Chapter 7

Implementing Educational Technology for Facilitating Non–Human Coaching or "E–Coaching"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HiTech Corporation (pseudonym) and its organizations are always looking for new methods of expanding its capabilities to help employees enhance competence and increase workplace satisfaction. While they would like to offer coaching to all employees, the costs associated with traditional coaching have limited coaching to only upper management. With today's technologies, one possible solution is to develop coaching opportunities that do not require a coach and can be used anytime, anywhere. Through a small pilot and then subsequent larger release, the corporation tested a non-human coaching, or e-Coaching, system that employees could use for an alternative to traditional coaching.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

HiTech is part of a Fortune 100 technology corporation that employs more than 100,000 people globally. It manufactures personal computer microprocessors and has manufacturing facilities that are required to run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. This organization has built a reputation for excellence and strives to achieve high performance through a hierarchical structure. While there are an abundance of definitions for eLearning, it is commonly used to explain learning that uses network technology to design, deliver, select, administer, and extend learning (Masie, 2008), and for the last several years, has become a standard method for training its employees (via Internet or intranet) —except in the case of coaching. Coaching-- a method to help individuals gain and improve levels of competency and through interactive questioning, collaborative goal setting, systematic observations, constructive feedback, and positive guidance--is face-to-face and limited to executives (Kimball, 2005; Sanders & Thiagarajan, 2005; Stern, 2004). If coaching is performed at other levels, it is limited to adhoc single instances or unstructured sessions. This limitation is due to the human and financial costs of traditional coaching.

Coaching and eLearning have become million and billion dollar industries respectively in the USA. In 2000, Stern (2004) cited that the United States invested $70 million in coaching. The 2010 American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) State of the Industry report estimated that United States organizations invested $42.27 billion of their employee learning and development budget in 2009 on external services, which also includes coaching. In a benchmarking study by Hall in 2002, IBM reported "saving nearly $200 million in only one year as a result of implementing an e-learning strategy" (p. 235).

SETTING THE STAGE

Jackie Snow (pseudonym) is the program manager for HiTech's coaching program. On a monthly basis, she receives approximately 20 new requests for coaching services. Her job is to ascertain how coaching can help the requestor or potential coachee. In many instances, Jackie finds that while coaching is a viable option, her coaching program does not have the resources to address the type of coaching requested. In any case, she offers more traditional coaching which is labor intensive. Rather than directing the individual to take specific action, an effective coach presents alternative approaches for the individual to consider. Coaching enables an individual to build a bridge between learning, technical performance, and the workplace context of any given organization (Stevens & Frazer, 2005). Coaching bridges gaps between skill and performance while asking the right questions that provides insight, feedback,

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