



## Live with Glenn Walton: How to Humanize Your Online Environment with Sound Boxes, Screaming Monkeys, and Rubber Chickens

### SPEAKERS

Tierney King, Glenn Walton

#### **Tierney King** 00:01

This is the Faculty Focus Live podcast. I'm your host, Tierney King. And I'm here to bring you inspiration, energy and creative strategies that you can utilize in your everyday teaching. This week's episode is sponsored by the Teaching Professor Conference. This year, join us in person or virtually to pursue your passion for teaching.

Today, we have Glenn Walton with us who is going to share nine and a half ways to humanize your teaching in an online environment. To start, tell us a little about yourself and why you decided to become an instructor.

#### **Glenn Walton** 00:38

Well, I wasn't always a teacher. About 10 years ago, a little over a decade ago, I left my fortune 500 job where I was in advertising sales for over 20 years. And before that, I was in marketing and management. And I also, in the 70s, was a police officer. So I've always dealt with people in a number of different ways. And after I finished the big corporate job, I said, "You know, I have a master's in marketing and management. Why don't I do something with that?" Also because my wife really didn't want me in the house at the time. She says, "Go find something to do, please." And so I started teaching with Purdue University. And of course, in the last five years, that's become totally online. And you can do this anywhere in the world, you can do what we're doing right now anywhere in the world, and make it relevant and exciting. So I started teaching, I found that I absolutely loved it. I had a great passion for it. I enjoyed it tremendously. So that's how I got started in this and somebody gave me a chance and they are still giving me a chance.

#### **Tierney King** 01:47

I know that you do some, you know, odd, quirky things in some of your classes. And one of the things is a rubber chicken. So tell me a little bit more about that, that's in your videos. How did that started?

#### **Glenn Walton** 01:58

Well, obviously, we've got the chicken before the coop right now. But basically, what I do is, I'll bring in some kind of a piece of entertainment because I do sound boxes, little sound machine boxes that you

can buy online for 20 bucks, and it adds to the content where you say, Okay, everybody, did you enjoy that? They all clap (sound of clapping from sound box). I said "okay, okay." So just little things to break it up to make it more humanized, the experience of learning. And when we do that, I use a rubber chicken, I interview the rubber chicken, I call him Rudy the rubber chicken. I interview Rudy. He's my partner and tells people about what to do, what they need to do for the instructions. And he'll squeak you know. I do a video of that. I also keep the videos on a very short basis. I only do like a one to three minute video. If you do more than three minute videos, you're gonna start having people drop off in when they observe things. So make it impactful, you know, make it dynamic. And, oddly enough, it becomes a point of, well, am I really teaching? Or am I entertaining? Ladies and gentlemen, in order for your students to capture what you want, and what you want them to learn, you almost need to do both. And that's why I put together the nine and a half ways to humanize the online teaching experience. Because all of them I used and they're all working beautifully.

**Tierney King 03:36**

So yeah, lead us into those nine and a half ways of what you do in your online environment.

**Glenn Walton 03:42**

So the first way, the first thing to humanize online learning is to make sure that the students enjoy the interaction and the opportunity to participate more. In my online seminar, I will stop every five to 10 minutes and engage them in some kind of a activity, whether it be a poll question, whether it be a question about their opinion on something, and they type it in the chat box. Now I have in my seminars, I have large classes, I teach introduction to management right now. And this is just starting out. So they're getting a good idea of whether they want to stay with this or not. Whether they want to continue with their education, you've got to make it impactful. So what I try to do is make sure that I create an environment where they enjoy coming to that one hour session. And I have students post in the chat box an average of 15 to 20 times in an hour. And if I have a large class, I may have 30 people so i can't i they see me in video and audio. They hear me on audio, they see me in video, but I only allow them in the chat box because if you if you put too much of their videos in in an hour's period of time, you're not able to give them as much information as you you'd want to set them up for success for that unit.

**Glenn Walton 05:03**

PowerPoints are also important. And it gives them something to look at. I do what's called feature slides, feature slides or event slides. For instance, if I'm going to tell a story, to match up with what's going on with this situation, I'll put a slide up with me, it's a picture of me holding a book. And on the top, I'll go it's storytime with Professor Glenn. And I say, "This week, we're going to be doing this, this and this." And so I tell the story. I used to tell stories all the time before I put up an event slide like that. One time they said, "Oh, we love that slide that you put up." I tried it just as an experiment. And they said, "That was the best story." And I told that story in all these other classes before and it was never an event like the one that they loved. At the very end, I will put in a takeaway slide. I want them to tell me what were the top three things? What did you get out of this one? I change it up all the time. But I say, "Your opinion is valuable to me. I need to know if what I've taught you has reached what I wanted to accomplish. And so understand I value your opinion." And they really appreciate that.

