

2010

# Virtual teams, eLearning and developing coaches : a work in progress

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## Publication Details

McCarthy, G. (2010). Virtual teams, eLearning and developing coaches : a work in progress. Fourth Australian Conference on Evidence-based Coaching Sydney. [Powerpoint presentation]

SYDNEY BUSINESS SCHOOL  
University of Wollongong

**Virtual teams, eLearning and  
Developing Coaches  
– a work in progress**

4<sup>th</sup> Australian Evidence-Based Coaching Conference  
June 2010

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**Outline**

Ask questions at any time!

- Background
- Blended Learning / eLearning / Virtual Teams
- Application in Master of Business Coaching at UOW
- Learning from online assessment task
- Next steps

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**Background**



- Master of Business Coaching at UOW
- Launched in 2008
- Part-time only
- 4 subjects a year, one subject at a time
- Spaced learning – 5 days per subject, 2 days face to face at a time
- Blended Learning - between face to face sessions, students:
  - work,
  - reflect, research, prepare assignments,
  - have access to resources and discussion through an eLearning website
  - and have a life!

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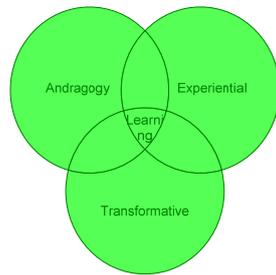
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## Learning and Coaching

- All coaching is underpinned by three main education theories according to Cox and Bachkirova (2010)

– In developing coaches, we base our approaches on these three theories



Andragogy or adult learning (Knowles 2005)  
Experiential learning (Kolb 1984, Schoen 1983)  
Transformative learning (Mezirow 1990, 1991)

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## Educational Principles

- Content is learned at a deep level by experiencing it (Saulnier 2009)
- Spaced learning, peer review and reflection contribute to deep learning (O'Brien 2004).
- Authentic tasks are complex and realistic, entailing consideration of multiple perspectives, collaboration and reflection (Herrington et al. 2006).
- Authentic activities are engaging for adult learners who want to be able to apply their learning, not merely acquire knowledge for its own sake (Westrup and Jack 1998; Knowles, Holton et al. 2005).
- Reasons for tasks should be clear (Knowles et al. 2005). A task which is valuable in itself is more motivating than a task completed just to get a mark.

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## Blended Learning

- Blended learning is 'an instructional strategy that combines online and face to face instruction' (Teng et al. 2009)
- eLearning is online learning in various forms, with technology used to assist in the learning process
- Challenges include how to ensure deep learning in the online environment, how to implement authentic assessment tasks, and how to create a sense of community
- Research into Virtual Teams can provide useful insights

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### Virtual Teams Definition

- Teams working towards a shared purpose who rarely if ever meet face to face and hence use some form of technology to interact



- McCarthy 2007
- One of the most critical success factors is **trust**
- Leaders need to shift focus from process to output (Daft 2008) and replace control with support (Shriberg, Shriberg et al. 2005)

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### Importance of Trust in Virtual Teams

- Trust is linked with
  - Commitment
  - Performance
  - Satisfaction
  - Problem-Solving
  - Communication
  - Ability to adapt to change
  - Confidence in relationships with each other
  - More exchanges of useful information
  - Lower transaction costs
  - More tolerance of mistakes



- Sources
- Abbott 2009, King 2007, Greenberg et al. 2007
  - Powell et al. 2006, Stahl and Sitkin 2005, Jarvenpaa et al. 1998

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### Building Trust

- Trust can be built through:
  - Team building
  - Focus on relationships before task
  - Focus on teams before technology
  - Small projects
  - Exchange information
  - Clear roles and responsibilities
  - Clear expectations and requirements
  - More exchanges of useful information
  - Frequent communication 1:1 and 1: Many



- Sources
- Dewar 2006 Carte et al. 2006 Brake 2006
  - Jarman 2005 Kerber and Buono 2004 Hart and McLeod 2003
  - Kayworth and Leidner 2001 and Jarvenpaa et al. 1998

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### Authentic and Supportive

- In building trust in virtual teams, small tasks must be genuine
- Leaders must be authentic and value the individual as well as the team
- A focus on relationships before task helps teams become effective quickly (Carte, Chidambaram et al. 2006, Jarman 2005)
- Social activities help teams to get to know and trust each other – face to face and online
- These approaches can also be used with eLearning



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### Performance

- Performance expectations must be articulated clearly
  - of task instructions, marking criteria
- Feedback must be frequent so that virtual team members can adjust their performance
- When students are not able to pop into ask a lecturer a question when it occurs to them, we need to make the information and support available online.



