

SOC Learning Guide for Using Technology with Groups

Title: Using Technology with Groups

Community: The Power of Groups

Description:

This informative class is designed to teach you about using technology to coordinate and communicate with your groups.

Using Technology with Groups

This informative class is designed to teach you about using technology to coordinate and communicate with your groups.

What is the purpose of this Learning Guide?

1. To give you a full understanding of which technologies are effective with groups.

During the one-hour (overview) Teleclass, the instructor will cover the following...

1. Technology overview
2. Technology distinction
3. Tasks to automate
4. Group technology strategies
5. Group administration strategies and systems
6. Group session environment creation
7. Group member communication strategies and systems
8. How using technology benefits the coach
9. How using technology benefits the participants
10. Common technology mistakes people make

Technology Overview

Advances in group communication technologies have allowed groups to move from being primarily an in-person medium to including many virtual group mediums as well. Virtual groups have the added advantage that individuals who share a common goal or interest can join together in a group regardless of where they are physically located. In fact today, groups that meet on a telephone bridge are almost as common as groups that meet in person, and groups made up of participants from different countries are not unusual.

As the digital generation grows up and become both consumers and providers of coaching services, virtual group technologies will continue to inform and expand how and where groups interact.

Miriam Webster defines technology as a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge. For the purposes of this class, technology is defined as a system or strategy for automating tasks.

Technology Distinction

Technology strategies versus Technology systems

Technology strategy

- A technology strategy is an overview or plan for accomplishing a task and achieving an end result.
- A technology strategy specifically addresses what will be accomplished.
 - “All email inquiries from group members will be answered within 24 hours” is a technology strategy.

Technology system

- A technology system is a method, program or service that implements a technology strategy.
 - Setting an Outlook rule to flag any email arriving from group members for action within 18 hours, is an example of a technology system designed to support and implement the technology strategy referenced above.

This class covers group technology strategies, with occasional references to specific technology systems. Class participants are encouraged to research their options fully to best match their personal strategy needs with the appropriate system when making technology system purchase or selection.

Tasks To Automate

- Group registration
- Confirming group registration
- Group reminders
- Group follow-up
- Invoicing and payments
- Connecting members outside of group sessions
- Soliciting topics and co-creating the group session agenda

Group Technology Systems

Group technology systems fall into 3 main categories:

- Phone-based
 - Bridge lines
 - Call muting
 - Call locking
 - Notification on entry/exit
 - Call recording
 - Audio podium
 - Digital recorders
 - Recording software
- Web-based
 - Information
 - Web page
 - Blog
 - One-way interactive
 - Registration form
 - Call prep form
 - Webcasts
 - Two-or more way interactive
 - Discussion forum
 - Group blog
 - Wiki

- Online meetings
 - Back-end functions
 - Shopping cart
 - CGI Scripts
- E-mail
 - Confirm registration
 - Reminders
 - Follow-up
 - Check-ins

Group Technology Strategies

Group technology strategies also fall into 3 main categories:

- Group Administration
- Group Session Environment Creation
- Group Member Communication

Group Administration Strategies and Systems

Group administration activities include tracking, registering and communicating with prospects, and group members, and processing payments.

- **Prospective Group Members**
 - **Group administration strategies**
 - Identify and track prospective group members.
 - Collect email addresses of prospects.
 - Add the emails to a 'notification' autoresponder or email group.
 - Invite notification group members to a teleforum in their area of interest.
 - Email the notification group when the next group is scheduled.
 - **Group administration systems**
 - Set up a 'notification' distribution list in your email program.
 - Outlook
 - Yahoo group
 - Reserve a telephone bridge for the teleforum
 - www.FreeConference.com
 - www.FreeConferenceCall.com
- **Current Group Members**
 - **Groups administration strategies**
 - Process group registration forms and payments.
 - Provide a way for group members to register and pay electronically.
 - Add the registrant's information to a group member database.
 - Process the credit card payment.
 - Send a registration confirmation to the group member.
 - **Groups administration systems**
 - Create an electronic registration form.
 - Code it in HTML.
 - Frontpage

- Dreamweaver
 - Create it in email.
 - Ask for it to be returned via fax, email is not secure.
- Process the credit card payment.
 - Paypal
 - Practice Pay Solutions
- Email a registration confirmation.
 - Outlook
 - Yahoo Group
 - Shopping cart autoresponder

Group Session Environment Creation

Creating the group session environment involves selecting and creating the environment where the group coaching sessions will take place.