**Glenn Walton 06:20**

So the next one is be predictably unpredictable. Say that fast three times. What you want to do is create an element of surprise during the seminar presentation. You need to change up your routine, just as they get comfortable with how you do things. Surprise them with some kind of a different approach, you know, like...(sound effect here)...yeah, surprise them. There you go. So a sound, a story, a question that shows them that you value their participation. See, planning a change in your routine, also, as an instructor will also create a more refreshing environment for you. Because you won't get bored with teaching the same things over and over again in the same framework.

**Glenn Walton** 07:04

Now, number three is be visually appealing, I talked to you about the PowerPoint slides. I may only use 30 slides in an hour's period of time, but 10 of them are event slides. So the slide should be colorful, meet up with anyone that has a disability, making sure you're checking online with that there are features now that you can do that with. And one of the things I did especially during the pandemic, I started last year, I put together a video, five to 10 minute videos for my students who are parents with children at home. And so I created a kid's storytime with Professor Glenn, where I read a book or I teach them how to do an origami fold, anything of that nature. My mom was a kindergarten teacher so I learned a lot of techniques back then. When I found that I brought that in, and I put it in announcements so they could have it and it was available to them to show their children, I found out from my students it was so exciting. They said, "We really appreciate the fact that you're showing our kids something. They will now let me work on my computer a longer period of time because they know Professor Glenn's going to be sending them, once a week, sending them a video just for them that they can work on to." So it's almost like school for them. It was a really interesting idea. I just threw it in there. And I've been using it ever since because I have a lot of adult learners in my courses. So that was kind of an unexpected fun thing to do.

**Glenn Walton** 08:35

Number four, you've got to be trendy. You've got to find up-to-date articles, YouTube places all kinds of things on video that they can go to that mirror exactly what's going on in present day, not just stuff that was done four years ago. Everything is so immediate, changing daily. Make sure you're investigating what's important there. When they don't get something in seminar that I told them, they're going to have to do that week, I'll ask at the very end, I say, "Any confusing things?" And they'll say, "Yeah," and they'll type in the chat box or some they'll say no, everything was fine. Some weeks I get confusion, other weeks I don't. And what I do is I create a mini three-minute explanation video to send out to clear up confusing seminar information or clarification, a follow-up video. No more than three minutes.

**Tierney King** 09:26

You record those specially then based on the feedback?

**Glenn Walton** 09:31

Yeah, absolutely. And it can change every week. Of course, it's going to change every week, but it can change every semester also. So it's a way to stay current with your students. They understand when you're putting that out there. They don't have to watch it or they can watch it. You've given them the option, but you put forth an effort to make sure you're connecting in a human way with their needs and their wants for that situation.

**Glenn Walton 09:58**

And let's see, I'm up to number five right now. Explain your expectations, a lot. I've talked a little bit about this already, but elaborate on your discussions. I do little videos, a one minute video before the discussion. I used to type what I wanted them to do on the discussion. Now I type it, but I also do a video of it at the same time reading it. And it's hard to believe but many people like to watch the video as opposed to just reading the explanation. You just never know. And so I do do both. And it sounds like I'm talking a lot about doing a lot of videos here. But if you're just yourself, and you talk, and you explain things, and they can look at it and go, "Oh, yeah, that's what he meant," because they can see the nonverbal message that you're sending in your face, whether you're serious: Now, look, you really need to work on this point one through four. Okay? Or, you know, like, have fun with this one. Everybody enjoy.

**Tierney King 11:00**

You do so many of these short videos, but do you think that portrays kind of an in-person element a little bit better? Because you know, you're constantly giving feedback and little snippets, you're doing videos and little snippets, rather than just doing you know, an hour long lecture.

**Glenn Walton 11:15**

Believe me, in this day and age? How long before a commercial comes out on the TV? Alright, and believe me, you're in a box. They're watching you in a box. It's screen time with you. But I not only use my own face and voice, but sometimes I'll create other things like I told you, I use the rubber chicken. There are times I use I blew up a yellow balloon. The other day I drew a smiley face on one side with eyes and I reversed it to a frowny face on the other. And I said, "Hey, Mr. Balloon knows that you need to get your stuff in by 11:59 on Tuesday. So he'll be happy, won't you Mr. Balloon?" Mr. Balloon doesn't say anything, but they're like, they're looking at Mr. Balloon, not me. And as opposed to me just getting on video and going, "I need all your your work in by 11:59 on Tuesday afternoon." I mean, make it different. So they'll go, "Oh, that was cool."

**Glenn Walton 12:11**

I had two Birkenstock sandals that were old and worn out and the flaps were coming down. And I put, on the bottom, eyeballs, so they were both talking to each other and saying, "Hi boys and girls." And so I was doing voices and I called them Birken and Stock and Birken and Stock were talking to them about something, and I had a student just email me yesterday because that I put that video up the other day. And they go, "Oh, my goodness..that was, yeah, I'll get my stuff in real quick." And that's all they did. It's just because you change it up, and you've taken the time to make it, okay?

