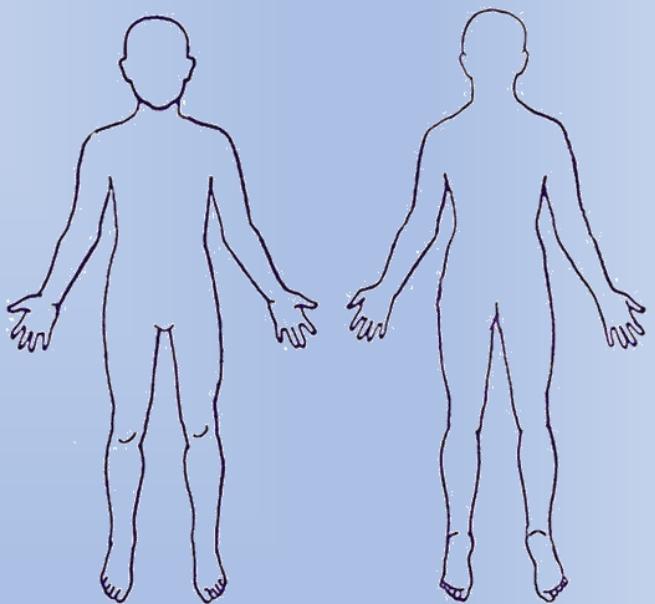




A blueprint for the perfect trainer



A summary of facts, opinions and research designed to be used as an aid for existing and potential trainers to be effective facilitators of adult learning.

September 2018

MIE stands for Motivate, Inspire, Educate.

This represents the philosophy of MIETraining, its creator and author of this guide, David Cartlidge.

David has combined over 15-year's experience of delivering a wide variety of subjects, including Lifeguarding, First Aid, Fire Safety, Manual Handling, Health and Safety, Physical Intervention and even handcuffing, with his studies in Learning and Development to create this essential guide for anyone wishing to deliver face-to-face or classroom style training.

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What are you?

A teacher?

A lecturer?

An instructor?

An educator?

A coach?

A facilitator of learning?



Whilst these titles do have their own definitions and distinctive meanings, there is no doubt a lot of overlap. This guide has been written to serve the interests of anyone who desires to present and pass on knowledge and skills to others in a face-to-face or classroom style format. What you choose to call yourself when doing this is largely irrelevant. Personally, I prefer 'Dave'.

We will use a variety of these names throughout the guide, but that should not be seen as an endorsement of any or a rejection of others, rather a simple reflection of the context or the need to address the subject of the sentence.

Teach;

'Impart knowledge or to instruct (someone) as to how to do something.'

Oxford English Dictionary

Trainer;

'a person who teaches skills to people or animals and prepares them for a job, activity, or sport.'

Cambridge Dictionary

The Basics

I feel it's important to at least mention a few things that are almost too obvious to need mentioning, but for that reason, they can be easily overlooked, so we'll mention them.

Getting the simple things right is as important, if not more so, than the fancy, fluffy things. When planning and delivering any learning activity, the following should be considered vital aspects that must be in place;

Lesson Plan

What are the objectives?
What will you deliver?
Where and when?
How long will it take?
What rules need to be adhered to (Class size, prerequisites, assessment etc.)
Every lesson needs a plan!

Venue

A great trainer can overcome many challenges that a poor venue may present but turning a phone box into a tardis will always be impossible.
Be clear on what constitutes a suitable venue, do your research and communicate fully with all parties involved to avoid surprises on the day.

Equipment

Some equipment will enhance your training, some will be essential to its delivery. If it's essential, plan for the worst-case scenario and don't rely on others. If you NEED a good projector, always bring your own, regardless of what facilities the venue has. Also have a selection of cables and connectors, speakers and a back-up plan in case your projector doesn't work.

Resources

Manuals, registers, handouts, assessment forms, feedback forms etc.
Always have way more than you need, plus electronic copies, in case you need to ask someone to print some more.
Prepare well in advance, don't print everything off the night before and find you've run out of ink or paper!

Fluffy things

There are often lots of extra bits that trainers like to provide, to help them standout from other providers, to add value or just to add comfort to the learning experience.

