

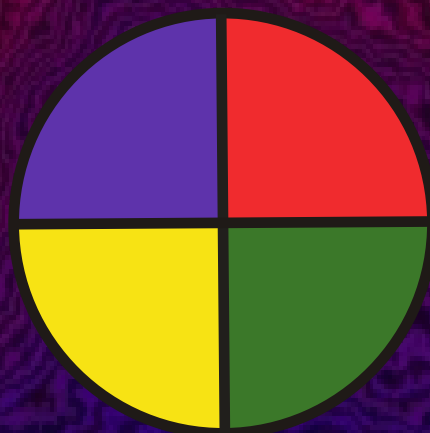


**Designing**

**Learner**

**Centered**

**Instruction**



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# Designing Learner-Centered Training

THE GOAL OF THIS BOOKLET IS TO GUIDE CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS TO DESIGN TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT WILL . . .

- Teach current or state-of-the-art information and skills based on needs assessment data
- Employ learner-centered techniques
- Help participants reach realistic performance objectives
- Guide participants to transfer the learning from the learning setting to job performance
- Promote consistency from one training program to another
- Document knowledge and skills taught, teaching methods used, and evaluation of the learning
- Include a lesson plan that will serve as an instructional road-map for trainers

## WHAT IS ITIP?

ITIP is an acronym that stands for ***Instructional Theory Into Practice***. It flows from the work of Dr. Madeline Hunter, who introduced the notion of educators, teachers and trainers using what we are learning about learning (research from neuro, behavioral and cognitive sciences) and modifying traditional education and training techniques/strategies accordingly.

Training designed according to the ITIP format simply means that, in its design and development, the training follows adult learning theory, is learner-centered, focuses on the needs and learning preferences of learners, and helps the learner reach the **goal of training**.

Designing and delivering training in the ITIP format will help you, as the trainer, answer:

- How can I help participants find meaning in what they are learning?
- How can I design a lesson that will produce new, transferable knowledge and skills that will enhance and increase job performance (transfer of learning)?

- What training strategies and techniques will likely appeal to the needs of my learners and also increase on-the-job transfer of learning?

## **WHAT IS THE GOAL OF TRAINING?**

The ITIP format of training design is based upon the premise that the goal of training is to teach knowledge and skills to workers or employees to help them perform their jobs “successfully.” Ultimately, successful workers help organizations accomplish their missions.

Successful job performance is determined by occupational analyses, competency sets, laws (local, state, and federal) under which the organization operates, organizational policy, and management planning.

## **ADULT LEARNERS and LEARNER-CENTERED INSTRUCTION (“INSTRUCTIONAL THEORY”)**

### **Adult Learners**

Much has been written about adults and the way we learn since Malcolm Knowles published his book, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, in 1975. Although there is a richness and complexity of information about how learning takes place, there are a few key principles to keep in mind when designing training for adult participants:

- Program design needs to take into account the entry-level knowledge and understanding of the participants.
- In order to accept, remember and use new information, adults need to be able to integrate it with what they already know, to place it on their own “reality map.”
- While most adults prefer learning that is active rather than passive, they also desire learning that stimulates thinking and has some degree of challenge.
- Frequent checks for understanding and opportunities for practice and feedback will address the need of adults to know what they are supposed to accomplish and how well they are doing in the learning situation.
- Adults differ from each other in experience, ability and background, and in preferred styles of learning. Accordingly, lessons need to be designed to accommodate these differences.
- Practice and transfer activities incorporated into the training design will help participants use what they learn when they return to the workplace.

## The Cycle of Learning

So what is the learning process itself? Most current research describes it as a “natural cycle of learning,” which is the combination of two processes, perceiving and processing.

According to David Kolb, and the additional research and theories of Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Bernice McCarthy and many others, learning as we know and understand it is actually two processes that are combined. In essence, people learn by first perceiving something, then processing the information.

McCarthy uses the analogy of a clock to explain how learning happens in the cycle. In a new learning situation, the cycle begins with a person **Perceiving**, or taking in information. This is represented by a vertical continuum, that runs from 12 o'clock (Concrete Experience) to 6 o'clock (Abstract Conceptualization). (See the Learning Cycle graphic, page 7.)

