An Innovative Approach
To Faculty Coaching

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ABSTRACT

As online education has grown rapidly, colleges and universities have developed various approaches to effectively evaluating and coaching faculty. Faculty performance is central to student success and faculty need feedback that is consistent, constructive and illustrative. Through the use of screen recording technology, academic department chairs can record a visual, clear walk- through of an online class while providing constructive, audio feedback to the instructor. This technology in and of itself is simple and straightforward to use, and can be archived for future reference in the event that an academic department chairs and/or administrator would need documentation regarding the performance of a faculty member. In 2009, the School of Business and Management at an online university began using Jing/Screen cast recording to provide faculty feedback. The response from faculty has been overwhelmingly positive. Faculty have expressed that combining the use of visual and audio feedback results in straightforward expectations in meeting teaching requirements and a better understanding of teaching requirements. This has proven to be an efficient and effective way of providing not only positive feedback but also constructive criticism, which has resulted in faculty taking actions to improve their teaching performance. This tool has worked well for this online university but the application could be equally effective in managing fewer faculty members. Faculties have been able to gain an immediate understanding of what they are proficient in and where they can improve. They have provided such feedback as, "I am in awe of the technology! This is so very user friendly, and it is such an efficient and effective way to get your message across to me." The introduction and use of this technology, audio and visual feedback, has created a community of improved understanding of University requirements and classroom expectations while establishing a better relationship and more open line of communication between academic department chairs and remote adjunct faculty.

Keywords: higher education, faculty coaching, Jing, Screencast

INTRODUCTION

*Q*uality assurance refers to the monitoring of practices and processes in a business in order to ensure that that the standards of quality are being met. In higher education, the monitoring and coaching of faculty is one of the major aspects of quality assurance. Institutions of higher learning face significant calls for accountability, leading to an increased interest in measuring faculty performance (Bradley & Bradley, 2010). There is a growing need to find a way to reach faculty in a remote setting and to create an environment in which remote faculty feel supported and engaged as a community who continue to raise student expectations. As suggested by Fang (2007), "In the online environment, training and development of faculty do not occur in a vacuum. Faculty members' backgrounds and contexts differ even if they use the same tools" (p. 17).For remote online faculty, the majority of communication, guidance and feedback will come from their academic department chair. Filetti (2009) notes, "Much of the important work of a university department chair is comprised of supporting and guiding colleagues" and "offering helpful supervision and timely feedback" (p. 343)., it is imperative that academic department chairs and administrators find a way to effectively and efficiently review, remediate, coach, and commend faculty for their performance in the online classroom.

This paper examines some of the methodology and processes for reviewing and coaching faculty in an online environment, and provides a recommendation for further research in this area or performance in an innovative approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous research studies that show the need for faculty reviews. This topic is important to students, faculty, and administrators, as all involved are impacted by the review process, either directly or indirectly (Bradley & Bradley, 2010). A call for institution-wide accountability in education drives this need for a valid faculty review process. Bradley and Bradley (2010) share a memorandum from the Provost's office of the example institution: "The evaluation of faculty performance is one of the most important functions of department chairs, division directors and other evaluators. The purpose of the Faculty Performance Review is to provide guidance for continuing and meaningful faculty development" (p. 21).

Faculty review processes began to catch on in the 1970s as the focus changed to accountability of universities to provide a valuable service in the form of quality education. Realizing critical monetary concerns, institutions adapted existing evaluation processes to include instruments intended to quantify time spent by faculty engaged in various responsibilities of employment and the quality of how they conduct those activities (Bradley & Bradley, 2010). "The training and support resources available to online instructors vary greatly from institution to institution, and even within institutions, and yet remains a critical factor in the long-term success of online education" (Baker, Redfield, & Tonkin, 2006). Remote instructors need not only information on standard policies and procedures but also continuous opportunities for mentoring and professional development (Murphy, 2008).