This might include props, branded pens, note paper or other 'freebies', biscuits/sweets, prizes and other non-essential, optional extras. If these are important to you, then make them part of your pre-course checklist.

You!

How essential are you to the course/session? What if you're ill or have an accident on route to the venue? If you need to cancel, who will you contact? Make sure that you plan your journey well, allowing plenty of time for setting up and unexpected delays and have access to all of the potential contact details you might need.
A well-stocked medicine cabinet is also advisable.

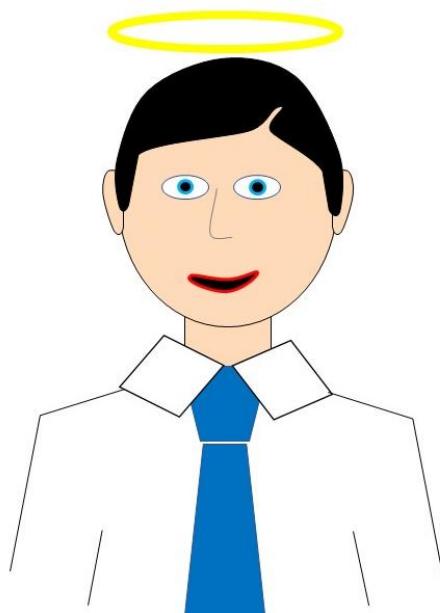
The other ‘basic’ that I want to mention is **professionalism**.

Again, this should be too obvious to need mentioning, but it is something that far too many trainers seem to lack, forget, or have an interesting take on its definition.

The way in which you conduct yourself, how you speak to and deal with your learners and even how you present yourself will rarely lead to positive feedback but can easily lead to negative comments. Your job is to facilitate learning, not to be a distraction or hindrance to it.

As an absolute minimum, no questions asked, do I really even need to mention this, talk about obvious, every trainer must be;

- ✓ Organised and prepared
- ✓ Clean and well presented – what this means exactly depends on what you are teaching, where and who to
- ✓ Welcoming and approachable
- ✓ Polite and courteous
- ✓ Fair, reasonable and consistent – especially important when acting as an assessor as well as a trainer
- ✓ Prepared to enforce rules and address inappropriate behaviour
- ✓ A positive representative for the industry



Andragogy

Andragogy is the science and art of helping adults to learn. Pedagogy refers to the science and art of helping children to learn and is quite different. This guide is primarily aimed at work related learning and is therefore focused on adults, so it is important to understand how adults view and approach learning.

Malcolm Knowles, often referred to as the ‘Father of Andragogy’, proposed five principles of adult learners;

1. **Self-concept** – Adults are self-directing and capable of making their own decisions
2. **Foundation** – they bring experience of prior learning, which affects new learning
3. **Readiness** – they are most interested in learning that has immediate relevance to their work or personal life
4. **Orientation** – they are most interested in learning that helps them to perform tasks or solve problems
5. **Motivation** – intrinsic (internal) motivators are likely to be more important than extrinsic (external) motivators

One of the worst things that a trainer can do is treat adults like children, but a lot of workplace learning does exactly that.

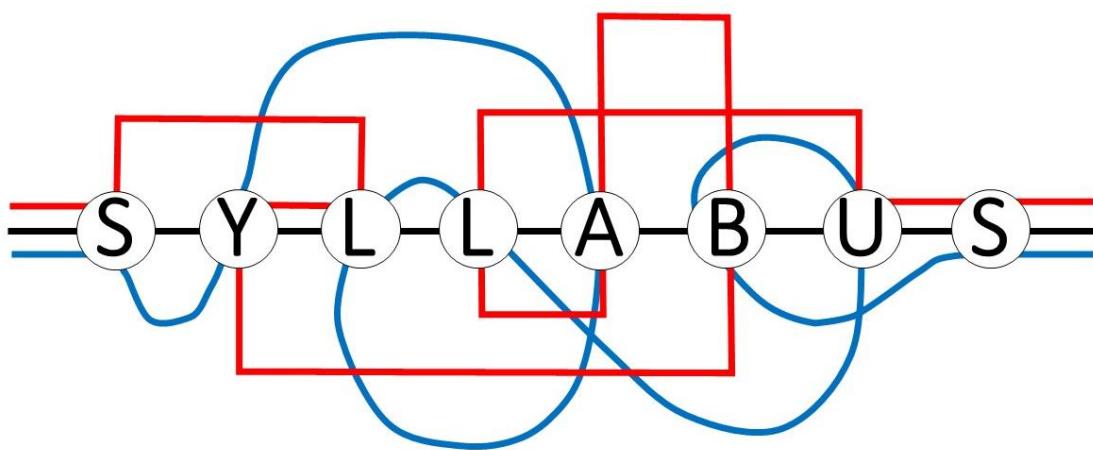
How a trainer can use this information is by ensuring that there is a clearly communicated purpose for the learning, allowing for some freedom of choice for the learner, build on their past experiences, connect to their work or personal life and focus on solving problems, rather than just remembering information.