Each person has a preferred, comfortable way of perceiving (taking in) information, which ranges from those who prefer to take in (perceive) through their own **Concrete Experience** (that is, by experiencing, relating to people, being sensitive to feelings and people) to those who prefer to take in (perceive) information through **Abstract Conceptualization** (by thinking, analyzing ideas and through facts, and data). Each way of taking in information (perceiving) is valuable - and each person has a preferred way of perceiving.

The second part of learning is **Processing**, or making sense of the new learning or new perceived experience or knowledge in our own world. Taking the clock analogy a step further, processing is represented by the horizontal continuum that runs from 9 o'clock (Active Experimentation) to 3 o'clock (Reflective Observation). (See the Learning Cycle graphic, page 6.)

Just as with perceiving, each person has a comfortable, preferred way of acting on, or processing, information to make it their own and have personal usefulness. This ranges from those who prefer to act on (process) through **Active Experimentation** (by jumping right in, tinkering, and actively doing something with the new knowledge or experience) to those who prefer to act on (process) the information by **Reflective Observation** (by thinking about it in relationship to what they already know and understand, observing and reflecting before acting on the new learning).

In essence, Perceiving + Processing = Learning!

### **MORE INFORMATION ON PERCEIVING = TAKING IN INFORMATION**

**Concrete Experience** - Learning by experiencing, relating to people, being sensitive to feelings and people; a very sensing, connected way of perceiving; takes in information through associations.

**Abstract Conceptualization** - Learning by thinking, logically analyzing ideas, planning systematically, acting on an intellectual understanding of a situation; a very separate way of knowing; perceives through abstractions; through facts, data, theories, concepts.

### **MORE INFORMATION ON PROCESSING = ACTING ON THE INFORMATION**

**Active Experimentation** - Learning by doing, showing ability to get things done, taking risks, influencing people and events through action, trial and error; jumping right in, tinkering, acting quickly on new information; acting and then thinking.

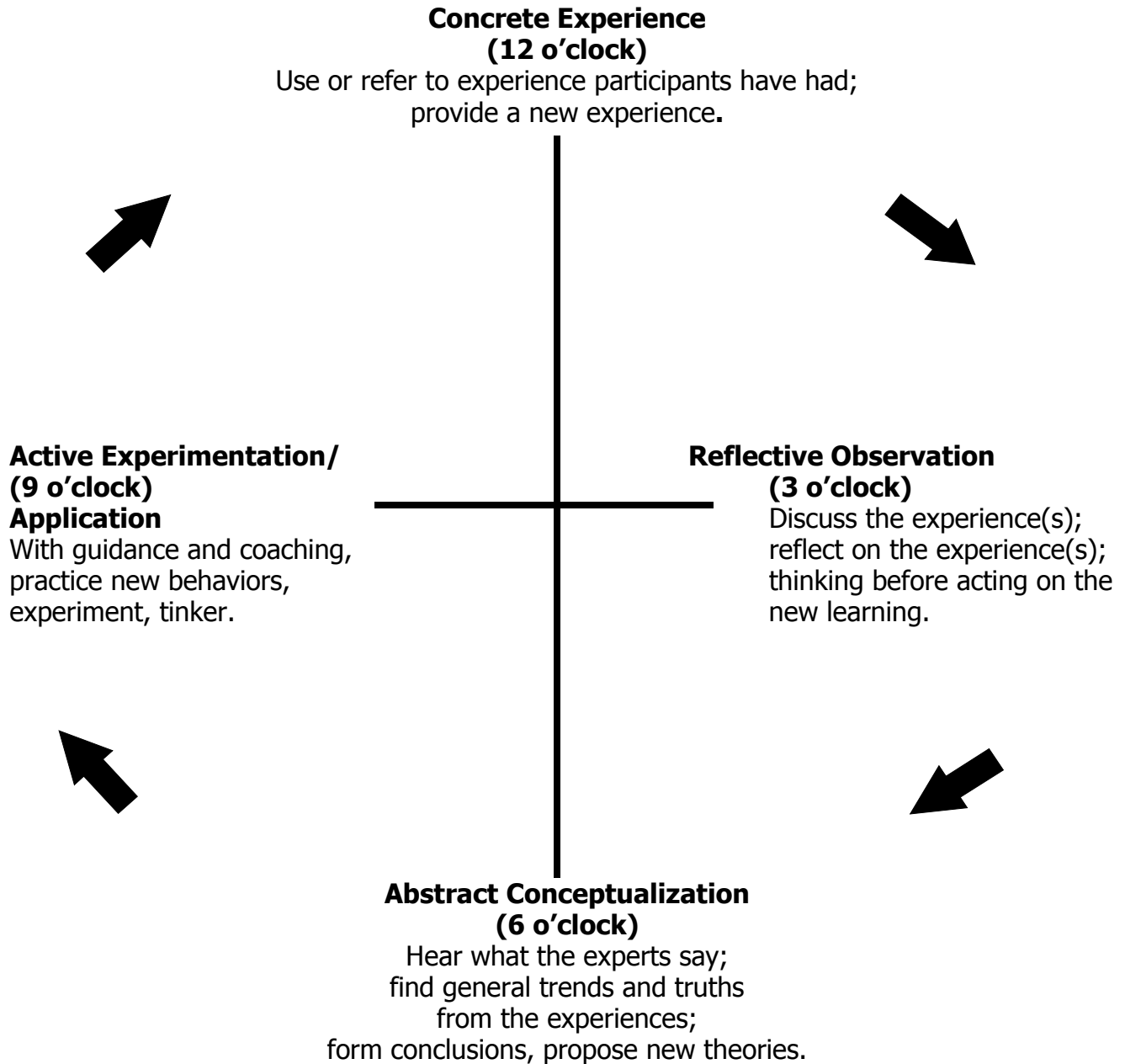
**Reflective Observation** - Learning by reflecting, carefully observing before making judgments, viewing issues from different perspectives, looking for the meaning of things; reflecting on the new information before trying it out; thinking before (maybe) acting; requires time to process the new information in relation to what is already known.

