Effective, time-saving, and scalable group work and peer assessment in online learning

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Background

ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

The University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management has been a leader in business education. By embracing innovative teaching methods, the school has served as a beacon of knowledge for the world's business community for generations.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTORS

Tony Leisen is an Instructional Design Manager at Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota.

Course objectives

Students were able to work in groups to produce video interviews based on the course content; participate in a discussion forum, and critically evaluate their peers and other groups' work.

BLOOM’S TAXONOMY

The learning activities, according to Bloom's Taxonomy, were mainly at the level of:

Understanding the content and apply it to produce a product

Evaluating own and peers’ work according to a given rubric

FeedbackFruits
The challenge

The Carlson team has been issuing lots of group work and peer feedback activities in their online/hybrid courses, yet it remains time-consuming and troublesome.

Canvas group functionality was used to organize group work, but the tool only enabled submitting work as a group and offered no opportunities to assess group members’ contribution. The team then utilised Google Forms to make up for this group evaluation component, which proved cumbersome for setup, management, and facilitation. Using Google Forms “ate up a lot of time”, according to Tony.

For peer feedback, Canvas’ native functionality was also used, but it turned out to be another “clunky” tool, failing to meet instructors’ expectations. The peer feedback process was also partially completed on paper, with students writing down their comments, and handing them in to instructors, who compiled the feedback and distributed it to the recipients.

That’s why the Carlson team sought a more complete pedagogical solution to streamline peer and group assessments, while also simplifying course management.

The solution

Just under three years ago, FeedbackFruits was introduced to the Carlson team and they immediately saw the capacity that the tools had to offer. After half a year of training, exploring the tools, Tony and his team were ready to persuade the university to utilize FeedbackFruits. This is when COVID hit, accelerating the transition to remote learning and the need for pedagogical technology. FeedbackFruits Peer Review and Group Member Evaluation were then adopted, as:

“It [the tools] was doing exactly what we wanted to achieve, making everything easier for IDs and instructors, teaching assistants (TAs), and students. Just all around, it was a good experience. It builds out all the activities we need and makes it easy for everyone.”

As teachers at Carlson started using FeedbackFruits tools, they came to love how the tools make group work and peer assessment in online learning much easier and less time consuming.

“...That’s what FeedbackFruits allows us to do: scaling these things up, which people previously have done in a session of 10 or 20 students.”

TONY LEISEN
Instructional Design Manager, Carlson School of Management
The outcomes

What the instructor enjoyed most about FeedbackFruits tools, was that they are **time-saving and easy-to-use**. The consistent, uniform user interface helped “save so much time and so many headaches not having to manage all these different forms and having the TAs to do all this work.”

The instructor, according to Tony, even joked with his TAs that “they can take the next 2 weeks off”, because all the manual management and facilitation is no longer needed.

“**It allows us to do things we know make the class better but are logistical nightmares.**” - Instructor, Carlson School of Management.

Another advantage that FeedbackFruits offered was the ability to scale up the learning activities to larger classes. Now, instructors can implement and continue successful teaching approaches in courses of hundreds of students.

Considering all these benefits, the Carlson team oversees a long-term plan to spread the word about FeedbackFruits, increasing the user base of the tools across faculties.

Faculties' response

**Faculty survey**

To further gauge the impact of FeedbackFruits tools, the ID team conducted surveys with the rest of the faculty who were in the pilot and received positive responses. The instructors demonstrated high satisfaction with Peer Review and Group Member Evaluation, emphasizing several factors that constitute their pleasant experiences:

**Factor 1**

Streamlined organization allows for all activity steps in one place, so that students didn't have to switch among different platforms to complete the peer feedback or group member evaluation.

**Factor 2**

Easy-to-use and consistent user interface, enabling teachers to easily launch learning activities that were previously impossible to facilitate, and students to easily pick up and use the tools.

*This use case is part of our presentation at InstructureCon 2021, watch the full session here.*

“It then became clear that this is gonna be a time-saver. [FeedbackFruits tools] are not only a time-saver, but also allow you to do more of these types of activities and really help the students to have a lot of interactions in the course between each other and become more engaged in the course.

**TONY LEISEN**

Instructional Design Manager