‘The learner should be actively involved in the learning process’
– Malcolm Knowles

When delivering to a mixed group of learners, with limited prior knowledge of them and their backgrounds, this can be difficult. Failing to address these issues though will likely lead to disengagement and a less enjoyable and less effective learning experience.

A great trainer should also be able to adapt to suit the particular group of learners in front of them on any given day. Some learners will be new to the

subject and will require a more introductory approach, with lots of reinforcement and checks that they are understanding the information. Other learners will already be very knowledgeable and experienced in the subject being taught, possibly there to renew or refresh a qualification. These learners will often arrive expecting to be bored and learn nothing new. A great trainer can change those expectations by demonstrating their depth of knowledge, delivering the same syllabus but in a different way, using new examples and exercises and going beyond the basic requirements to include relevant and related information, building on their existing knowledge.



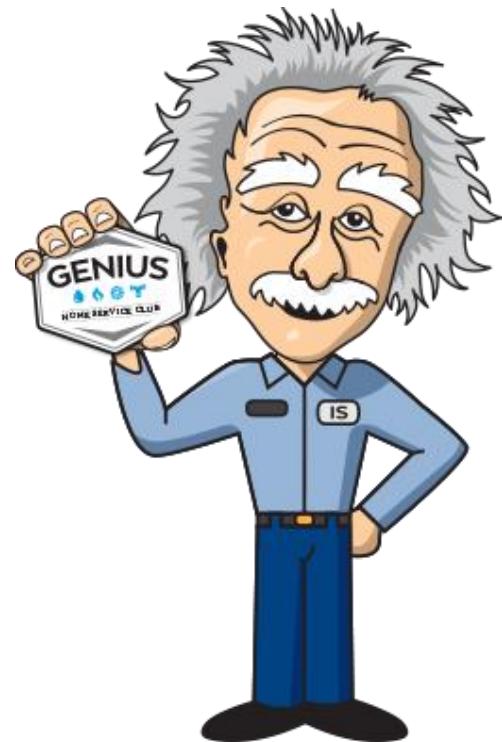
When you have a very mixed group of learners, this can be challenging. As well as trying to relate the same core material to a variety of work environments, attempting to provide it in both a simple and complex manner can lead to confusion.

One option is to use the more experienced learners as teaching assistants. When setting activities or practical work, pair them with their less experienced counterparts to support them and share their knowledge.

Knowledge

There is an assumption amongst the average member of society that someone who teaches a subject must possess an extraordinary degree of knowledge and experience of that subject. Shattering that elusion serves to benefit nobody!

In fact, maintaining that elusion benefits the teacher a great deal. But what is the reality, how much should you know before you profess to educate others?



All trainers have to start somewhere and it is often frighteningly easy to acquire the basic pre-requisites to teach most practical or low-level qualifications (RQF Level 1-3). Conveniently, there is a multitude of even *more* highly knowledgeable and experienced individuals (NB. Read the first paragraph again!) who offer ‘train the trainer’ type courses that will *absolutely* prepare you to go out into the world and confidently deliver amazing versions of the particular subject matter immediately following the few short hours or days you spend with them.

What’s that? During the first course/ session that you delivered you felt like you’d ran a marathon in a Teletubby outfit, your voice kept reverting to a bad Joe Pasquale impression and you struggled to remember your own name? I can’t think why?