- **Creating the group environment strategies**
 - Decide upon the appropriate group hosting environment based on the needs of the group members and the skills and resources of the coach.
 - Schedule the group sessions.
- **Creating the group environment systems**
 - Reserve or install the group hosting environment.
 - Telephone bridge
 - www.FreeConference.com
 - www.FreeConferenceCall.com
 - Online conference
 - www.GoToMeeting.com
 - www.accuconference.com
 - Discussion forum
 - Yahoo group
 - Coachville member community
 - phpBB
 - Invision Power Board

Group Member Communication Strategies and Systems

Group member communication activities include collecting and sharing information among group members, and (optional) creating a venue outside the groups sessions where group members can interact.

- **Group communication strategies**
 - Ask compelling questions.
 - Send group members a list of compelling questions for them to answer.
 - Send the responses from each group member to the entire group for their reference prior to the first session.
 - Host a discussion forum for supplemental group interaction.
- **Group communication systems**
 - Create an electronic compelling questions form.
 - Code it in HTML to email the form results to the entire group upon submit.
 - Frontpage

- Dreamweaver
 - Create it in email.
 - Ask group members to 'reply to all' when replying.
- Create a hosted discussion forum.
 - Yahoo group
 - Coachville member community
 - phpBB
 - Invision Power Board

How Using Technology Benefits The Coach

- The coach has more time to coach because less time is spent on administrative tasks.
- Group members can customize when and how they want to receive services, providing a just-in-time experience that doesn't depend on the coach's presence.
- Strategies can be implemented and fine-tuned over time, and replicated quickly for use with new groups.
- Collecting client information is automated resulting in information that is both accurate, because the client keyed the data him/herself, and electronic, which means it can be formatted, cut and pasted, imported into a table, etc.
- The coach becomes a role model for how technology can be used to facilitate business processes.
- Technology helps level the playing field between large and small companies, a one-person coaching company can give the impression of being larger, by using high-touch facilitation tools such as autoresponders, forums, etc.
- Technology lowers the rate of buyer's remorse because it allows transactions to be completed in a single step.

How Using Technology Benefits The Participants

- Technology offers prospective group members an automated clear path toward getting involved with a coaching group, which can include a FAQ page, testimonials from previous and current group members, an online registration form, and a way to contact the coach for more information.
- Client can receive just-in-time, personalized communication from the coach, without needing to actually be in the same location at the same time. With email and group forum coaching, you don't even need to be online at the same time.
- Technology has made hosting and administering virtual groups inexpensive, and accessible, which lowers the cost and increases the availability of quality group coaching.
- Clients can self-administer their coaching participation according to their own schedule and needs, including choosing to receive regular reminders, canceling and rescheduling private sessions.
- Clients participate in and benefit from a larger network of peers, such as a coaching group consisting of florist shop owners serving communities of 25,000-50,000 people. Technology allows these individuals to come from all over and join in group coaching, enabling a collaborative versus competitive experience.

Common Technology Mistakes People Make

- People often expect a system to deliver a strategy. But when choosing a technology solution, the strategy needs to be arrived at first, before the appropriate system can be determined.
- Technology won't do the coaching. It provides a conduit for the coaching, but the coaching ideas and skills still need to come from the coach.

- People lose sight of the original purpose for using technology, to save time and energy, and often end up with strategies and systems that take too much time to maintain and are too complicated for their needs.
- People get discouraged by the amount of time it takes to implement a strategy and set up a system, and fail to maintain the system once it's up and running.

This Learning Guide was written by and based on material developed by Beth M. Lyons, www.TechieCoach.com; www.KitchenTableCoaching.com.

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