Now that it has been determined that faculty reviews are imperative, the focus turns to how these reviews are delivered. As institutional policy outlines, the importance of providing ongoing performance evaluation of faculty, the evaluation and measurement framework points to the importance of providing a similar, continual review of the process itself to capture opportunities for improvement (Bradley & Bradley, 2010). Faculty will become familiar with the process and feel comfortable in the mode in which it is delivered. There is established support in the research stressing the importance of developing valid and reliable measurement tools (Bradley & Bradley, 2010).

Additional research turns the focus to online classrooms and the faculty who teach in this environment. The rapid growth of online learning has mandated the development of faculty evaluation models geared specifically toward the unique demands of the online classroom (Mandernach, Donnelli, Dailey, & Schulte, 2005). Some of these unique demands include a student-centered environment in which faculty address specific needs of students that may be harder to address in this online environment. Instructors need to realize the fears and apprehension of the students that take online courses. Many may need that extra push and attention that is not required in a traditional brick and mortar school.

In the infancy of online instruction, considerable emphasis was given to demonstrating equivalence between online and traditional face-to-face instruction (Mandernach, Donnelli, Dailey, & Schulte, 2005). As more is learned about the students and their needs, schools have moved away from this idea of needing to equate the two models of learning. This movement extended from pedagogy to evaluation as many online programs mirrored established face-to-face processes for faculty evaluation when creating models for the virtual classroom (Mandernach et al., 2005). These theories have been proven incorrect as schools and administration are realizing that the qualities desired of an online instructor may be different than originally thought. With the rapid growth of online learning, these early evaluation models have revealed limited relevance to the online environment both in content and implementation (Mandernach et al., 2005).

Shedd (2005) notes that faculty performance evaluations are often the most awkward, unpleasant and challenging part of an academic department chair's role. Research and experience has shown that managers need to think outside the box when it comes to effectively evaluating online faculty. Oftentimes, the way in which expectations and feedback are communicated impacts the instructor's perception and motivation in the classroom. Evaluations should create a connection between the individual instructor's goals and the goals of the organization

(Hardre & Cox, 2009). To address the ineffectiveness of traditional faculty evaluation models for use with online faculty, as well as to contribute to the growth of online learning as a field (and not simply a practice), innovative faculty evaluation models that are geared specifically to the unique demands, expectations, and requirements of modern online learning must be developed (Mandernach, Donnelli, Dailey, & Schulte, 2005). In summary, faculty reviews for online instructors need to mirror the technology and innovation of the online classroom in order to be effective.

Kruger, Epley, Parker and Ng (2005) found the following:

Without the benefit of paralinguistic cues such as gesture, emphasis, and intonation, it can be difficult to convey emotion and tone over electronic mail (email). Five experiments suggest that this limitation is often underappreciated, such that people tend to believe that they can communicate over e-mail more effectively than they actually can. Studies 4 and 5 further suggest that this overconfidence is born of egocentrism, the inherent difficulty of detaching oneself from one's own perspective when evaluating the perspective of someone else. Because e-mail communicators "hear" a statement differently depending on whether they intend to be, say, sarcastic or funny, it can be difficult to appreciate that their electronic audience may not. (p.925)

This research supports the authors' established theories regarding the importance of feedback. Academic department chairs must find innovative ways to provide feedback to online instructors beyond narrative emails and written rubrics.

The remainder of this paper will discuss how the authors reformed the way one university addresses faculty feedback and the positive effects that have followed this change. Also included will be suggestions for future research regarding raising or lowering of benchmark standards due to the use of multiple mediums in coaching.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

During the past five years, several reform efforts have been in place to enhance the relationship between remote faculty and academic department chairs in online institutions. Online higher education institutions have been in the forefront using advancements in curriculum and instruction with multiple mediums and delivering lessons through advanced technologies. Higher education communities have recognized that technology is a powerful tool for improving the achievement of outcomes and success for students; therefore, technology must also be recognized as a valuable tool for improving faculty performance and success in the classroom. With information and communication technology imbedded into faculty coaching at this university, the degree to which faculty relationships and teaching measures are positively impacted needs to be assessed.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Although the ways in which faculty coaching practices have evolved, the overriding goal of integrating technology has been to enhance faculty relationships with department chairs, and ultimately improve teaching measures and student assessment of faculty performance with department chairs and faculty who work remotely and supervise a large number of faculty, despite the fact that the definition of teaching measures may need to change. To date there is little research investigating the relationship between technology used in faculty coaching and relationship building. Academic department chairs are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure the faculty teaching under them are coached on a regular basis and that a sense of community is developed with their faculty, all while ensuring that student satisfaction with faculty performance is at an acceptable level.