There’s clearly a lot more to being a good trainer than just knowledge, but it is still an important requirement of the role.

So, back to the question, how much should you know?

It would be easy to simply say; ‘as much as possible’, which is of course true, but not particularly helpful.

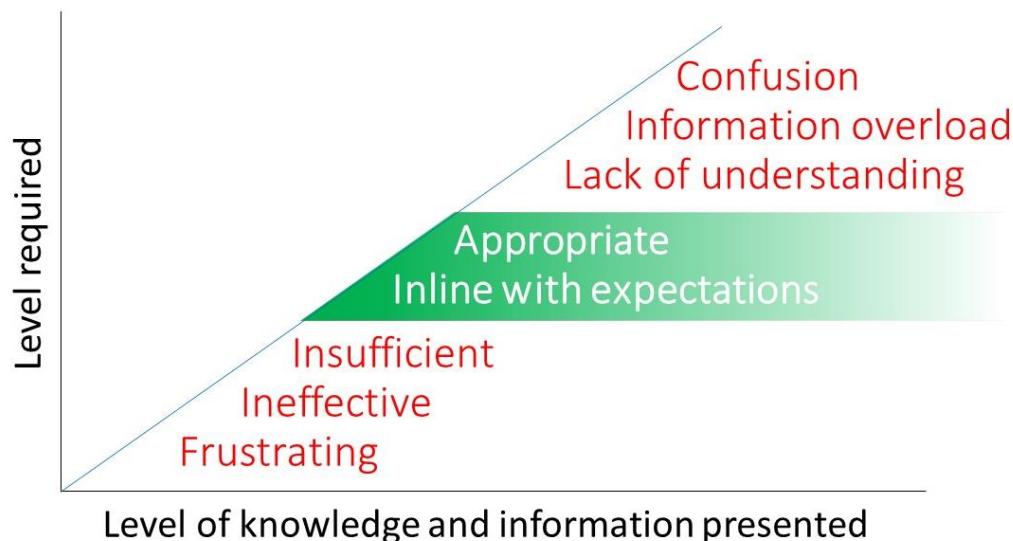
My approach has always been to know twice as much as I need to know to deliver the subject and then to keep topping up. Every course is an opportunity

for me to learn as well as teach. I have a mental library of stories and examples that learners have recited and that I call upon frequently to enhance my own experiences and to better illustrate the topic we're discussing.

Your first course will never be as good as your one hundredth course, but with some honest critical reflection and good old fashioned hard work, your second course should be better than your first and your one hundred and first better than your one hundredth.

It is not all about how much you know either. Your focus should be on your learners and how much *they* need to know. Any session needs to be pitched at the right level and the information delivered in a way that your learners will understand. There is a real skill in being able to take large amounts of information and present it in a way that someone completely new to the subject will understand.

Courses at RQF Levels 1, 2 and even 3, are relatively basic and delegates will often have limited knowledge and experience. It is vital that trainers stick to the syllabus and deliver the content that has been advertised and approved, regardless of their personal level of knowledge.



Learners will rarely be impressed with the nonsensical blurb falling out of your mouth and flying over their heads. What they will really appreciate and benefit from, is you enabling them to understand something that they previously found baffling.

'If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough' – Albert Einstein

How ever much you know, there will always be a question that arises beyond the scope of your knowledge and experience. Thankfully though, most of us have a means to verify, or debunk, such ideas that we carry around in our pockets and can refer to during the next break (Smart phone).

Just be careful to choose your sources of reference carefully. If you haven't realised already, the internet is full of fake news and differing opinions, which is often the source of some of the stranger questions you may get asked.

It is also often beneficial to do some further investigation when you have the time and examine the origins of the question and whether there are any seeds of truth to some of the more bizarre suggestions. You'd be surprised how often there is.

Another good approach, especially when you first start delivering a subject, is to repeatedly identify a weakness in your knowledge and focus on turning it into a strength.

