



Confidence & Consistency In Coaching Marketplace

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Executive Summary

Over 1500 students a year are required to complete Marketplace, which is a business simulation game that assess a student's ability to work in a team as well as make data driven business decisions. Instructors "coach" students through six quarters of the simulation and the need for coaches is expected to increase annually. With new coaches being added, an environment of inconsistency in the approach coaches take with students is emerging. Additionally, new coaches are expressing a lack of confidence in their ability to effectively coach students. This proposed tutorial, "Confidence from Consistency in Coaching Marketplace" is designed to address this need. The tutorial will be offered online and asynchronously. The coordinator for Marketplace, Eva Cowell, (who's also the SME) will manage the use of the tutorial as well as the responses to the formative and summative assessments submitted by instructors (aka, the learners). The content in the tutorial focuses on key areas, as defined by the coordinator and includes defining the coordinator's responsibilities, which simulation reports should be used, which questions per report should be used with students as well as the top 5 best practices of coaching Marketplace.

Introduction

"Rome was not built in a day, but Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed in a day." Applying this quote to business, investor Vijay Kedia captures the devastation poor business decisions can have on a company. In a capstone course for business majors at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), students work in teams, spending 6-7 weeks competing in a business simulation game called Marketplace. According to the company website, "*Marketplace Live*® business simulations allow students to experiment with business strategies, test business ideas, and experience the consequences of their actions in a virtual business environment. As students apply the theoretical knowledge they learned in your class to make strategic and tactical business decisions in the game, they develop skills critical to succeed in today's business world." (Cadotte, E. 2017. Retrieved from (<https://www.marketplace-simulation.com/>)).

At UTK, the simulation is implemented in the following format: Business decisions are required on a quarterly basis and a total of six quarters are played. The previous quarter's decisions impact the next. So, in real-time, students are seeing the results of their decisions on their companies' success or failure. Most sections of Marketplace require two instructors that act as "coaches." The primary responsibility of the coach is to guide students through the simulation by asking specific data driven questions that help students make sound decisions. Additionally, it's important that coaches not directly answer questions yet instead, coach students to find the answers themselves. Multiple sections of Marketplace are conducted requiring the use of over 50 coaches per year.

It's not surprising with the scale of this course that there's a lack of consistency emerging in the approach instructors take in coaching students. A few areas needing clarity and consistency include:

1. The role and responsibilities of the coordinator of Marketplace.
2. Identifying which simulation generated reports to use per quarter
3. Identifying which guiding and data driven questions to ask students per quarter
4. Strategies coaches should use when a student plans to miss a meeting (referred to in Marketplace as an Executive Briefing)
5. Strategies for keeping students motivated throughout the simulation
6. An understanding and sharing of best practices

As a coach myself as well as speaking to other new coaches, it's not uncommon to find coaches lacking the self-efficacy they need to believe in their ability to coach well. As Bandura states, "Perceived efficacy plays a key role in human functioning because it affects behavior not only directly, but by its impact on other determinants such as goals and aspirations, outcome expectations, affective proclivities, and perception of impediments and opportunities in the social environment (Bandura, 1995, 1997). Therefore, developing a consistent coaching environment, which could result in coaches, feeling more confident in their abilities, seems critical to the success of coaches, students and the program.

The Marketplace simulation is implemented via the Management Department. The primary stakeholder for this tutorial is the coordinator for Marketplace and the SME, Eva Cowell. Additional stakeholders include the following:

- Anne Smith: Management Department Head
- Lindsay Mahony: Management Department instructor and Marketplace coach
- Existing and new coaches to Marketplace
- 1500+ students required to complete Marketplace annually

Learner Analysis

Most of the coaches for Marketplace are professors in the Management Department. Following is a list of the most common learner characteristics:

1. PhD or Masters educated
2. Tenured faculty, non-tenured track faculty and adjunct of Management Department.
3. Professional coaches on hire from the company that developed Marketplace.
4. Age range is from 28-65
5. Gender: 30% female & 70% male
6. Ethnicities: Caucasian, Hispanic, African, European
7. Employment: Tenure, non-tenure and administrative positions
8. Most have a high level of comfortable with technology

9. High locus of control

Additionally, the coordinator for Marketplace has over 10 years of managing and coaching the simulation. A few of the coaches have in excess of two years' experience yet most of the coaches, including, myself, have less than one year. Therefore, the timing for this tutorial is optimal: Current staff of coaches have some experience with the simulation but little knowledge regarding the approach the Management Department takes in its implementation.

Context Analysis

The performance and learning contexts differ. Yet, a solution to minimize the gap between the two is possible. The performance context is as follows: Coaching takes place in the classroom. Each coach will work with teams of students, so about 25-30 students, with teams rotating working with the coach at about every 20 minutes. Additionally, many coaches will support multiple sections of BAUD 453 - the undergraduate level course in which Marketplace is used. As an example, I supported four sections of BAUD 453, per day, in the fall 2017. So, I coached around 120 students per day. In contrast to the performance context, the learning context will take place online, asynchronously and without students. The tutorial will be managed by the coordinator of Marketplace. As noted in the Learner Analysis, most coaches are full-time faculty members of the Management Department. So, the need for a training program that is flexible and online is key to the tutorial being used. In other words, coaches need the flexibility to complete the tutorial in the evenings, on the weekends or when their schedule allows them to do so.

The gap between the performance and learning context can be minimized within the design of the tutorial itself. For example, real-life scenarios are used providing the learner the opportunity to imagine and visualize themselves in a coaching session. Additionally, sample simulation reports will be used as well a collection of guiding questions that have successfully been used before with students. So, the tutorial itself will use as many real-life resources possible.

After speaking with the coordinator for Marketplace, maintaining an open and honest dialogue between herself and the coaches is important. As the voice and face of the tutorial (which is detailed under the Media section), the coordinator will establish herself as the "go to person" when a coach needs help.