### **SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAINERS?**

When we combine the two processes together, it yields a natural cycle of learning. Trainers can use this natural cycle as a way to design training that will appeal to and satisfy trainees' various learning preferences.

While we know that people prefer to learn in a variety of ways, we as trainers can use a learner-centered lesson design format (ITIP) to address and accommodate learner needs and learning style preferences. We can best focus on the goal of training when learning is enhanced by designing training that follows the complete cycle.

# The Natural Cycle of Learning





## **DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM ("INTO PRACTICE")**

**Step 1: Determine the TARGET AUDIENCE for the training: who will be invited, required, allowed to attend?**

The first step in designing an effective training program is to examine the data collected concerning the need for training. This data, collected using one or more of the following processes - occupational analyses, employee and management interviews, observation of job performance, examination of work products, mandates, organizational policies, and focus groups - is used to determine the target audience for the training, prerequisites, and performance objectives.

*Examples:* First line supervisors, immediately on promotion;  
All probation agents, during first month after hire;  
Managers or supervisors responsible for writing departmental policy;  
Training professionals who have completed a basic training for trainers workshop.

**Step 2: Determine the OUTCOME or goal for the training. What will happen as a result of the target group successfully completing the training?**

The outcome statement, or goal, of the training is stated in broad terms and describes the problem to be solved as a result of the target population completing the training.

*Examples:* This training is designed to provide training professionals with the knowledge and skills they need to develop training programs that are legally defensible: based on needs assessed through a job and task analysis, detailed enough to provide consistency from one class to another, and that employ active learning strategies.

**Step 3: Conduct a TASK ANALYSIS. What tasks would a person have to do in order to accomplish the outcome or goal, and what knowledge and skills would they need in order to perform each task?**

The outcome or goal is too broad to teach or to measure, so it needs to be broken down into steps, or tasks. Each task needs to be analyzed to determine the knowledge and skills necessary.

The program designer, or curriculum design team, then needs to prioritize the knowledge and skills and determine which the participants would already know or be able to do, and which need to be taught in this training.

*Examples:* **Tasks** necessary to reach the outcome statement from Step 3 include: conduct a job and task analysis; write a scripted learner-centered lesson plan; develop evaluation tools.

**Knowledge and Skills** necessary to perform each task. What would anyone have to know or be able to do in order to perform the task?

