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Monarch Media, Inc.
Case Study

MIsavvy
Online Skills Training

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Industry

Public Health and Government

Challenge

Research shows that motivational interviewing (MI) is an effective counseling methodology for dietitians and nutritionists to use in helping clients make healthy behavioral changes. When used properly, it has been proven to reduce obesity in all demographics, and improve healthy behaviors.

It's challenging, however, for dietitians and nutritionists to find good training options that help them practice and master MI techniques. To overcome this challenge, Monarch developed a prototype online training program, MIsavvy, and conducted a research study to test its effectiveness.

Key Benefits

- Accessible 24/7
- Cost-effective
- Self-directed
- Focuses on developing skills and behaviors
- Tailored to the trainee's specific practice environment
- Provides meaningful practice through simulation of real-world situations
- Lessons are spaced over time to support development of proficiency in new behaviors and skills
- Peer-to-peer learning is facilitated through online discussions

Overview

MIsavvy is an online program and platform that offers an interactive four-week curriculum in MI skills training. Funded by a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Monarch conducted a study to test the effectiveness of the program, which provided online modeling, practice, and skills development with MI techniques. Dietitian study participants reported that MIsavvy helped them increase their knowledge of MI (93% of users) and improve their skills (87% of users). We're continuing to develop and study the MIsavvy program to create a leading online MI training that will help dietitians work with their clients more effectively.

Approach

Teaching to impart a skill is inherently different than teaching to impart knowledge. With an eLearning course, designers have the added challenge to create a course that allows learners to practice behavioral skills in a medium that does not always lend itself to interpersonal interactions.

Monarch Media has developed methodologies for making online training a powerful tool in practicing skills that would otherwise be accomplished face-to-face. In addition to our work on MIsavvy, we've conducted research for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that demonstrated positive skill development outcomes through online learning methodology. We have addressed skills development across a wide range of audiences including work with the State of Iowa's Alcohol and Tobacco division and San Francisco's Public Health Department. Our efforts have addressed public health concerns ranging from HIV, childhood pregnancy prevention, alcohol & tobacco use, active communities, nursing education, and life skills for deaf and hard of hearing students.

For MIsavvy, our instructional design team applied both **adult learning theory** and best practices for skills training in an eLearning setting. This four-week course provides an opportunity to review and practice interaction techniques in the context of a nutrition counseling session. Throughout the course, participants reflect on their personal nutrition counseling practice to determine priorities, set goals and assess personal progress.

Adult Learning Theory & Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is organized around the four stages described by educational theorist David Kolb:

1. *Concrete Experience*
   Learners draw from their own experiences and utilize past knowledge. Scenarios replicate real-life situations, issues, and interactions are an ideal foundation.

2. *Reflective Observation*
   Adults need to engage with and reflect upon their experiences to understand and acquire knowledge and necessary skills. Allow time and space for such reflection. Create opportunities to observe actions through demonstrations and analyze processes and procedures through case studies and scenario-based activities.
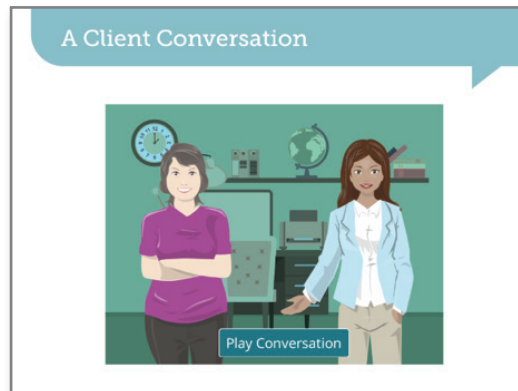
3. *Abstract Conceptualization*
   Building upon past experience and reflection, learners make sense of acquired abstract concepts and provide perspective. Assessments that exercise "critical thinking" skills are necessary to drive idea development and process formulation.
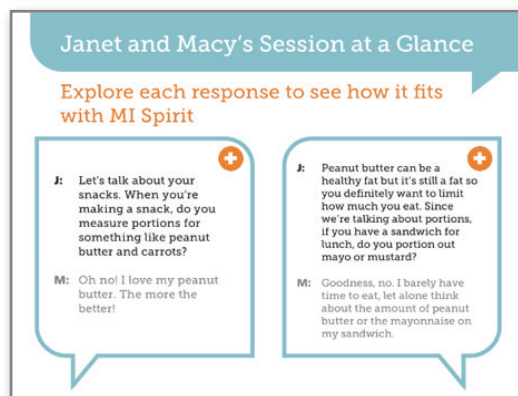
4. *Active Experimentation*
   Role playing activities reinforce what's been learned. Games are also an effective and engaging method to "do and learn," creating realistic interactive situations. Real experience develops and the overall cycle resumes.

Samples

A Client Conversation

Play Conversation

Janet and Macy's Session at a Glance

Explore each response to see how it fits with MI Spirit

J: Let's talk about your snacks. When you're making a snack, do you measure portions for something like peanut butter and carrots?

M: Oh no! I love my peanut butter. The more the better!

J: Peanut butter can be a healthy fat but it's still a fat so you definitely want to limit how much you eat. Since we're talking about portions, if you have a sandwich for lunch, do you portion out mayo or mustard?

M: Goodness, no. I barely have time to eat, let alone think about the amount of peanut butter or the mayonnaise on my sandwich.

MI Spirit or Not?

Choose whether the following statements are in MI Spirit.

Yes / No — I'm wondering where you would like to start today with this visit.

Yes / No — If you'd like, we can talk about the nutrition component of those foods. Tell me more about the foods you might be concerned about.

That's Right
This statement is an example of MI Spirit in action. Working in partnership, the dietitian invites the client to choose how to begin the session, supporting the client's autonomy.

Beginning with an Open Question

Can you help Janet?

I understand you're concerned about your weight and have had a history of high blood pressure. Is that why you are here?

Try rephrasing this statement into an open question.
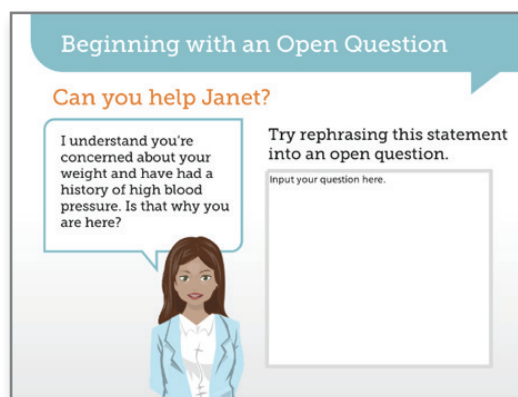
Input your question here.

1. *Concrete Experience*
   Provide real-world scenarios

2. *Reflective Observation*
   Users reflect on each scenario and consider how it could be improved.

3. *Abstract Conceptualization*
   Ask users to apply critical thinking skills and provide immediate feedback on how they are doing.

4. *Active Experimentation*
   Provide opportunities for practice and provide meaningful feedback.

More Information

To learn more about how Monarch Media can help you with your next eLearning project, please call, email, or visit our website:

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