**How to Create Effective Long-Term Learning Experiences**

**Is your training working? Here are some “flags” that might indicate your training needs to be reviewed:**

* Your training is well-received and fun, but nobody remembers it a week later
* Your training is lengthy and detailed with a comprehensive manual included (but nobody is using the information)
* Your training is a “one time” intervention – a webcast or class with no pre-work or follow-up
* No hands-on exercises
* No knowledge tests
* No way to measure success or know if knowledge is used or retained
* No group discussions or engagement on the part of participants
* No follow-up

**Take note of these important considerations when developing training:**

Not every training requires extensive planning, but you should consider each training and decide which of the concepts below is relevant. It is important to know that people do not retain information well, and rarely learn well in a simple seminar format.

Some training is simple and needs nothing other than a quick communication. If that is all that is necessary, just keep it simple and go for it (for example, maybe you just need people to enter a new word or two in a drop-down menu in your customer service system.) Still, as you will read below, follow-up, repetition and understanding checks NEVER hurt.

**INTRODUCE NEW CONCEPTS BEFORE THE TRAINING:**

* Completely new information – particularly if it is at all complex - is overwhelming. Always send out pre-course information if you are dealing with a new concept. (A five-minute video with a pre-quiz afterwards, maybe.)

**GET PEOPLE COMFORTABLE:**

* People who aren’t acquainted will benefit from an ice breaker to make them feel more comfortable with the others in the room.
* Many people find trainings upsetting as though they are being “graded” – Find ways to take the pressure off. Don’t act like the information is easy or assume you can get through information quickly. Everyone is at a different level.
* Don’t forget to set ground rules. You should communicate these to the attendees – When can they take a break? What about lunch? Is there a question period?

**SHORT IS BETTER THAN LONG AND SIMPLE IS BETTER THAN COMPLEX:**

* People do not retain information that they do not use, and they generally only retain a small bit of the information you provide anyway. You need to provide learning in incremental bites with a few big pieces of information in each training that they will retain.
* Keep your tools simple. There is a reason “death by PowerPoint” is a standard phrase. You don’t need to build a procedures manual – Cut any words and steps that aren’t vital to your training.

**KNOWLEDGE CHECKS & HELP YOU MAKE SURE PEOPLE “GET IT” AND MEASURE RESULTS**

* Conduct quizzes intermittently and make sure there are discussions afterwards to help if people are confused.
* You can’t know if you’re training is successful if you don’t measure knowledge before AND after training to see if the participants made progress.
* Measuring retention of the information at a later date is important as well.

**REPEAT THE INFORMATION IN DIFFERENT FORMATS**

* The more a concept is repeated, the more a participant is liable to recall it in the future. So repeat concepts in different ways. In addition to this, in general people have different learning styles and get bored sitting still and watching a PowerPoint so vary your style of training (seminar, hands-on, scenarios, videos, group discussions, collaborative projects, books, manuals, cheat sheets) and know which of these are best applied to each of your audiences.
* People generally learn more when the practice or act out the task or behavior required. Build in exercises and practice time.
* Many people benefit from small team discussions and feel disengaged in large “seminar” settings.

**FOLLOW UP AND REINFORCE KNOWLDGE**

* Don’t let the information get forgotten. Email a follow-up quiz. Do a week out check in. Assign exercises or tasks they can do immediately to practice the behavior. Use a short time at the beginning of ongoing meetings to reiterate the concepts and share podcasts, etc.

**ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING**

* Ice breakers, activities and quizzes should all be geared to encourage critical thinking. Critical thinking is a skill that many executives feel is key to successful career growth, yet there are few efforts to support those who are not able to think in a logical way. Remember to always integrate activities that require logic and decision making in your programs to help learners figure things out on their own when necessary.

**In summary:**

Imagine that you are learning a difficult and complicated new concept that is going to interact with several other job requirements. You are utterly confused and stressed, but your company is offering training. This is what happens next:

* Before the training you receive an email asking you to take a test on your current knowledge (not much) and to watch a 5-minute video introducing you to three important things you need to know about this new concept. (After watching, you feel you know a little more than you did.)
* When you arrive at the training, your instructor does an ice breaker. The ice breaker is designed to relax you and remind you that you can learn new things.
* The instructor reviews the course of events – you are happy to hear there will be a question session at the end and that you can email the instructor afterwards with additional questions. You also find out that you will be receiving more printed information at the end of the session. (That is probably a good thing since you would have read it instead of paying attention to the training.)
* You go over the first concept and it feels good to know that you remember it from the short video. On the PowerPoint slide, there are only two bullet points, so you don’t have to worry about trying to read and listen at the same time, but you do take a few notes on the notepad provide to you. It helps you remember things to write them down.
* Afterwards, you break into small groups and are asked to decide how to apply this concept to a traditional situation you face each day in your job. Your group discusses and several people have good questions and insights.
* The larger group re-convenes, and you all learn from each other. One group goes up front and acts out the scenario that they worked on; this helps you visualize how you might handle it.
* You have a two question “understanding” quiz and the instructor explains why some people got one of the questions wrong. This is good, because you were confused on that area as well.
* This same training practice applies to the other 2 concepts that you learned in the brief video. (Maybe these are even done on another day, after you’ve had time to absorb the first concept.)
* Finally, you are given a 5-point tip sheet to take back to your workplace and some “assignments/after-work”. During the week, you do the brief afterwork and email it, as instructed, to your manager.
* A week later, you get another test in your email which reminds you of a few things you may have forgotten. (This also lets the instructors know that you still remember the concepts.)
* In the next team meeting, the first part of the meeting is spent on talking about concepts learned and the results of the after-work, and you talk about any difficulties people are having applying the new concept in their job.

While this may seem like a lot of steps, you will find that ensuring you plan for long-term retention feels great. You will feel you’re your staff actually is able to apply the concepts introduced going forward, and you will know that your actions worked because you will have good measures in place to do so.

Contact our Learning team if you would like help on facilitation a class or training session: (866) 440-0302 or view our training library for courses to supplement your plan: <https://letscatapult.org/learning-events/classes-events/>

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