Knowledge and skills necessary to perform the above tasks include: ability to conduct a job and task analysis; knowledge of the stages of a lesson plan; knowledge of the adult learning cycle; ability to design learner-centered instructional strategies; knowledge of the levels of evaluation; ability to write questions to process learning activities.

**Step 4: Develop realistic and measurable PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES.**

A performance objective describes what a successful learner will be able to do at the completion of the learning experience.

In order to communicate clearly what the learner will be able to do, a performance objective must have three components:

1. Statement of visible performance - an action word that tells what the learner is expected to do. This does **not** describe the instructional strategy or the behavior of the instructor.

The following words state visible performance: write, construct, compare, develop, complete, connect, prepare.

2. Condition - the important conditions (if any) under which the performance is to occur. Is there equipment or material that the learner will be expected to use when performing (e.g., forms, tools, manuals)? Is there anything the learner will not be

allowed to use? What are the real-work conditions under which the learner will be expected to perform (e. g., without a checklist, in the dark)?

3. Criterion - how well someone has to perform in order to be considered competent. Is there a time limit (e.g., within one minute) that is critical? Is accuracy critical?

*Examples:*

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- write a realistic and measurable performance objective that has all three components;
- develop instructional strategies that will help participants reach the stated performance objectives;
- write activity-processing questions that will guide participants through the learning cycle;
- complete a departmental travel reimbursement form accurately and completely following the guidelines in policy #xyz;
- conduct a room search following the ten guidelines presented in class. Participant must discover all contraband items placed by instructor.

Other points to consider when writing performance objectives:

- ◆ There is no “magic number” of performance objectives required or desired. The number will be determined by the number of skills needed to perform the tasks indicated by the needs assessment and the determined target audience.
- ◆ The amount of time required to train to a performance objective will vary depending on the level of skill of the target audience, the complexity of the tasks being taught, and the size of the class.
- ◆ Performance objectives must be realistic in terms of job performance. When training professionals attend a training program on training design, it is more likely that they will have to “develop or write complete performance objectives” when they return to the workplace than to “list the three components of a performance objective.”

After completing a class on sexual harassment, it is more likely that learners will need to be able to “observe a situation or read a case study and determine if it could be perceived as sexual harassment” rather than to “define sexual harassment.” When people are on the job we do not usually ask them to “list, define, or describe” - we ask them to perform.

**Step 5:        Develop a FIVE-STAGE LESSON PLAN (an ITIPed lesson plan) that guides learners through the learning cycle.**

**FIRST STAGE: ANTICIPATORY SET**

We start with a concrete experience for participants to set the stage; refer to an experience(s) participants have had or provide an experience; help connect people to people, and people to content, through movement, dialogue, conversation.

Begin the practice of active, learner-centered learning right up front. Help participants feel comfortable in the learning environment and answer the questions “Why do I need to learn this?” and “What will I be expected to do?” through strategies such as questionnaires, demonstrations, participant interviews, topic-related icebreakers, expectation-sharing, experience-sharing.

*Examples:*

- In a class on sexual harassment, have participants work with one or two others to read a few short scenarios and select a “best response” from several listed. Scenarios need to be realistic and not obviously either sexual harassment or not. Guide instructor to have a few volunteers share responses, then use as lead-in to the critical need to be aware of both policy and law.
  
- In a class on Wellness, give the following instructions: ask each participant to list 10 tasks they have to accomplish each day, personal and professional. Give each person 10 balloons; ask them to blow them up and use a marker to write one task on each balloon. Have participants stand up and begin to toss their balloons in the air, trying to get all 10 “juggling” at once so none fall on the ground. After two or three minutes of activity, laughter, dropped balloons and so forth, have participants sit in pairs and discuss the following questions: How well did you “juggle” all 10 balloons/tasks? What happened when you tried? How is this similar to how you try to juggle your real life tasks? Then, connect to the part of the content that says wellness is a balancing act.

**SECOND STAGE: INSTRUCTIONAL INPUT**

Guide participants to connect new information with what they already know: they might be presented with new theories, laws, processes or skills, or they might be asked to look at current information or processes in a new way.

