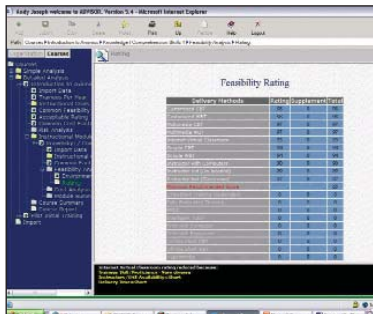


RATINGS

Improving Delivery Option Decisions



ADVISOR Enterprise 5.4

online decision-making tool
BNH Expert Software
800.747.4010
www.bnhadvisor.com
US\$9000 annual fee for enterprise use of three modules and 50 concurrent courses. Single user and division pricing are also available, and each module can be leased or purchased separately.

Includes

- User guide
- Free technical support during business hours

Recommendation

Many training departments issue requests for proposals (RFPs) and analyze the responses as if the RFPs were unconnected. If there is consistency, it is only because the same training staff members are involved. Advisor helps codify your team's experience into a single sharable resource based on well-grounded research and practices. The tool's value comes from turning it into an expert.

Reviewed by
Jeff Merrell

The process of deciding between program delivery options is often based on assumptions. Without a method to make those assumptions explicit, the *Wow!* factor of a slick new product or program might cause budget-affecting decisions to be based on the buzz factor.

Advisor Enterprise aims to resolve this issue. The idea behind the product is that smart, consistent, and objective analysis of training alternatives before a program is developed or purchased will lead to better budget and resource allocation decisions.

When you look more closely at the tool, you see that it can also help continuously improve the decision-making process. Every time users put data into the system, they are making implicit understandings explicit—and recording their experience for the next time they need to make a decision. In this way, Advisor becomes an expert.

How it works

Advisor's feasibility analysis helps an organization determine the most economical and effective option or combination of options from a selection that includes instructor-led training, off-the-shelf or customized e-learning, virtual classroom technology, print resources, video-conferencing, and more.

Advisor analyzes delivery options after users define requirements for content, audience, environment, hardware, and software. Detailed questions are designed to capture assumptions about the requirements. For example, the audience requirement asks users to assess learners' resistance to change, level of motivation, computer and reading skills, ability to travel, and so on.

After a user completes the requirements assessment, delivery options are ranked according to a numerical rating that aggregates the assessment data. Delivery options receiving more than the minimum score are highlighted as recommended. Options that don't meet one or more of the requirements

We liked...

- the ability to analyze training delivery options consistently and objectively
- how Advisor improves as you input more information
- that the tool provides data you might need or calculations.

defined as critical receive a zero score. Users can drill down to see the data that contributed to the aggregate or minimum score and make adjustments if the rating seems inaccurate.

This adjustment capability is one of Advisor's most useful features, as it works off of the user's explicit decision criteria. The more you tweak the information that Advisor uses in its logic, the more the tool codifies the collective decision-making intelligence of your organization.

Analyzing costs

After ranking the delivery options, the tool assesses direct, indirect, and hidden costs of each option. Each cost category includes a list of subitems designed to calculate true costs. In some cases, Advisor provides data that may be useful in completing the calculations (for example, the estimated number of hours required to develop an e-learning course of a specific length), but the user always has the option to override that data with his or her own.

The final element of the Advisor cost analysis is a look at hidden costs associated with implementing new learning technology. Again, Advisor sets up the framework for estimating the cost of new technology implementation and administration and associated change management efforts.

The user can then rate delivery options in

either a “best value” method that gives the highest rating to the option meeting all requirements at the lowest overall cost or a “best dollar per point” method that gives more weight to the options scoring higher on requirements factors.

Pricing and support

Advisor consists of three modules that can be leased or purchased separately or in combination: Select Right Blend of Delivery Options, Align Training With Organizational Goals, and Effectively Manage Training Budgets and Resources. Three licensing options are available: single user, division, or enterprise. The pricing of each varies based on the number of courses managed concurrently.

With a complex product like this, technical support can be critical, especially early in the learning curve. BNH Expert Software includes free technical support Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST, and will respond to 95 percent of all questions within four hours and 100 percent of all questions within 24 hours. Around-the-clock support is available for an additional fee.

Overall value

The U.S. defense industry has used Advisor Enterprise to organize decision-making criteria before making a purchase. The tool has been designed to work in an environment in which decisions may be based on complex criteria and budget scrutiny is intense.

For corporations, Advisor will be an effective tool if the company is willing to put in some effort—for example, to identify hidden costs. The system’s interface will require some time to learn: Although there are shortcuts for conducting an analysis, the tool is much more valuable if you spend some time embedding your own expertise into its models and calculations. It will also take some time to understand the detailed logic of the system.

Even with those considerations, Advisor may be an excellent investment for many organizations. If your company spends time developing detailed RFPs for training programs, you may find that much of the information you use in the RFP process will

flow easily into Advisor. The cost of Advisor licenses could then be recouped in a single improved decision.

BNH offers a trial account as a risk-free way to try out the product. Keep in mind, though, that the real value of the tool is in its long-term use.

➔ <https://www.bnhadvisor.com/home/e.store?action=demotry&cmd=tryit&prodid=ppu&partner=tkm>


Jeff Merrell, author of the Training Media Review report on leading LMSs, has more than 20 years of business experience as a consultant and corporate learning and development manager. His Evanston, Illinois-based consulting practice (www.elrng.com) focuses on helping organizations implement learning strategy; jeffmerrell@elrng.com.

Product evaluations are provided by Training Media Review and do not imply endorsement by T+D or ASTD. For more information, contact TMR at 877.532.1838; www.tmreview.com.



Could be better...

- Because of its complexity, Advisor can require some time to learn.
- Tweaking the tool for your best use may also require a time investment.

 WWW.LEARNINGCIRCUITS.ORG to access TMR's reviews of e-learning materials, including e-courses, authoring software, learning management systems, and more.

ADVISOR Enterprise 5.4 product rating

Production quality 

Ease of use 

Value of purpose 

Value for the money 

Documentation 

Overall rating  **.5**

KEY **poor** **satisfactory** **good** **excellent**
   