'There's no such thing as a stupid question – and we all like a lauah!' - Me

Once you've built up your knowledge and you're feeling confident, why not turn what can be an uncomfortable moment into a challenge. Announce at the start of the session that questions are encouraged, have small prizes lined up and they will be awarded to anyone who asks a relevant or interesting question, especially one that you've not been asked before. Turn that embarrassed learner into a proud winner!

Alternatively, you could issue post-it notes at the start of the course and ask people to write down one question they would like answered during the course. These are anonymous, so no embarrassment and can be put up for you to refer to. Some you will naturally cover in your lesson plan, others you may be able to add in at a relevant point and some you may need to directly pick out and answer.

Why is the sky blue?

What is time?

Teaching style

What makes you different from the hundreds of other people that probably deliver the same subject? The information you deliver will probably be 90% the same, especially if you are following a syllabus from a major awarding organisation, so how do you stand out from the crowd?

Aside from knowledge of your subject, which I would argue only accounts for around 30% of the quality of your training, being a great trainer is about three things; Sales, Entertainment and Communication. What powers your training is your energy and enthusiasm.

What makes a great trainer?



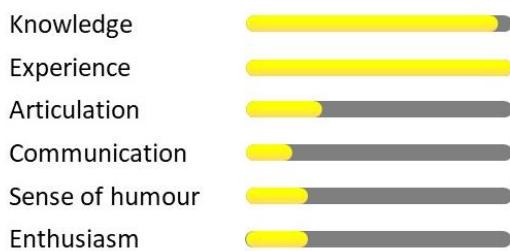
Knowing as much as possible about your subject will always be beneficial, but there is also a basic level of knowledge required to teach it, which forms a pre-requisite for any trainer.

Your learners will normally be attending a course because it is pitched at a certain level, designed for a certain audience and cover a predetermined list of information. The quality and effectiveness of the session you deliver is therefore affected by the way in which you deliver that list of information, not the amount of additional knowledge you may have on the subject.

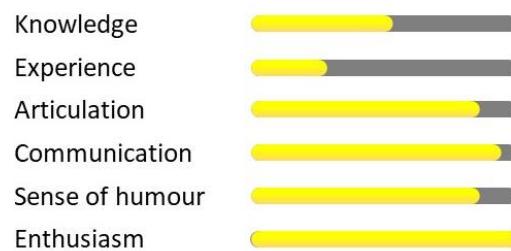
I therefore believe that a new trainer can be better than one with 20 year's experience, if they can present the information more effectively.

Which trainer would you prefer?

Bill



Ben



Sales

As a trainer you are selling information, knowledge and skills.

Most people attend work related training because they need to and because they've been told where to be, at what time and on what date, sometimes without even knowing what is being taught. It's not unusual for learners to not want to be there and even believe it's a waste of time before you've even had chance to introduce yourself.

'Education is not the filling of a pail – but the lighting of a fire'
– W.B. Yeats

Most syllabuses start the day with a set of objectives, stating what the session will cover. This is your opportunity to sell. You should take the time to explain not just *what* you will cover but *why*.

Introductions are an opportunity to find out more about your learners, why they are there and what they want and expect to learn. It's an opportunity to transform a subject that you are delivering to a group of people into something very personal to each individual.

If people are truly interested in the subject and have even chosen to attend for their own reasons, not because their employer is making them, this job is easy, just confirm they will learn what they expected to.

If they are there to obtain a certificate and tick a box, your jobs a little harder and your sales pitch will have to be more convincing.

Try to find a way of making the subject personal and creating a *need* for them to have this information. Some questions that can prompt this might include;

- What worries you most about..... **the subject you are covering**
- What would you do if.... **Present a situation where not knowing this information could lead to a negative outcome for them**
- Did you know.... **Give an example of a scenario where this information benefitted a person greatly, or getting it wrong led to a negative outcome**

Relating the subject to very public examples at this stage can also help build a connection with its importance and turn the theoretical into reality. Recent

*'Sell the problem
you solve, not the
product'* – Unknown

examples might include the Alton Towers Smiler incident, the Grenfell Tower fire or any recent, well publicised news story, or examples from their industry. Just remember to be sympathetic and respectful, you never know who's in the room and the personal connection they may have to a story.