There are a number of considerations to make when designing the instructional input:

- ✓ the target audience and what they already know/know how to do
  
- ✓ the performance objectives

- ✓ the difficulty or complexity of the information or skills
- ✓ the criticality of the new learnings to successful job performance
- ✓ the diverse learning styles of the participants
- ✓ the characteristics of adult learners
- ✓ the need of learners to “digest” information in “clumps” of five to seven “bits”

These issues will determine the complexity of the instructional strategies as well as the amount of time devoted to this stage.

“Covering” a lot of information in a short amount of time will not help participants succeed in applying the new skills on the job. Lecture is but one way to “input” or teach the content. In the lesson plan the trainer should be guided to conduct frequent “checks for understanding” by asking specific questions about the key points. Below are two situations where a trainer asks planned “Check for Understanding” questions. As you’ll see, they are open-ended questions, which learners must answer with more than a “yes” or “no” answer.

Some of the typical questions that trainers ask at the end of a piece of content instruction, such as “Are there any questions?” or “Does everyone understand?” are not questions that check for understanding. They are asking for a yes or no answer; “check for understanding” questions are just that - questions designed to let the trainer know where the participants are in terms of understanding the content.

*Examples:*

- In a class on sexual harassment for supervisors, one of the performance objectives is for participants to be able to follow departmental policy in responding to an employee’s complaint of sexual harassment. The trainer asks participants to read the policy, then demonstrates policy application in several work situations by using a skit. One trainer plays the part of the supervisor. A co-trainer, or a volunteer participant, plays the part of the employee making the complaint. The lesson plan includes a script or script guide for them to follow to ensure that critical points are made.

After each situation is demonstrated, the trainer asks participants to respond to several questions to help them make the connection. All questions, as well as expected responses, are written into the design.

Sample check for understanding questions include: “Did the supervisor follow policy when responding to this employee? Why do you think so? or What did s/he say that violated policy?”

This method helps participants connect policy to their actual job performance and engages them actively as learners.

- In a class on courtroom presentations for probation officers, one of the performance objectives provides for participants to be able to conduct a courtroom presentation that follows the court's established professional code of standards. The trainer assumes the role of the probation officer and asks the class to assume the role of the judge. The trainer makes a less-than-professional presentation, then asks the "judges" what questions and concerns they would have.

Sample check for understanding questions include: "What questions do you have about the probation officer's presentation? What were the strengths of the presentation? The challenges? How did the probation officer follow the code of standards? How did they fail to follow the standards?"

After presenting the court's established professional code of standards, the trainer demonstrates these standards in another mock courtroom presentation. The participant "judges" will again ask questions and voice concerns, noting the difference between the two demonstrations.

This engages the learners actively in the learning and helps them see the difference between the two techniques.

### **THIRD STAGE: GUIDED PRACTICE**

Participants practice the new concepts or skills with trainer guidance and feedback in a situation that closely simulates job conditions. This stage is essential in every program, for every performance objective.

If the training is based on needs assessment information to teach participants knowledge and skills needed to perform critical tasks on the job, they must be given numerous opportunities to try out the new information and skills, practice all key attributes, get feedback and ask questions if they are to transfer the learning to their job performance. "Guided" practice is like practicing with a safety net and, at times, continues beyond the classroom to the work site with a job coach or mentor.

#### *Examples:*

- In the class on sexual harassment described earlier, participants work together in pairs or small groups to read several employee complaints of sexual harassment. They either write questions the supervisor should ask and responses the supervisor should make *or* demonstrate to others in class responses that comply with policy. The trainer will ask for feedback from other participants, then provide additional feedback as needed.
- In the class on courtroom presentations, each participant will use a case file to prepare and conduct a courtroom presentation in a small group. Feedback will be provided by other participants, as well as the trainer, on how well they followed the guidelines.

## **STAGE FOUR : INDEPENDENT PRACTICE**

“Independent” practice is like taking away the safety net, for when participants return to work they will not have someone to remind them when they skip an important step in evacuating a building, searching a room, administering CPR, or to stop them in the middle of their courtroom presentation to tell them to “try again.”