**Glenn Walton 12:54**

And you need to be everywhere in the course, six and seven are be everywhere in the course. Design your class to be more inviting and pleasant. Wherever somebody's going to look to get instruction, make sure you're there with an explanation. You're supposed to give some personal insight and motivation to the student before they begin. So we use, I used YouTube until Purdue global came up with this new video called Kaltura. And so we can do countour videos, it works right in the class. There are a lot of different things I've used Screencastify before in the past. Anything you can do that you can make sure has closed caption for your students. I've had students who are deaf, and they'll have

people in my live seminars typing to them. And I'll make sure that the words are coming up so they can see what I'm talking about. We need to be connecting with everyone in every situation nowadays. So everyone has the ability to see what's going on with the information.

**Glenn Walton 13:52**

You talk about the eighth and the ninth way, and I kind of put those together. It's the course materials and human factors. We've talked about this already. I use, when students are doing a great job in seminar and they've really shined or they all answered, I'll pull out a bowler hat, a black bowler hat with a light bulb that turns on the top. My wife got it for me for Christmas. She says you can use this in the classes, I know you. And so I'll put on the hat and I'll go, "Brilliant! You're all brilliant." And I only pull it out once maybe twice in a class, and if the next unit I haven't pulled it out yet, they'll go, "Where's the hat?" I said, "You have to say something brilliant. You have to be thinking of brilliancy." You know, I have a Mark the management monkey. It's a monkey that I got for Christmas one time and it's it shoots across the room. It's a little monkey and it has a screen. (monkey scream sound effect)

Mark the management monkey gets excited when they do something great too. They're all like, "Oh my gosh, this is crazy." Guess what? It maintains their attention. They don't know what's coming next. And they are thrilled to have an opportunity to just enjoy what's going on. What's scary is I have people say, "I wish the seminar was a lot longer." And you go, okay, I guess I must be doing something, right. So that's important

**Tierney King 15:23**

When you use all these different elements and stuff and your students are kind of waiting for it, do you get more students, you know, raising their hand? Where students are talking and everything because of this, because they kind of want to know what or how you're going to respond to them.

**Glenn Walton 15:39**

It is interesting. From when I first started doing this online, I was trying to get everyone to post at least a couple times in a discussion in your chat box to the point now where the least amount of people that post, I mean, they are constantly interacting. It's the interaction that makes the difference. And as wonderful as it is that we have this brilliance as an instructor and this knowledge and this expertise that we want to transmit and to help transform the student, it's like when you're listening on a TV show, and you look at something and it's boring. How quickly do you change the station? And folks, they will turn a professor or instructor off big time, and just let it play while they're playing on their phone or they're doing something on the side. I have them help me teach the course. They are actually helping me teach the course or teach the seminar because they're participating. And you'll find that some of the students will ask some phenomenal questions, or they'll make some interesting statements about how they feel about a certain situation. And it will lead to greater discussion on that piece. And I'll have them take it over into the discussion for that week.

**Glenn Walton 16:57**

But not everyone, I will say this, not everyone can be like me or should be like me. You have to be your own personality. I put something together and I want people who are listening to this to understand, I'm going to ask, What do you bring to the course you are teaching? No matter what techniques or ideas

you see that others have created in their programs, unless they fit with your type of personality, or your even your style of presentation, they're not going to work for you. So you, the instructor, are truly the most important half of the teaching equation. The new technical online information you discovered just recently in this last year, especially during the pandemic, is only, it's really only half of what's going on. You're in uncharted territory. Whatever you're learning through your learning management systems or what you have as tools, you've got to reach out and look and change what you're doing to make sure that you stay relevant to what's going on in the community now. But you must be able to adapt to it. And so when I come to you, and I tell you, these are some of the things I've learned to do over the last five years, and they work, I want to make sure I share that with others because it makes a difference.

**Tierney King 18:13**

Very cool. These are great tips. I think a lot of instructors don't necessarily think about implementing just little sound effects or, you know, a monkey or a hat in their classes to engage students. So what the small things can do in a classroom online is pretty amazing. And then I think we'll just kind of end on, is there anything, maybe just something that you've done in the past year that really sticks out to you that you want to tell our audience.

**Glenn Walton 18:43**

I continually try to look for new things. Well, for instance, I did something the other day, a multiple choice poll questions, A through E, right? And I also sing, I've sung in barbershop quartets and that type of thing. So I have what's called a pitch pipe. All right, and on the pitch pipe, it has A, B, C, D, E. So I told my students, "All right, everybody, I'm going to cheat a little bit this week, and I'm going to give you an opportunity to hear what the answer is." So the answer was A so I said, "Okay, anybody with perfect pitch, you know the answer, you've got it." And, and so, that was really something that just, I saw it laying around and I picked it up. Look for common things that everybody else knows or doesn't know. Introduce them into your experience, and let them experience that same thing with you as you learn together. I learn every time I teach. And the reason I do that is because I listen and watch what others are saying. And that makes a difference as to how well they feel I value them and how well they value what I'm bringing to them.

**Tierney King 20:07**

Perfect. We appreciate you coming on the Faculty Focus Live podcast and sharing your your tips and tricks with us today. So thank you so much.

**Glenn Walton 20:14**

Yeah, it's been fantastic.