I often have laminated exerts from news stories and articles, along with a relevant image, which I can show as my source and which learners can have a closer look at during a break if they like.

Entertainment

Did you hear the one about the monotone trainer that bored their learners to death?

Ok, so you don't need to be the next Peter Kay to be a great trainer, but you do need to be able to hold people's attention and keep them awake long enough to complete a feedback form.

'My Dad used to say 'always fight fire with fire', which is probably why he got thrown out of the fire brigade.' – Peter Kay

It is always nice to receive positive feedback and confirmation that the learners enjoyed the session and perceived the content to be useful. Learning and Development professionals will be quick to point out though that learner

enjoyment is not a reflection of the knowledge and skills they have acquired, which are the objectives for an employer sending someone on a training course. A learner could have a great time on a course but learn nothing of any use when they return to the workplace. That can hardly be considered a job well done for the trainer?

Way back in the 1950's, Donald Kirkpatrick first published his four level training evaluation model, which summarised how the effectiveness of training should be assessed;



Providing entertaining training will often lead to positive feedback at Level 1, but that entertainment should also be used to serve a greater purpose, contributing to outcomes at Levels 2, 3 and 4.

Think of your training like Comic Relief; the humour attracts your attention, then they hit you with the really important information and make you cry!

Okay, so making people cry in a training session isn't always a great idea, but creating an emotional connection to the subject will increase the likelihood of them remembering it. Whether that emotion is happiness, because they found something funny, upset because of an emotional story, case study or scenario you made them think about, or even anger in some circumstances, it supports a stronger mental image. If you were delivering safeguarding training, there are many real-life examples of abuse and neglect that would make many people angry and this will increase their focus and memory of the session.

There is also a business benefit to delivering entertaining training. If learners enjoy the course they are more likely to return, to provide a good report back to colleagues and line managers and even refer you to their wider networks.

One important caveat with entertainment though is to remain inoffensive. A great trainer should be a role model. Your humour should not be based on sexist, racist, homophobic or any other discriminatory or offensive content.

Communication

The objective of any training session is to pass on information, be that in the form of knowledge, skills or attitudes. To do this effectively, trainers need to be good communicators.

There are many theories and often quoted perceptions about communication, such as the 7:38:55 model, which breaks face-to-face communication down into three elements and attributes a percentage to their part in conveying the overall message.

- 7% The words you use
- 38% The way you say it (Tone & cadence)
- 55% Body language

If we were to take this literally though, what would be the point in learning another language, if you're still receiving 93% of the message without understanding the words being used?

It's clearly not that simple, but *how* you say things and what your body is communicating are very important considerations for any trainer.

'Master the topic, the message and the delivery' – Steve Jobs

You should view your voice and your body as tools. If you're just going to stand in front of people and speak, they may as well watch a video. If you don't give them something to look at, their eyes will be drawn elsewhere, closely followed by their minds.

Be expressive, move around and use your hands, body and facial expressions to help explain and illustrate what you are describing. Use emotion, volume and cadence (Rate and rhythm) in your voice to convey information more powerfully.

Online and elearning have become increasingly common in recent years. They offer a more accessible and usually much cheaper option than face-to-face, classroom style learning. Along with the ability to network and share experiences with colleagues, the primary benefit of classroom learning is YOU.

If you aren't maximising the benefit of being in the same room as your learners, you may as well sell online training.

Great trainers DELIVER information and they do so using passion, emotion and their entire body.

Verbal communication;

Level 1	Speak clearly and loud enough for everyone to hear
Level 2	Change your volume to suit the message, pause to allow reflection on what you've said
Level 3	Use the emotion and passion in your voice to stress the importance and feelings associated with the information

Search for these examples on Youtube and consider HOW the information is being delivered;

Speech	Search for
Muhammad Ali	I'll show you how great I am speech
Barack Obama (2004)	The speech that made Barack Obama
Rocky Balboa (2006)	Rocky Balboa (2006) Inspirational speech
James Cordon (2017)	James Cordon's message to Manchester
Nick Vujicic	No arms and no legs, motivation

Energy and Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is infectious. Whenever you see or hear someone talk passionately and enthusiastically about a subject, any subject, it automatically draws your attention and triggers an assumption that it must be important and worth listening to. The opposite is equally true. A boring presentation leads to an assumption that the subject is boring and not worthy of your attention.

'Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm' – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Delivering great training is hard work! A great trainer puts so much energy into their sessions that, especially after a full days training, it's not unusual to feel physically and mentally drained.

There are often many thoughts running through a trainers mind during a session, all of which require your energy;

- ?
- What do I need to include on the current topic
- ?
- Is everyone engaged
- ?
- Are we running to schedule
- ?
- How can I make the subject more relevant for 'these' learners
- ?
- Has everyone understood what we've just covered

The reason 'Energy and Enthusiasm' was presented as a battery in the earlier image is that they impact on all other aspects of your training. To really bring the subject to life for your learners requires enthusiasm. If you aren't passionate about the subject, no matter how much you know, how do you expect to generate enthusiasm in others?

Facilitating Learning

In the 1920's psychologists surmised that individuals have a preferred method of learning, which they categorised as Visual, Auditory or Kinesthetic. This gave us the VAK Learning Styles which have been referenced and refined for the past 100 years.



The concept of 'how' people learn and individual preferences to learning has been the subject of many more research projects and theories that have expanded on the simplistic VAK styles.

Some people have added to these three basic options to include a 'T' for Tactile learners, who like to touch and feel, or an 'R' for Reading/ Writing, used to describe a person who likes to make notes and write things down to process the information better.

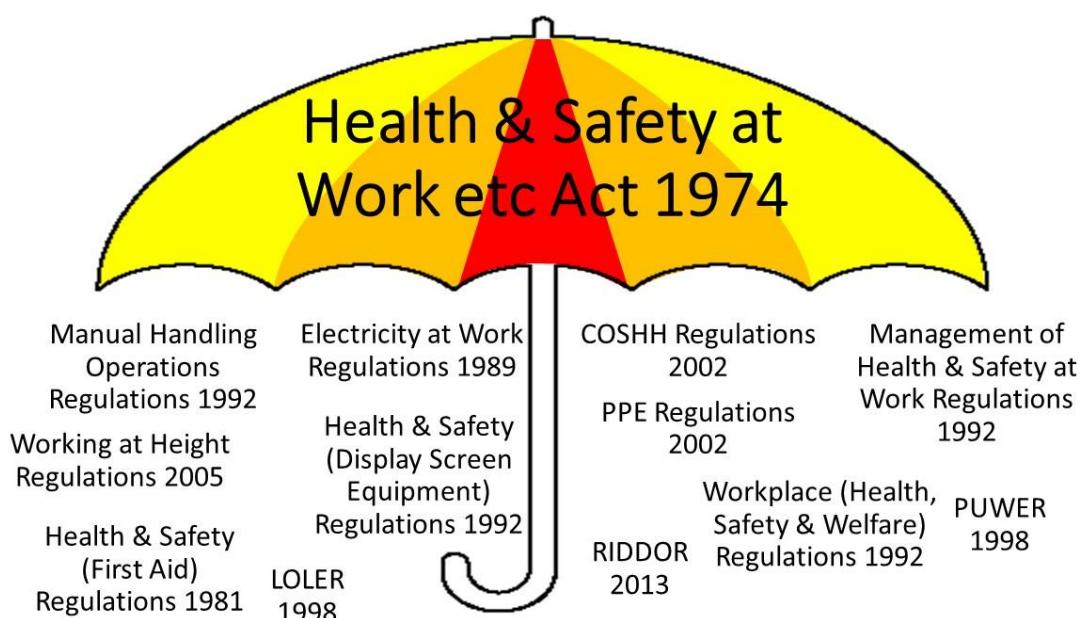
'The index of learning styles' (Felder, 2002), describes four dimensions of learning styles and places people on a continuum between these pairs of variables;



Converting this information into practical terms, a good approach to teaching would be to cater for all learning preferences. By presenting information visually, talking about it and using practical elements for learners to interact with, will produce the most effective learning outcomes. Relevant props and examples can also help as visual aids and tactile tools to further enhance understanding and provide clarity of what is being discussed.

So how do you make a subject like legislation visual and interactive?

