Putting the Learner First

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Course Objectives

How does an instructor create the greatest learning value with the time available? The answer is to treat adult learners as adults and structure our training to those needs. In this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify and define the seven conditions of Adult Learning.
- Describe the four different modes of learning.
- Define and describe the steps of the Total Learning Model (TLM).
- Practice facilitation techniques appropriate to each step of the TLM.
- Practice developing concrete experiences.
- Plan how to apply the TLM to current lesson plans.
- Plan how to apply the TLM to new lesson plans.
- Decide whether the appropriate learning method for specific topics is face-to-face or online.
Think About This . . .

- Twenty-five students, in five neat rows of five desks each, all facing forward. Teacher at the front, reading, posing questions, writing on the board. Students respond one by one directly to the teacher. Students complete a task written on the board by said teacher.

1. Is learning taking place in this classroom? How do you know?
2. Is the activity conducive to the most effective and satisfying learning possible? Why or why not?
3. What helps you learn?
4. What gets in the way of your learning?
5. How do you like to be treated when asked to learn something?
The Seven Conditions of Adult Learning

1. Adults recognize the need to learn.
2. Adults are concerned with physical comfort, mutual respect, helpfulness, freedom of expression and acceptance of differences.
3. Adults want the goals of the training to mirror or support their own goals.
4. Adults feel responsible for and committed to the training.
5. Adults participate actively in the learning process.
6. Adults want to discuss and apply their experience during the training.
7. Adults want to feel that they are moving toward their goals.

- How are these learning conditions different from the learning conditions we found in our childhood classrooms?
- Do we sometimes continue to create conditions in our training sessions that are more appropriate to childhood learning?
Adult Learning Styles

There are four different modes of learning: experiencing, reflecting, analyzing, and experimenting.

- An adult’s preferred learning style is made up of two of these modes -- where the participant’s learning comes easily and most naturally. Most effective learning occurs when the participant is forced to learn from every learning mode.

- In **experiencing** mode, participants learn from feeling rather than thinking. Participants address the training from a sense of personal involvement. This mode employs the affective domain - it touches the senses.

- During **reflecting**, participants learn by observing rather than by acting. They use impartial evaluation to see implications, make connections, and look for meaning.

- When **analyzing**, participants take on a quantitative perspective and develop and act on intellectual understanding – also known as the cognitive domain.

- **Experimenting** is more than learning by doing. These participants will key in on the practical application of the concept, rather than the theory.

As instructors/facilitators, our goal should be to develop learning plans that continuously address each learning mode.
What We Normally Do

When instructors are presented with a performance objective, we tend to be content focused.

We ask ourselves, “How much of this knowledge can I push into their heads in the time I have been given?”

This can lead us to the “Everything and the kitchen sink” brand of training. We are so focused on “getting out the information,” that we sometimes neglect to focus on creating the environment that will enable the participant to effectively learn and retain that learning.

- As instructors, to which method does content-focused learning objectives usually lead us?
- What are the pitfalls or obstacles to learning of this method?
How Do I Know I Am Lecturing?

If I am not sure if I lecture, I should ask myself or be aware of the following conditions:

- As a percent of the classroom time, how much do I speak?
- Is the room silent as I speak?
- Am I the expert? When participants ask me a question, do I automatically answer?
- Are people working on something else, answering phone calls, reading, taking personal breaks or acting uninterested?
- Is a long video another kind of lecture?
- Are many online tutorials just a “lecture” you read?
What Do I Want Them to Learn?

- Learning objectives must be meaningful to be useful. Deciding what it is that the participant must learn to have made the training experience worthwhile is crucial.

- Knowing what the objectives are from the outset empowers the participants. They know what they are supposed to learn and what you expect from them.

- Developing meaningful objectives enables the instructor to use time effectively. An instructor has to decide what can be taught given the time, resources, and the target audience, and has to make the determination of what should be taught!

- Objectives should be related to performance rather than simply awareness. If our only objective for a session is that we want a group to “understand who to contact in case of a bomb threat,” there are probably more cost effective and efficient ways to present the information.

- Objectives should be written from the participant’s point of view, not from ours! It is not about “what do I want to cover” but “what should the learner be able to understand, value or do with the information” after the class is over.

- Objectives are also a selling tool. When you base your objectives on the needs uncovered in meetings with the targeted audience’s leadership, you can tell those managers exactly what they can expect the training will do for the employers.
Objectives fall into three categories: attitudes, skills, and knowledge.

Attitude objectives are appropriate when you want to change people’s attitudes or increase their awareness of or sensitivity to certain issues or ideas.

