

Evaluation Enhances Blended and Online Learning

By Irene Stern Frielich

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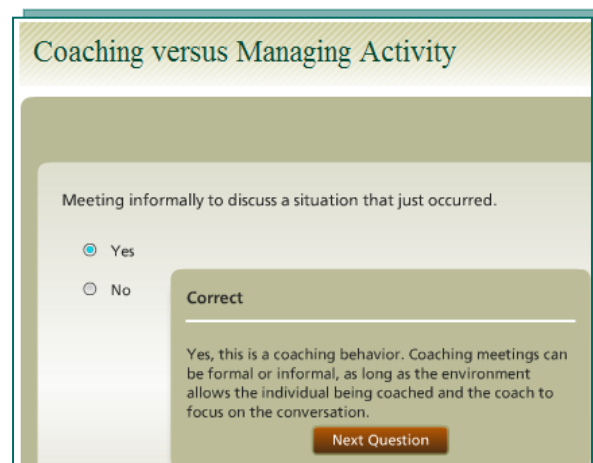


EnVision Performance Solutions and our elearning collaborator, Illumina Interactive, recently competed in the LINGOs (Learning in Non-Government Organizations) Global Giveback 2 Competition. Having developed dozens of online/e-learning courses in the past few years, we jumped on this opportunity to “push the envelope” and integrate a variety of approaches.

For the competition we worked with Management Sciences for Health (MSH) in Cambridge, MA, to develop *Coaching for Results*, a highly interactive six-module, web-based course that introduces the value of coaching and provides learners with the ability to use MSH’s five-step coaching model. Learners have nine weeks to complete the course, which is moderated by an online instructor.

We integrated a number of evaluation approaches in the course designed to engage learners, help them learn, and provide feedback to both learners and the course instructor. As with instructional design for face-to-face instructor-led learning, we based evaluations on the learning objectives and spent some time in the planning phase to ensure evaluations were functional and relevant. Here are some of the approaches we used.

Quiz-type questions may be the most common type of evaluative components in online courses. We used them to reinforce learning as well as a level 2 evaluation of learners’ knowledge. For example, after being introduced to the differences between coaching and managing, learners are presented with a series of seven situations for which they must determine if the situation is an example of “coaching” or not. This series is not scored and feedback provides an explanation of the correct response.



Surveys can help engage learners and provide the course instructor with a before and after comparison of learners' perceived skills and knowledge, a combination level 3 and 2 evaluation. At the beginning of the course learners respond to a series of statements that best describe how frequently they do, or are aware of, coaching-related actions and knowledge. The same statements appear at the end of the course. Statements include "I handle emotional responses and disagreements in a coaching conversation effectively" (level 3) and "I know my coaching strengths and weaknesses" (level 2).

2. Read each statement then select the rating that best describes you.

	Infrequently	Sometimes	Often	Almost all the time
I understand my role as a "coach."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel I am effective when coaching others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am comfortable coaching others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know my coaching strengths and weaknesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know when a situation requires coaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what is causing the problem even before having the coaching conversation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ask questions to find out more when I coach others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen attentively to those I coach and avoid interrupting them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I provide suggestions to those I coach before asking for their ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I handle emotional responses and disagreements in a coaching conversation effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The actions to take after the coaching conversation are clear to those I coach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I set up a follow-up meeting after coaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Discussion forums can help learners process what they are learning and share their thoughts and ideas. Throughout the course, we leveraged Moodle's discussion forum to ask a variety of level 2- and level 3-type questions.

For example, after viewing a "photo novella" vignette of a manager (who is also a doctor) coaching his employee, learners are asked, "What did the doctor do well?" In this level 2 activity, learners apply the basic knowledge they've learned in the course. The instructor may comment on discussions to reinforce correct responses and correct or redirect incorrect responses.

What did the Doctor do well?