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### Principles for Blended Learning

1. Build trust and relationships
2. Be authentic
3. Develop competence and foster growth
4. Provide support
5. Allow time

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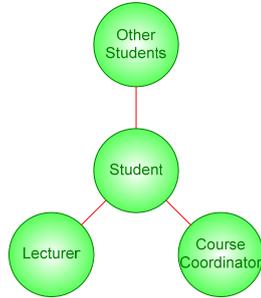
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## 1. Build Trust and Relationships

- Initial interviews
- Face to face activities
  - Safe place
  - Honest personal information
  - Constructive feedback
- Shared tasks
- Rapid response
- Concern for students
- 2-day format
  - Shared breaks
- Communication in various media




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## 2. Authentic Learning

- **Activities**
  - Individual skills to complete coaching session
  - Real play versus role play
  - Combine coaching with tools from other disciplines
    - e.g. Innovation tools with coaching
  - Students rate discussion highly
- **Authentic Assessment Tasks**
  - Demonstrate skills
  - Apply theory to experience and reflect, e.g. action learning
  - Develop responses e.g. code of conduct
  - Online coaching assignment and reflection
  - Authentic tasks can be complicated to put on paper!




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## Student Responses to In-Class Activities

Activity	Subj 1	Subj 2
Lecture	5	5
Discussion	6	5
Video	5	
Listening Exercise	5	
Feedback Exercise	5	
Brainstorming Exercise	5	
Demonstration of Coaching		5
Coaching exercise		5
Learning from fellow students		6

n = 11, rated on a scale of 1 to 6 where 6 is Excellent

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### Variety is important

- Students like a variety of activities and particularly value learning from each other
- Students liked the opportunity to reflect collectively on their experience and make sense of this thing called coaching
- Individual skills exercises e.g. listening or feedback, are useful as well as coaching sessions
- Videos provide an opportunity to observe real life situations



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### Student Satisfaction with Assessment Tasks

Assessment	Subject 1	Subject 2
Report	5	5
Presentation	6	
Group Facilitation		5
Reflection	5	
Exam	5	
Coaching Session		5

n = 11, rated on a scale of 1 to 6 where 6 is Excellent

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### Assessment Tasks

- Motivating in their own right, e.g. code of conduct
- Assess learning outcomes and graduate qualities
- Individual and Group
- Practical and Written
- Written instructions can be misinterpreted – need to be piloted
- Quality of feedback important

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### Use of Exams

**DONT  
PANIC**

- Exams are used in some subjects to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of theory
- Students commented that exams made them revise a broader set of topics than assignments which were in-depth on a specific topic
- Students also commented that exams were less confronting than coaching sessions

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### 3. Develop Competence and Foster Growth (1)

- **Many skills are needed**
  - There are several listings of coaching competencies, both by professional associations and in the literature
    - E.g. listening, questioning, goal setting
  - To this we add business skills
    - E.g. business planning, managing change
  - For a masters course, students also need to develop academic skills
    - E.g. critical analysis, referencing, research methodology
  - IT skills also needed to enrol, research and write assignments, interact online

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### Develop Competence and Foster Growth (2)

- **Self-assessment, feedback and reflection play a vital role in growth and development**
- **Much of what is learned is not learned in class**
  - Aha! moments can arise at any time
  - The two-day format encourages sharing in breaks
  - eLearning platform
    - allows more resources to be made available than can be covered in class
    - can cater for minority interests
  - Assignments including reflection heighten self-awareness
  - Feedback enhances learning
  - Moments of doubt can hit both experienced and new coaches (de Haan 2008)

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## 4. Provide Support

- **Face to face and online support are necessary**
- Personal support
  - Interest of the lecturer biggest single factor in student motivation (Waterhouse 2005)
- Academic support
  - Finding and using information
  - Critical analysis and academic writing
  - Reflective writing
- Technology support
  - Part-time students study any time of the day or night
  - System needs to be robust and as much online help available as possible




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JUW [TCHR225]- Master of Business Coaching

Sydney Business School  
Welcomes You to the  
Master of Business Coaching

**Subject outlines and other useful information**  
Course structure, subject outlines, orientation information. NEW! Subject Outlines for TBS 963 now available

**Notes by subject**  
2010 Slides for TBS 963, TBS 964, TBS 967 and TBS 968. NEW! Notes for TBS 964 2010 and TBS 968 here now.

