**LE@D**

## WHY RESEARCH E-TRAINING?

A recent study of primarily public libraries indicated that 70 percent of the library organizations surveyed plan to use e-training within the next three years. The need for increased work-related training and the use of distance learning to meet these demands has been evidenced in the increase in staff development programs for public libraries.

Even with the array of e-training initiatives, quality benchmarks have yet to be established for development and implementation of e-training courses for public library personnel.

*Project IMPACT* (Initiative to Measure Personnel Assimilation of Computer-mediated Training) in *Public Libraries* proposes to investigate the impact and return on investment of various levels of implementing Web-based training in public libraries. The short and long-term impact on knowledge, skills and abilities will be determined and performance measures will be proposed.



## STUDY TIMELINE

Project IMPACT in Public Libraries is a one-year investigative evaluation and research project. The research study is being implemented in three phases.

- October-December 2007  
Course Implementation & Initial Data Collection Phase
- January-March 2008  
Delayed Posttest and Survey Phase
- March-July 2008  
Final Data Analysis Phase
- August-December 2008  
Dissemination of Results & Findings

The results of IMPACT in Public Libraries will inform public library administrators and training personnel of online training implementation strategies that optimize implementation costs in terms of specific outcomes.

## **Project IMPACT in Public Libraries**

**Phone (214) 717-4342**



*This research study was been made possible by a generous grant from the **Institute of Museum and Library Services** and the **University of North Texas**.*

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

If you are interested in participating in future research studies, receiving LE@D newsletter updates, or receiving the results of *Project IMPACT in Public Libraries*, please complete the following form and drop it by the LE@D booth at PLA Midwinter.

- I am interested in participating in future research studies offered by LE@D.
- I am interested in receiving the LE@D e-mail newsletters and updates.
- I am interested in receiving the final report for *Project IMPACT in Public Libraries*.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Library Name: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

You may also send your request to IMPACT@unt.edu with "Participate" in subject line.

MEMORANDUM FOR PROJECT IMPACT PARTICIPANTS

SUBJECT: Final Survey and Delayed Posttest

I would like to thank you for participating in the Project IMPACT in Public Libraries web-based survey sent out this month. Response rate has been above 80%, which is exceptional. You provided complete data and informative comments about your online learning experience. Your assistance has provided very helpful information regarding online training of public library personnel. Project IMPACT staff will use your input to inform the online training community of ways to improve public library staff online training experiences.

You may read the results linked from the LE@D Web site once this final research phase is complete:  
<http://www.leadonline.info/>

[INSERT APPROPRIATE INCENTIVE BASED UPON DELAYED POSTTEST SELECTION]

You generously selected to contribute your five dollar gift to a donation to *Reading Excellence and Discovery*,\* a non-profit foundation committed to helping build reading skills of struggling, low-income students. Thank you for your investment in our youth. We also appreciate your willingness to engage in online learning and your commitment to professional development.

You selected to receive a \$5 cash gift. Please find the enclosed five-dollar bill, a small token of our appreciation for your willingness to engage in online learning and for your commitment to professional development.

You selected to participate in the drawing for the \$100 gift card. Your name has been entered in the random drawing that has one winner per twenty entries, and you will be contacted by e-mail by April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 if you are a winner. List of winners' initials will be posted online with the final project report. We appreciate your willingness to engage in online learning and your commitment to professional development. Wishing you the best of luck in the drawing.

You selected to receive a \$5 gift card. Please find the enclosed five dollar Starbuck's/Amazon card, a small token of our appreciation for your willingness to engage in online learning and for your commitment to professional development. Thank you for your time and valuable input!

Thank you for your time and valuable input!

Best regards,

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