EvaluationLive!®
Resources and Links to Literature

This list is a work in progress. We invite others to suggest additional references and their relevance to the EL! model by emailing Melanie Hwalek at mhwalek@specassociates.org.

Overall Gestalt of EvaluationLive!®

**Concept of Flow** (conceptual catalyst for EvaluationLive!)


RELEVANCE: This TED talk and a plethora of writings about flow by Csikszentmihalyi and others in the positive psychology movement provide a definition for what the EL! model asserts is the ultimate experience of stakeholder engagement with the evaluation experience. “Flow” refers to the personal feeling of total engagement with what one is doing. Csikszentmihalyi asserts that flow happens for the individual when there is the perception of a highly challenging task and simultaneously the perception of having the skills to meet the challenge. EL! asks the question of whether evaluators can create a gestalt of the evaluation experience that increases the probability that people will experience flow during evaluation encounters.

**Context**


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Operationalizing EL!

Importance of Practice


RELEVANCE: Interactive Evaluation Practice (IEP) presents seven principles that evaluators should attend to in order to bring the interpersonal factor of evaluation to life. Principles #2-#6 are related to the evaluator being astute to the political, cultural and positive-interdependence aspects of evaluation practice.

Evaluation Anxiety

RELEVANCE: Evaluation anxiety can be thought of as the extreme opposite of flow; what the EL! model aims to avoid. The authors provide a nice summary of research and professional writing about evaluation anxiety. The article provides an excellent case study of what can go wrong in an evaluation; the case could be diagnosed from the perspective of EL!


RELEVANCE: This article appears to be the first use of the term “extreme evaluation anxiety” or XEA which is now referenced in the evaluation literature. The authors conclude that “more than technical skills are needed to conduct high quality evaluations” (p. 271) and set the stage for EL!
**EL! Evaluator Characteristics**

**Competence:** the evaluator is credible, culturally humble, and knows methodologies, measurement and management.

**General**


RELEVANCE: The competencies are consistent with the overall EL! model, with particular emphasis on competence, content expertise and communication skills.

**Cultural Humility**


**Management**


**Content Expertise:** the evaluator has or acquires sufficient knowledge about the topic or intervention being evaluated to make meaningful interpretations of the findings and to have smart conversations with stakeholders.

**Flexibility:** the evaluator modifies the evaluation design as the need dictates and provides stakeholders with meaningful information at the right time, even if this means accommodating unanticipated deadlines.

**Flexibility**


RELEVANCE: The authors describe the “nudge” as the moment when the developmental evaluator brings data and observation to a team of innovators and decision makers so they can move closer to their goals (p. 46). This is related to the idea of the EL! evaluator bringing the right information to the right people at the right time.
Communication skills: The evaluator is adept at asking good questions, managing conversations, teaching, presenting, listening and writing.


RELEVANCE: The article reports on a study of job seekers, employers and AEA’s job bank and explores competencies reported by evaluators learned during graduate school and those desired by employers. Among the top five skills highly valued by employers were communication skills such as presentation skills, relating to stakeholders, report writing.


RELEVANCE: The authors present case studies of evaluations and present an analysis that discriminates those evaluations where anxiety and resistance were present and those without. One of their suggestions for reducing anxiety is that “Evaluators who serve as conveyors of information, mediators, supporters and advocates are more likely to induce feelings of reliance, interest and trust in the evaluatees. (p. 223),


**RELEVANCE:** The authors found in their research that three indispensable skills of servant leadership are very important in developmental evaluation: “using an appreciative lens, listening deeply and integrating reflection and practice” (p. 46). They also found that in determining what feedback to emphasize, there was “value in focusing on the ideas and actions that carried energy.” (p. 49)

Royse, Thyer, Padgett, 2010 p. 388; Checklist for Writing and Assessing Evaluation Reports.


**RELEVANCE:** The book contains a myriad of methods for improving the communication in reporting evaluation findings.

**A learner attitude:** the evaluator is as much a learner as s/he expects clients to be, learning about both the program being evaluated and how to improve his/her own evaluation skills.


**RELEVANCE:** Boundary spanning evaluation practices and facilitation are foundational to our work and involve regularly “checking in” regarding whose voices are being heard and assiduously tracking, monitoring and coaching ourselves. Evaluations must practice “360 degree listening with (our) whole being” and use...
“double-sided mirrors” and clear-eyed assessments of our readiness and preparedness (page 9).

**EL! Clients**

**Embraces learning:** the client (organization) is interested in learning about its work, values taking time to pause and reflect, and truly appreciates less than perfect data and program results.


**Drives questioning:** the stakeholders co-create the evaluation questions with the evaluator and constantly want to ask more questions.


**Champions the evaluation:** someone among the stakeholders, usually the person who commissions the evaluation, is a champion for the evaluation. The champion understands the value of evaluation, can anticipate what information would be useful, can put the right information in front of the right people at the right time, and can motivate the organization to pause and reflect on its work.

RELEVANCE: The authors present a model for managing evaluations that lifts up the role of evaluation facilitator and working with advisory groups of intended users as a step to take prior to determining the evaluation design. They note as “crucial” the placement of “a person or group in charge of coordinating the multiple activities necessary to create demand for evaluation as a regular and routine part of an organization’s work.” (p. 107)

**Shared Responsibility:** the evaluator makes every effort to meet the needs of the stakeholders, while the client/champion recognizes that evaluation takes time and resources and works with the evaluator to make certain that the demands of the evaluation do not go beyond the resources available.

**Trust:** both the evaluator and the client/champion truly believe that they are in each other’s corner, that they can reveal their struggles without repercussion, and that nothing about the evaluation findings will “leak” or be revealed without the client’s knowledge and approval.

**Equality:** the champion, stakeholders and evaluator are all in the relationship to learn.

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RELEVANCE: Interactive Evaluation Practice Principle #1 states that the evaluator should “get personal.” This includes “Find(ing) people who care about the evaluation and its results, especially primary intended users.” (p. 61)


**EL! Relationship**


RELEVANCE: Interactive Evaluation Practice Principle #7 states that the evaluator should “take time.” This includes “Think(ing) of IEP as a journey that involves shared decision making and constructive conflict resolution.” (p. 61)


RELEVANCE: Sustainable trust and relationships are necessary for authentic engagement.


RELEVANCE: Interactive Evaluation Practice Principle #7 states that the evaluator should “take time” and that “interpersonal processes take time; be ready to devote time to what matters for successful IEP.” (p. 61)

They are all experts in their own way and recognize/respect this in each other.

RELEVANCE: The authors talk about creating common space where “positional authority was downplayed and informal language was used by all.” (p. 51)