Sometimes the independent practice can occur in the classroom environment, but more often it actually occurs back on the job site. One activity that can be written into the lesson plan to guide the independent practice and help participants transfer the learning from the classroom to the work place is Action Planning. Here are some key areas for an Action Plan to address:

- ▶ What they need to do (steps to take, tasks to accomplish) to use the new skills, techniques, behaviors when they return to work;
- ▶ What resources they need to make this happen;
- ▶ People they need to support them or give them feedback and how to get this support;
- ▶ Challenges they might face in taking these steps;
- ▶ How to address these challenges;
- ▶ Benefits they are likely to realize when they take these steps (master the skills);
- ▶ Establishing a time line for all the above.

## **STAGE FIVE: CLOSURE AND EVALUATION**

The final stage of the lesson plan guides the trainer to check for understanding and to determine through observation, review and listening whether participants are comprehending information, making connections and making progress toward the training goal.

*Examples:*

- Use the formats from *Jeopardy*, *Hollywood Squares* or *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* as a customized way to evaluate and close the learning. These game show activities are a lively and fun way for participants to review a module or entire day of training.

Write detailed instructions in the design for the game equipment or props, set up, and directions for the participants, along with all the correct answers.

- Trainer Challenge: Instruct the trainer to have each table group write four questions they want to ask the other group(s). They need to make note of the correct answers. Instruct

trainer to have the tables swap index cards and respond to the questions from the other group.

- For psychomotor skills, develop a check-sheet for the trainer to use while observing participants in demonstration of the skills. Instruct the trainer to give feedback as needed.

**Step 6: Design INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES that engage participants actively and help them reach or accomplish the desired performance objectives.**

Instructional strategies are endless in number and variety. Instructional strategies are to performance objectives as vehicles are to destinations: one type won't get you everywhere you need to go. When choosing and/or designing instructional strategies, there are a few key considerations to keep in mind:

- ✓ the performance objectives (how far do you need to go; how complicated is the skill)
- ✓ the learning space - amount of room; equipment available
- ✓ the diverse learning styles
- ✓ the amount of time needed and/or required

**Instructional strategies, or learning activities, need to simulate behaviors and thoughts that the job requires.**

While lecture is perhaps the easiest instructional strategy to design and is likely the most common strategy to use, when used alone or in a lecture/discussion, it cannot guide participants around the learning cycle. The true advantage of a lecture is that it enables the instructor to "cover" a lot of information in a short amount of time.

Take a moment to reflect on what was written earlier in this document about "covering" information. This strategy does not engage participants, cannot be used for guided or independent practice, and does not give the trainer an opportunity to check for understanding and give feedback. As you design your training, "match" the training strategies you choose to the outcomes your performance objectives are targeting.

For example, if you want the learner to "safely evacuate the building within four minutes," what strategies might you use? Would you lecture on the steps to evacuation? Probably. Would you demonstrate the steps to safe evacuation procedures? Definitely. Would you have participants practice evacuating the building in several possible scenarios? Absolutely! Would you have participants do an analysis of their own performance in the evacuation scenarios, and then practice again after the analysis? Positively! See the difference? By coming as close as possible



to real life situations in training settings and by choosing a variety of instructional strategies that build on each other, the trainer makes it more likely that participants will apply the new knowledge, skills and behaviors in the workplace, and improve their job performance.

Training strategies include, but are not limited to, case study, role play, demonstrations, simulations, learning games, problem-solving activities, group discussions, group or individual projects.

To be useful, the instructional strategy and directions for its use must be written with sufficient detail for the trainer to be able to clearly understand the purpose and be able to provide instructions to the participants.

*Example:*

- In a class for supervisors on delegations skills, participants read and discuss steps for successful delegation. They are then instructed to read a "case study" that describes a supervisor's dilemma. In the case study, the supervisor describes 10 tasks that if delegated to others in the work group, would free up a considerable amount of time each week. Each task is described, including the amount of time each day or week that must be devoted to it.

Another sheet describes the eight employees in the workgroup - their skills, goals, and work performance characteristics. The participants are asked to work in groups to determine which tasks the supervisor should delegate and to whom.

Here are the questions they are to discuss, first in small groups, then as a large group:

Small group questions:

1. Which of these responsibilities would you advise Joe to delegate?
2. To whom would he delegate each responsibility? Why?
3. What steps should he take to make this an effective delegation?
4. What benefits will likely occur as a result of the delegation - to Joe, to the employee to whom he delegated, to the staff, to the organization?