Display replies in nested form

What did the Doctor do well?
by Admin User - Monday, 6 December 2010, 10:32 AM

What did the Doctor do well?
Reply

Re: What did the Doctor do well?
by Virginia Maglio - Wednesday, 8 December 2010, 02:27 PM

Dr. Mutolo first said "Good morning", then asked the nurse to come to his office to talk in private. He was smiling and being friendly to understand the situation and look for solutions.
Show parent | Reply

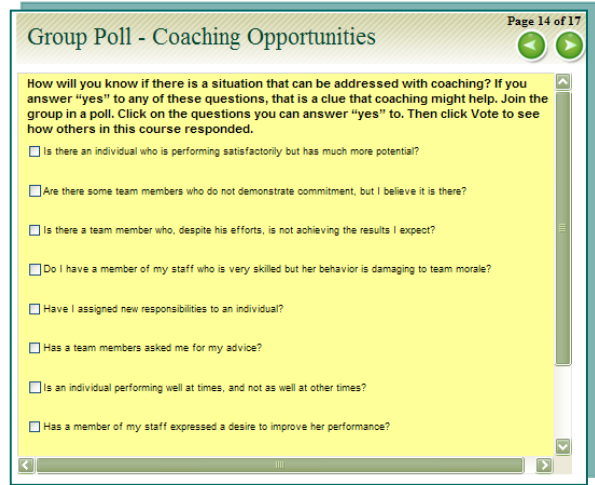
Re: What did the Doctor do well?
by Iana Traverse - Wednesday, 8 December 2010, 02:28 PM

Instead of reprimanding the nurse, Dr. Mutolo described the facts, expressed his point of view and gave her the opportunity to express herself and propose solutions.
Show parent | Reply

Another discussion asks, "What gets in the way? What are the challenges you face?" This provides the opportunity for learners to consider coaching in their real-life situations and begin to see how they can apply the skills they are learning to their own workplace, a level 3 evaluation activity.

Polls offer a fun and interactive way to engage learners while obtaining information about their level of skill or knowledge. Learners respond to the poll, and then see how other course participants responded.

We used a poll asking learners to identify their actual coaching opportunities by selecting from a list of “coaching cues.” This approach also helps set context for the learners, enabling them to identify ways they can readily apply what they learn throughout the course. The instructor can also use the poll information in a follow-up questionnaire after the course.



Learning partners, in which learners pair up to help each other learn, are a critical component of our course. Near the beginning of the course, we ask participants to complete a learning partner agreement and send it to the course instructor who follows up if the agreement is not sent in. Throughout the course, learners are instructed to complete a learning partner activity that includes:

- Discussing key points in the course
- Sharing ideas of how to apply what they learned to a specific work situation
- Practicing skills with each other before using them with employees

In follow-up discussion forum questions learners share key points from their learning partner experiences. The course instructor, following prompts in an instructor guide, monitors the discussions and offers guidance. Learners have the option of continuing their partnership after the course.

Learning Partner Agreement

As part of the *Coaching for Results* course you will have a number of opportunities to discuss and practice what you are learning with your learning partner. In your initial meeting you will complete this agreement.

	Learning Partner 1	Learning Partner 2	Learning Partner 3
Name:			
E-mail:			
Phone:			
Work schedule:			
Best time(s) to meet:			

How often, when, and where will you meet?

We plan to meet:

-
-
-

Those were some approaches we used, and we’d love to hear your thoughts and questions as well as your own tips for integrating evaluations into online learning. Oh, and the LINGOs competition I mentioned at the beginning? Yes, we did win! At this year’s eLearning Guild Learning Solutions Conference and Expo, EnVision Performance Solutions and Illumina Interactive were awarded first place

in the corporate developer category for *Coaching for Results*. We continue to push the envelope to develop exciting, engaging, and effective courses.

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Irene Stern Frielich, president of [EnVision Performance Solutions](#), leads a team of expert instructional designers and training professionals to provide instructional design and training-related consulting services to corporations and not-for-profit organizations. Passionate about learning and helping others to learn, Irene and her team are continually seeking new ways to engage learners and create fun and effective learning experiences. For articles on other training topics, feel free to visit the EnVision [blog](#). Irene can be reached at irene.frielich@envision-performance.com.