Much of research gathered thus far was focused on static documents that evaluated an instructor's classroom that centered on and included various instructional measures and rubrics. Few studies have contributed to our understanding of the potential roles that technology such as Jing/Screencast.com might play in increasing the challenge of building relationships while increasing teaching measures, and ultimately resulting in increased student learning. The authors of this paper that adopting a multimedia type coaching environment will lead to increased instructor motivation, more engagement in the online classroom, a closer instructor/chair relationship in remote environments, and increased teaching measures.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem to which this study is directed is the lack of knowledge concerning the impact of academic department chairs' use of technology on relationship surveys and teaching measure assessments. The problem may be that the academic department chairs do not know if the use of technology to deliver coaching will improve relationships or teaching measures. Rather than debating whether or not the evaluation for teaching measures currently used is accurate and should be continued to be used, the focus of this study will be on how to make the best use of complementary types of coaching.

RATIONALE

The research on coaching faculty prior to this study focused on increased teaching measures of faculty working with static documented information in spreadsheet format delivered once per term. Few studies have contributed to the understanding of the potential role that technology using multimedia feedback, audio and visual recording, can play in key challenges with faculty. Academic department chairs are expected to monitor faculty and produce coaching reports once per term. The hope of the study is that academic department chairs who have participated in the use of multimedia coaching in a yearlong integration will have less resistance to integration of suggestions, and faculty will participate in a collaborative community experience with mutual suggestions. The link between coaching with the use of this technology and increased teaching measures has not been observed to result in significant changes but the relationships built may lead to more collaborative environments as faculty take more responsibility for their own performance and resulting measures.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Online higher education universities have spent significant time providing static documents that provide coaching to remote faculty members. Although advocates on both sides of the use of technology in coaching debate and support their claims that one is superior to the other, the analysis has not yet been undertaken. The study and analysis is important to instructors' professional development as well as the relationship between academic department chairs and remote faculty (which online universities are dependent upon). A further study collecting responses to surveys and data on teaching measures will need to be investigated. This study should focus on the relationship between the ways in which academic department chairs engage in the use of Jing/Screencast.com technology in faculty coaching, and subsequent achievement of expectations and increased teaching measures.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may assist academic department chairs and administrators' decisions concerning the technology integration in coaching. After studying the first six months' results using this technology, Jing/Screencast.com, these chairs found mixed results on indicators of faculty relationships and increased scores on teaching measures. Four populations who will benefit from the study are faculty, academic department chairs, students and administrators. Will faculty relationships be enhanced and will teaching measures increase by the use of multimedia technology in coaching? This question is important to the populations involved and this study will focus on the process for answering those questions.

Research Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses were formulated and need to be tested:

1. Null Hypothesis (Ho1): There is no statistically significant relationship between faculty relationships using technology-enabled coaching.
2. Alternative Hypotheses (Ha1): There is a statistically significant relationship between faculty relationships using technology-enabled coaching.
3. Null Hypothesis (Ho2): There is no statistically significant relationship between faculty teaching measures using technology-enabled coaching.
4. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha2): There is a statistically significant relationship between faculty teaching measures using technology-enabled coaching.

Definition Of Terms

Technology used will be Jing/Screencast.com. A link including visual and audio feedback is sent to the faculty member once per term.