Large group questions:

1. What challenges do you think he might encounter in delegating these responsibilities?
2. How could he effectively manage these challenges?
3. Which, if any, of these responsibilities should Joe keep for himself? Why?

**Step 7: Design training aids that clarify learning points, assist participants in remembering information presented and comply with copyright law.**

“Training Aids” refers to any material or equipment the trainer will use to support the information s/he is presenting, to enhance the learning, to emphasize a point, to help participants remember.

The following are some basic guidelines for designing and using training aids such as videos, transparencies, computer-generated slide presentations, participant handouts or workbooks, special equipment or materials.

**Videos**

- ☞ If commercially produced, obtain copyright permission, regardless of who owns the video.
- ☞ Make sure the information, demonstrations, and key points are current and consistent with all guidelines, techniques, laws and policies presented in the lesson.
- ☞ Provide information in the lesson plan on how to obtain (purchase, borrow, rent) along with the cost to purchase, if that is recommended.
- ☞ Write questions for the trainer to ask prior to, and after, showing the video. Remember to include the desired responses to these questions.

**Computer Generated Slide Presentations (such as Power Point and Corel Presentations) and Transparencies**

- ☞ Copyright permission is necessary if any information in the slide show or on the transparency is downloaded from the Internet or obtained from other copyrighted sources. This includes syndicated cartoons in newspapers, magazines and books.
- ☞ Design slides that help participants connect with, focus on, or remember key points.
- ☞ Follow the 6x6 rule - no more than six words across and six lines down.
- ☞ Use consistent font and background for each slide.
- ☞ Use a large enough font - usually 28 points or higher - for participants to view text.
- ☞ Indicate in design exactly where each slide or transparency is presented.
- ☞ Give slides and transparencies numbers and titles that clearly indicate the location and order.

- ☞ Don't overdo.
- ☞ Avoid or limit animations and sounds for slide show. If these are used at all, they need to be purposeful.
- ☞ Make transparencies of each slide for trainer to have as a backup in case of equipment failure (computer/LDC) or include a note to trainer to make transparencies.

### **Charts Stands and Newsprint**

- ☞ Print in large, bold letters; don't speak while writing; use blue, black, dark green, purple or brown for main ideas, red for strong emphasis, lighter colors for highlights; tab pages (masking tape will do) for quick reference; roll and store in tubes; **follow the 6 x 6 rule** - no more than six words across and no more than six lines down.

### **Props or Equipment**

- ☞ Clearly list all materials needed for props, along with where to locate or purchase the materials and the amount and size needed.
- ☞ Clearly describe all equipment needed (such as computers, handcuffs, contraband, etc.) and where to obtain (purchase, rent, borrow.)
- ☞ Indicate classroom size and setup to allow for use of equipment and materials.

### **Participant Handouts or Workbooks**

- ☞ Get permission to use copyrighted materials.
- ☞ Make sure information is accurate and up to date.
- ☞ Number pages.
- ☞ Use no more than two typefaces per handout.
- ☞ Provide note-taking sheets and/or white space to enable participants to make their own notes.
- ☞ Use interactive formats such as partial slide/transparency text where participants complete the information.
- ☞ Don't overload with information; design worksheets and instruction guides for activities.

# Guidelines for Developing Training Designs

## Performance Objectives

- ✓ Are they specific, observable, measurable?
- ✓ Are they at a level high enough to transfer to desired job performance?
- ✓ Are they based on needs assessment data?

## Instructional Strategies

- ✓ Will they help participants reach the performance objectives?
- ✓ Will they actively involve participants in the learning?
- ✓ Are the instructions easy to follow?
- ✓ Does the lesson design include all necessary materials, including where to find them?
- ✓ Will the strategies reach all learning styles and complete the learning cycle?
- ✓ Is there a logical sequencing of strategies?
- ✓ Are there transitions from one objective to another?

## Practice

- ✓ Is there sufficient opportunity for participants to practice using the knowledge and skills with guidance from the instructor?

## Evaluation

- ✓ Does the lesson design include ways for the trainer to evaluate participant learning during the course?
- ✓ Are there strategies for the trainer to evaluate participants' learning at the end of the course?

From **Best Practices in Staff Development and Training** - *Juvenile Justice Trainers Association*; used with permission.