**Coaching Skills**  
Notes on coaching skills. NEW! Examples of David Grove's Clean Language.

**Notes relating to coaching frameworks, models and theory**  
Notes organised by theme rather than by lecture or individual subject

**Academic, research and support skills**  
Notes on critical thinking and writing, literature reviews, time management and other useful skills.

**Discussions and Sample Exam Questions**  
Post your questions relating to coaching in general, specific subjects, assignments or exams, or share your reflections and experience of coaching.

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## Student Rating of eLearning

eLearning element	Mean Rating	SD
Notes for lectures	4.8	0.75
Notes by theme	4.7	0.82
Notes on coaching skills	4.7	1.5
Notes on academic skills	4.5	1.4
Discussion forum	4.3	1.4

n = 11, rated on a scale of 1 to 6 where 6 is Excellent  
 • Limited use of discussion forum on eLearning – emails preferred

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### 5. Allow Time

- Time is important for forming relationships and building trust
- Time is also important for deepening understanding and building expertise
- Time impacts differently in face to face and online interactions
  - Online coaching assignment example later

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### eCoaching

- Increasingly popular for at least part of a coaching engagement
  - Costs and Time
  - Flexibility of time and location
  - Consistency across a multi national
  - Access to expertise – e.g. expat couple coaching
  - Access to preferred choice of coach or coaching style
  - Record of coaching interaction
- An example of an authentic online task is eCoaching

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### An online coaching assignment

- **The brief**
  - Choose a partner with whom to work on eLearning – text-based
  - Coach each other on an innovation of your choice
  - You will have already established a relationship face to face.



- Platform restricted to eLearning
- Number of entries restricted to 10
- Plus Individual Reflection

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### Key Learning Points (1)

- Time – plus/minus of being able to think about questions and responses
- Relationships – plus/minus of knowing the coachee well
- Suited brief-solution focused coaching
- Students tried to find ways to demonstrate concern for the person
- Useful to ask explicitly for feedback during the session
- Open questions used to explore but also clarifying, testing, reflecting, paraphrasing, summarising



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### Key Learning Points (2)

- Felt they needed extra care when challenging but also needed not to shy away from it
- Had to be clear, succinct, and deliberate
- One question at a time
- Articulating in writing can enhance clarity
- Helped to bring in other tools e.g. TRIZ, mind maps
- Less confronting than face to face
- Boosted confidence (more prepared)
- If offering commercially, need to price in preparation time



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### Limitations (1)

- Lack of body language and tone of voice
- More formal style
- More care to avoid possible misinterpretations
- Silence does not have the same power
- Can't do the mms and aahs with which they might encourage people to continue in a face to face session



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### Limitations (2)

- Having previous entries available useful **but**
  - could lead to being less mindful/present
- Presence varied with skill of coach
  - e.g. whether coach had pre-meditated questions or really responded to what the coachee had said
- Technical limitations
  - e.g. time to refresh browser



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### Unanticipated learning

- Became more aware of own habits in face to face coaching, e.g. not finishing questions with words, tendency to jump to solution mode
- Became more aware of coachee's choice of words
- Thought about reasons for asking questions and found it helpful to share with coachee
- Thought about the process of coaching and what works
- Found having a coaching process or framework was useful in addition to coaching skills
- Diagrams helped articulate thoughts and share understanding
- Frequent short interchanges were very focused



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### Next Steps

- Some course re-structuring for 2011
- Longitudinal evaluation and review
- Experiment with other platforms for online coaching
- Introduce staged assignments with portions online for peer feedback to encourage use of interactive elements of eLearning
- Research
  - use of graphics with eCoaching and eLearning
  - are certain topics more appropriate for eCoaching than others?



eLearning is not used for its own sake but to **enhance** learning

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## Any questions?



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