Skill objectives deal with behavior. They are easy to identify and determine if they have been met.

Knowledge objectives have to do with content and relate to the ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge, to comprehend information, and to analyze concepts.

What kinds of training classes do you do currently that have learning objectives that are primarily attitude development?

What kinds of training classes do you do currently that have learning objectives that are primarily skill development?

What kinds of training classes do we do currently that have learning objectives that are primarily knowledge development?
Essential Elements of Objectives

- Must be specific and measurable
- Must be results oriented
- Must be focused on the important parts of the job
- Must be written in terms of performance
- Must be specific about what participants will be able to do
- Must describe behavior or performance
Practice Writing Objectives

- Consider what topics you are currently instructing. With a learning partner, ask:
  - What objectives do I have now?
  - Are my objectives related to what I want to teach or to what they need to learn?
  - Have I really thought about what the student needs to learn from my instruction?
  - Do some or all of my objectives start with “learn?”
  - What is the difficulty with writing objectives that focus on “learn?”
  - When I state an objective, do I make sure my discussion during the seminar focuses on that information?
  - If I give a quiz or evaluate participants at the end of the instruction, do I link this evaluation to the objectives I have listed?
How Do You Organize The Learning?

- You want participants to remember the content, put this knowledge into use and heighten awareness of the topic’s importance.

- By using the Total Learning Model, the participants take charge of the experience and you become the facilitator and resource.

- Sometimes, we are anxious that our expertise is validated by the participants. We want them to ask us questions so that we can give them the answers. This model encourages self-discovery on the part of participant and creates an enthusiastic, consistently vibrant classroom session.

Does your instruction seem organized? Do you frequently give different classes different information? When you have to put together a new class, does it feel like you are starting from scratch?
The Experiential Learning Model

- Concrete experience.
- Publish and Process
- Generalize New Information
- Develop New Courses of Action
- Evaluate Learning
The Total Learning Model

- This learning model takes the students through a cycle of learning that deliberately visits each of the learning modes. In this way, instruction is designed to both touch the students’ natural learning preferences and to force them to consider the subject from different learning modes.

- The first step is the **concrete experience**. When participants are presented with new information, their first exposure should come in the form of a concrete experience. At first glance, the concrete experience resembles an ice breaker or other “training game” with which we are familiar. However, the concrete experience must be tied into the learning objectives and if it is highly analogous to the topic, that would be ideal. Moreover, the concrete experience should be designed so that it engages all the participants on some emotional level.

- The second step is **publish and process**. The facilitator guides the group with leading questions regarding the concrete experience. These questions would include: “What happened? What did you see? How did you feel?” The questions should move from a debrief of the concrete experience to a relating to the topic under study, such as: “How is this like what has happened to you on your job? What have you learned?”
The Total Learning Model

- The next step is for the facilitator to **generalize new information**. This is the most traditional, most lecture-prone part of the instruction. The instructor tells the group what it doesn’t know. However, if the publish and process step was conducted effectively, this step can be very efficient. The instructor should only fill in the gaps—not repeat what has already been aired.

- Once the group has attained a base level of competence, the group and individuals should think about and discuss how to apply this new knowledge and insight. This is considered the **develop new courses of action step**. Participants have to go from a theoretical to a practical view. This should be a challenging part of the training and one in which the facilitator should be available to stimulate discussion and expand learning. Too often, traditional instruction leaves this issue completely in the hands of the participant— the learner will figure out how to put it to use somehow, someday.

- Finally, during the **evaluate learning** step, the participant demonstrates the new knowledge or skill. A demonstration could mean a practical exercise that is an interactive application of the learning objective that requires the participant to meet the learning objective standard.
The Concrete Experience

The concrete experience step is not an icebreaker or a game although that is what it might resemble. The purpose of this step is to touch the experiencing mode of learning – or the emotional side.

When most instructors introduce a game or activity, they do so in order to “wake people up” or get them involved in the learning again. Developing a concrete experience that is engaging on the emotional level and strongly tied to the learning objectives keeps students engaged and learning through the session. There may be nothing more disheartening than hearing that the only thing that was remembered about a class was the card trick you showed as an icebreaker!

How do you develop concrete experiences?

- The same resources you have always used for your games, icebreakers, and energizers can give you lots of ideas. The key is the learning objectives. Ask yourself, “How does this activity relate to the topic? How can it enable me to guide the participants to the outcomes I have identified?”

- Designing great concrete experiences takes time and practice. Getting help from others in the creation process is a good idea.