This is often where the difference lies between a ‘trainer’ and a ‘great trainer’! Finding fun and interactive exercises that facilitate learning can be a real challenge. Sometimes simply creating a visual representation of the information can enable a better understanding. For the legislation example, it might be useful to focus on the purpose of the legislation concerned and why it was introduced, instead of simply what it says.



A popular method, that's now being further explored with the use of modern technology, such as virtual reality (VR), is Gamification. This is the use of games to aid learning. If you've not got access to a dozen VR headsets and a degree in video game development, don't worry, there are simpler options;

- Quizzes – simple Q&A’s, TV quiz show inspired formats, divide groups into teams or compete as individuals,

- Card games – these be conversational points, matching pairs, picture scenarios,
- Skill challenges – focusing on speed or accuracy/ quality,
- Role play – carefully staged and managed scenarios,

Purchasing a set of cheap ‘buzzers’ and splitting groups into teams can have an amazing effect of learners’ motivation and concentration. Just remember, your role as ‘Quiz Master’ is to always bring the exercise back to the learning points its designed to cover. If everyone has a great time, but learns nothing, the activity has failed.

Perhaps the biggest learning theory of recent years is the 70:20:10 model.

70 : 20 : 10

Experience

Doing your job

Social Learning

Sharing knowledge
with colleagues

Formal Learning

Classroom or
elearning

Whilst the employment and management implications of this are useful, as a trainer, your role in this is often limited. How it can relate to you, is the importance of the connection between the three categories. Formal learning is often a necessity, to acquire knowledge, but has a limited benefit to the workplace, unless it has a strong connection and relevance to the persons work activity.

Trainers should look to relate the often generic training to the persons workplace and working practices as much as possible. This can be done using relevant workplace examples and encouraging learners to reflect on what has been covered and how they will use it to change and improve their work.

Added Value

Two of the biggest changes in the field of Learning and Development over the last five years have been an increased focus on interventions aligning with organisational objectives and more emphasis on monitoring and evaluation (CIPD Learning and Development Survey, 2015).

This is important to trainers because their future business relies heavily on the quality of the feedback and the Return On Investment (ROI) attached to the service they provide. Understanding your position within the training cycle and the other stages involved will better enable you to ensure that you are fulfilling the broader needs of your customers.

A lot of trainers have a very narrow view of their role and focus solely on delivering the course or qualification that they advertised, in the same way that they do for every customer. In doing so, you place yourself in direct comparison with other providers, with one sole measure – cost. If they can get the same training from someone else, but cheaper, why would they not change provider?

If you take the time to consider the role of those who commission your training and selected you as their provider, you can often find ways to add value and deliver a service that ticks more than one box. This might be by tailoring the course to the industry of those attending, providing examples, case studies and resources that may be of interest or by building in some reflective practice and connecting the subject to their workplace.

If your learners can return to work with a clear understanding of how the training relates to their role and how they can immediately implement what they have learnt, improve their work and make their organisation safer or more efficient, it will demonstrate to their employers why you were such a good choice as training provider.



Summary

Training should be an extremely rewarding profession. If you don't enjoy what you do, it will likely come across in your training and affect the quality and effectiveness of your sessions.

Training also comes with responsibility. You are the gatekeeper of knowledge and can have a significant and wide reaching affect on a persons attitude, performance and career. Have respect for the important role that you play and commit to a strategy of lifelong learning and continuous improvement.

Here are my 'top tips' to having a successful, satisfying career in training;

- 1 Be organised
- 2 Be professional
- 3 Be entertaining
- 4 Be passionate
- 5 Be knowledgeable

There will no doubt be those who disagree with some of what I have written and have their own views on what constitutes a 'Great trainer'. That's fine. Disagreement is fuel for debate, which leads to greater understanding and clarification. What isn't acceptable is poor or even mediocre training. The needs of the learner should always be at the heart of what we do. **Motivate, Inspire and Educate them in the best way possible.**

I hope that you have found this guide useful and gain as much satisfaction and enjoyment from your training as I do.

Love what you do, demonstrate that passion in your training and be proud of the positive difference you are making to the lives of others.

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