# TECHNOLOGY ENHANCE

The
# 10
## Most Important Coaching Web App Features

*Are We There Yet?*

# D COACHING LYLE LABARDEE

*Tell us what you think.*

While there are a number of well-developed and effective coaching web apps available, such as JournalEngine, Coaches Console, Coaching-Websites, bLife and others, adoption of these web apps on a large scale by coaches remains modest relative to the tens of thousands of professionals currently coaching. In this column I'll be asking, "why?" and proposing "The Ten Most Important Web App Features" that coaches and clients alike are looking for in a coaching app.

When it comes to day-to-day coaching, most coaches, it seems, still prefer to rely on face-to-face or telephone services. In other words, the coaches and clients who would otherwise demand these apps do not see enough value to readily and quickly adopt them. This modest adoption rate suggests that the use of coaching web apps is still at the "Early Adopter" (Moore, 2002) level. In his book Crossing the Chasm, Moore explains that a chasm exists between the technology adoption stages characterized by "Early Adopters", where a growing body of users put innovative ideas into practice, and the "Early Majority" where the technology is readily and quickly adopted by the mainstream market.

So, why are we not seeing a majority of coaches and clients adopting coaching web apps?

Is it the technology, the non-technical nature of the person who is inclined to coach, or the coaching process itself that leaves coaching web applications little more than a curiosity at best for many coaches? While the answer to the question goes beyond the scope of this article, there's something to be said for starting with the question: what are coaches and their clients looking for in a coaching web application, and what kind of functionality might actually enhance the coaching-client interaction? While it may be difficult to identify a precise and accurate answer to this question ahead of time, the veracity of the answer will be made evident by rapid and unsurpassed adoption of the coaching web application that "gets it right".

While being the first to admit that I don't hold the answer to the question concerning what kind of functionality will lead to "Majority Adoption" of a coaching web application, I do hope to stimulate thoughts, feedback and discussion around what
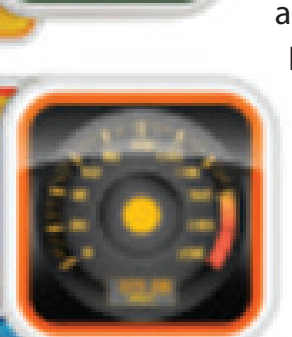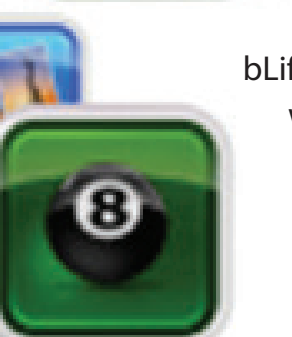
# TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED COACHING

coaches want to see in coaching web applications. All of the coaching applications mentioned at the top of this article include many of the features outlined below and in many respects represent the pioneering efforts of those who conceived and developed those apps.  While all of the apps have various functional strengths none offer a thorough presentation of all of the features I have outlined below. Take a look and let me know what you think. I'll be publishing reader feedback in the next issue (I'll be sure to ask your permission before using your name in print).

## The 10 Most Important Coaching Web App Features

1. **Private and Secure:**  Every aspect of the application conforms to globally-accepted, privacy and security standards as outlined in The Ethical Framework for The Use of Technology in Coaching (Labardee, Nagel & Anthony, 2010).

2. **Affordable:**  Users of the app need to have a high level of confidence in return on investment realized through:

   a.  client interest in using the app (more clients)

   b.  time saved on non-billable administrative tasks, and applied to billable coaching service

   c.  money saved on outside marketing, site administration resources.

4. **Human-Ready:** The user interface design is clear, simple and easy to navigate.  It incorporates the use of white space, large text, large text entry fields, and as few steps as possible. It minimizes the use of large color palettes, and ultimately serves to enhance, not overshadow the coach-client interaction.

5. **Automatically sizes** itself to fit the screen of the device upon which it is being viewed. These devices include, iPad, iPhone, Android, laptop, TV monitor, etc. The coach and client interaction becomes mobile.

6. **Connect-Ready:** The web app supports easy to use, mobile-ready, scrolling coach-client interaction features such as private messaging, journaling and chat.

7. **Group-Ready:** The web app allows the coach to invite users to join groups to participate in group coaching.  Group members can easily engage one another and share documents and media.

8. **Marketing-Ready:** The web app provides coaches with easy-to-use resources for keeping

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their website updated, attractive and working to attract more clients. Coach-managed functionality includes tools to support SEO, surveys, e-news and social media.

9. **Publishing-Ready**: The web app allows coaches to publish own blogs, develop and publish assessments, news, information and courses for selected clients. Clients can easily access information and resources.

10. **Admin-Ready:** The web app allows coaches to save time managing paper records and files, and makes it easy for clients to complete intake information and billing information online. The admin functions support document loading, document interaction (form completion) and printing. It also supports client self-scheduling, payment and case management.

11. **Media-Ready:** The web app supports streaming video and other rich-media files that support and enhance the coach-client interaction.

**Tell us what you think; we look forward to your feedback.**

**Send your feedback to :**

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REFERENCES

Moore, G. (2002). *Crossing The Chasm. (Revised Edition)*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

Labardee, L., Nagel, D.M & Anthony, K. (2010). *Ethical Framework for the Use of Technology in Coaching*. TILT Magazine, Volume 1, Issue 4: 24

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