- Concrete experiences can also be developed for online classes. Any case study, role play or video clip that elicits an emotional reaction and can be tied to the objectives may be appropriate.
Sample Concrete Experience

- Seminar: Coaching
- Learning Objectives:
  - Understand importance of sharing vital information with team
  - Describe when team should be self managing.
  - Define issues that may hinder a manager from effective coaching.

- Concrete Experience:
  - Break class into small groups. Designate one member of each small group to act as the leader. Hand leaders a “project box” with parts that must be assembled by the group. Also hand each leader an envelope labeled “manager’s report.” Team members should turn away from the table and place blindfolds provided around their eyes. The leader will instruct the team members to turn around and give them the project box and coach them through assembly of the parts while everyone is still blindfolded. At the same time, the leader must open the manager’s envelope and complete the items on the report. The instructor will call time and the activity ends. All groups and individuals should report what happened.
  - How did this concrete experience relate to the learning objectives?
  - What feelings might the participants (both team members and group leaders) have uncovered during this activity?
  - Could what happened during this activity “feel” realistic?
  - What might they discover about coaching or leadership from this activity?
Publish and Process

During this step, the instructor really gets to exercise facilitation skills.

As the concrete experience ends, the instructor begins asking open ended questions.

- “What happened?”
- “How did you feel?”
- “What did you think?”

The facilitator’s job here is to guide the group to self discovery of the concepts. The facilitator should direct the group toward the learning objectives through open ended questions and build on student insights. The facilitator should also be encouraging the participants to make connections to the objectives themselves and to build on each other’s insights.

- In your small group, write down a series of open-ended questions that will help you guide your students toward discovery of the information.
**Generalize New Information**

- In this part, you are the “expert” and you are giving the participants information they do not have.

- If your concrete experience was well constructed and you encouraged discussion and discovery during the publish and process time, this portion can be significantly shorter. If points have already been well-discussed, don’t belabor the point in your presentation.

- Practice including the students in the learning. We want to get the learners out of the habit of being passive receivers of information.

- When you introduce a slide, you may ask, “What do you know about this topic?” If the class is already fairly well-informed on the point, you can fill in the gaps.

- When a student asks a direct question of you regarding content, try asking the group “What do you think is the answer?” This returning of the question to the group can uncover what the group understands and what the group misunderstands.
Develop New Courses of Action

- When a group or individual has achieved a basic understanding of a topic, your seminar is an excellent place for them to begin reflection and discussion of how to apply this new knowledge back on the job.

- This is a creative period, and your job is to guide them with questions to ways of putting this knowledge into practice later. This stage of the learning cycle should concentrate on leading the participants through some practice of new skills.

- This portion of the cycle lends itself very well to group work in which members of small groups can hear each other’s ideas and aid each other in thinking of ways to use the knowledge. Your job while groups are working is to stay out of the process, watch the clock, and maintain a comfortable learning atmosphere.

- When participants present their ideas (report out) to the larger group, you may choose to help everyone build on the ideas presented. If you see something that is “wrong,” draw attention to the item subtly and ask the group for an opinion.

*What kinds of practical exercise can you introduce into your seminar? Can individuals role play a coaching session or interviewing? Can they build a check list for opening procedures for a food service site? Use your creativity and the ideas of the others in your group to brainstorm some ideas.*
Evaluate Learning

- During this final step, students check the knowledge they have gained in your seminar into some sort of practical exercise.

- The evaluation can be a group demonstration of understanding, it can be an individual evaluation (for instance actually filling out a blank job requisition form correctly) or a simple quiz.

- Facilitators always provide feedback to the evaluation and offer assistance if areas are still imperfectly understood.

What methods of evaluation are using in your classes now?

Do your methods simply check knowledge? Can you improve the evaluation so that the student has to actually practice or demonstrate the she understands
Total Learning Model
Learning Styles

Concrete experience (Sensing/Feeling)

1. Create a concrete experience.
2. Reflect on experience, analyse it.
3. Integrate experience and reflections into concepts.
4. Examine and develop concepts.
5. Work on defined concepts and givens.
6. Practice with givens and add something of oneself.
7. Analyse application, judge results of experimentation for relevance & usefulness.
8. Apply learning by doing it and share with others.

Reflective observation (Watching)

Reflectors
imaginative learners
why?

Theorists
analytic learners
what?

Abstract conceptualisation (Thinking)

Pragmatists
common sense learners
how?

Activists
dynamic learners
what if?

Active experimentation (Doing)
Who Can Be A Good Facilitator?

- Can anyone learn to be a good facilitator?

- Do you have to have a background in education in order to use this learning model?

- Can you take your current instruction and make it more learner centered by applying the model you used today?