Dependent Variables

Faculty relationship will be demonstrated through the survey scores. Two categories will be reported and standards set up by the online university. Additional information will be gathered to investigate teaching measures through an independent student survey.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The weaknesses may be related to the inadequate measures of variables, loss of faculty, lack of participants, small sample size, errors in measurement and other factors related to data collection with remote employees. The online university where data will be collected generally includes far more faculty being supervised by one academic department chair than a campus university, thus the comparability of this study to on ground coaching of faculty would be diminished. With the focus of this study on the relationship between coaching achievement using technology with remote faculty, the following assumptions were made regarding this study:

1. Faculty received one complete assessment during each term.
2. Faculty have received static flat document coaching in the past and now receive the Jing/Screencast.com format.
3. Faculty have the intrinsic desire to improve.
4. Participants will answer the surveys truthfully.
5. The study can accurately determine the levels of relationships.
6. Teaching measures accurately measure the quality of teaching.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The theoretical framework for this study is the need for more information on what are effective coaching tools that positively impact achievement of qualitative relationships and quantitative teaching measures. The emphasis on previous research has been with the use of static spreadsheets sent once per term evaluating performance in the online classroom. This study focuses on the academic department chairs' use of technology through audio and visual recording that positively impacts relationships and achievement of teaching measures. A quantitative survey to faculty needs to be conducted to those who received coaching before and after this technology was in place and a quantitative assessment needs to be conducted of teaching measures before and after this technology was in place. The hope of the study is to find a greater number of incidents in which faculty who receive the multi-medium coaching demonstrate higher achievement in teaching measures and present stronger relationships with their academic department chairs using regression analysis of the dependent and independent variables.

Faculty will be invited to respond to surveys addressing their relationships with their chairs in the environment of online higher education in a remote setting. The data will be collected and analyzed to determine if the faculty perceptions of the use of Jing/Screencast.com improved relationships, and if the dependent variable of relationships and teaching measures were positively related.

CONCLUSION

Faculty performance and engagement in a classroom is critical to student success, particularly in the online environment where students need ongoing support and targeted educational guidance. Administrators providing coaching and feedback to faculty need efficient and effective tools to help their faculty progress. While anecdotal evidence has shown that the use of screen recording is beneficial to faculty and administrators, further research is necessary. A study of the relationship between the use of technology-enabled coaching and faculty performance/faculty satisfaction as well as the use of technology-enabled coaching and teaching measures is called for.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Heather Dana, an Academic Department Chair from Kaplan University, has been involved in online learning since 2005. She has taught adjunct courses for University of Phoenix before moving to Kaplan University in 2009 where began teaching Introduction to Finance as an adjunct. She soon accepted a full time position as the Department Chair for the Finance and Economics Division in the School of Business and Management.

Brandy Havens previously served as the Academic Department Chair for the Accounting Department at Kaplan University and currently works as an adjunct instructor. Brandy began her career in online education in 2006. She holds a BS in Accounting, an MBA, and is a licensed Certified Public Accountant. Brandy is in her second year of coursework towards a Ph.D. in Business with a specialization in Advanced Accounting. Before joining Kaplan University, she held various positions in public and corporate accounting including auditing, budgeting, and SEC reporting. Brandy currently works on a consulting basis providing services in tax and financial planning.

Cathy Hochanadel is an Academic Department Chair in the School of Business and Management at Kaplan University. She completed a BS in Business and Marketing at Saint Louis University, and an MBA at Rockhurst University. She has completed the coursework toward a Ph.D. in Business Administration with a Marketing concentration from TUI University. Cathy began teaching online in 2000 and began her career with Kaplan University in early 2002. Prior to joining Kaplan University, she worked in the commercial real estate industry as a marketing manager. In addition, she has experience in direct marketing, sales support and non-profit promotions.

JoDee Phillips is an Academic Department Chair with Kaplan University in the School of Business and Management. She was formally the Assistant Dean of Curriculum with Kaplan University. She has been involved teaching online and assessing and creating curriculum for five years. JoDee's credentials are an MBA from Marylhurst University and has recently passed her dissertation written comprehensive exam from Northcentral University working toward a PhD in Business with an emphasis in Marketing.

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