A Simple But Powerful Training Model For Trainers (Mar 08)

By Robert Bacal

Editor's Note: The following model was originally developed by the late Michael Orme, an expert practitioner and researcher in the area of training effectiveness, and training of trainers and teachers. It is, on the surface, easy to understand, but it has significant depth and complexity beneath it, being based on learning theories such as *Bandura's Social Learning Theory*. Like all instructional models, it can be augmented by understanding other models.

Introduction

Sometimes it appears to us that good trainers are somehow "born to it". What they do in their delivery seems so natural and smooth. It is true that some people seem to take to it naturally, but the great percentage of people seem to have to learn how to deliver and design training. There are some things to keep in mind, and they are not terribly complex, at least on the surface. Let's look at the basic part, or components of a training program... elements that should be included by the course designer, and addressed by the trainer.

I. Providing For Motivation and Attention

People learn best when motivated, and they only learn when they are paying attention. So, somehow you have to build in ways of keeping attention in the sessions, during delivery. One tip is that people pay attention if there is change around them, and that people get involved when there are things to do, when they are having fun, and when they see the relevance of what is to be learned to things that are important to them. The latter suggests that we need to build in hooks that tie the content into the needs of the learners.

II. Presentation

This aspect of delivery has to do with somehow getting the participant in contact with the material to be learned. They must be exposed to it. A number of ways to provide this exposure are available, with lecture being one of the less effective ways. Discussion, interactive teaching, brainstorming, use of media, small group and individual exercises can be considered. The advantages of these more active approaches lie in their capability to provide more than just contact with the material, but help create cognitive involvement.

III. Preparing Participants For Effective Practice

Practicing (doing stuff, usually, but practice can also be mental or covert) is very important in the learning process. We want to provide opportunities for such practice, but we also want to ensure that, during practice, people will have a reasonable chance of having the satisfaction of being successful. Preparing the trainees for practice has the goal of trying to increase success during practice.

Some techniques for doing this include making sure that people understand what they are to do during practice... not just that they have memorized the procedure but that they actually understand it. It should make sense to them.

Another way is to break the practice session down into smaller bits, so that trainees don't have to remember a great number of steps all at the same time (reducing cognitive load strategy).

Remember how you probably learned to tie shoes? Mom or Dad probably broke the task down into steps, and if they had a feel for how you learned, they might have started by showing you how to take each end of the lace. Then you did it. Then they might have shown you how to make a little bow with one end, then you tried it. And so on. They broke it down for you.

Another way is to supply prompts prior to or during practice. That would be the equivalent of the parent actually guiding your hands while you tried something. Or telling you as you were practicing: "Now take the bow and cross it with the other end". In our work with adults, we might prompt people by having the steps listed for them on an overhead, or piece of paper they can refer to.

The term used for these preparation for practice techniques is "response guidance".

IV. Providing For Practice
We know that people learn well by doing, or applying what they have learned. That is why we don't just tell people how to type, or how to conduct an interview. We usually will provide the opportunity to actually type or how to conduct an interview. We have to remember tat knowing about something is different from knowing how to do something.

It's worth noting that not all practice is physical. Some types of learning can be practiced by use of questions, case studies, or other exercises. This is called covert practice, or sometimes mental rehearsal.

V. Providing Feedback
We know that practice is important, but people must know how well they are doing when the practice. The process of giving them this information is called feedback. We need to build this in to our delivery. It is not enough to supply practice opportunities for, let's say interview skills. The learner needs to know what was done well (so they can repeat it), and areas where alternative approaches could be tried.

There are a number of ways of getting this information to the learners. Some tasks give this information, by their very nature. For example, tying your shoes is easy, because you know that if the shoes fall off, there is a problem, although you may not know what went wrong. Typing trainees can calculate their own typing speed and error rates, so they can give themselves feedback.

Other tasks are not so easy. Interview skills, for example, when practiced during role plays require some other forms of feedback. The trainer can observe and comment, or, the other trainees can supply feedback. Another way is through the use of video and audio taped feedback so the trainee can see for him/herself what the practice looked like. Video and audio feedback is best used in conjunction with trainer feedback because, quite often, the trainee will not focus on all the important parts of the performance.

There is good feedback and poor feedback, and there are some accepted ways of giving it effectively.

VI. Providing For Application / Transfer of Learning
The bottom line for effective training is that participants will be able to take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it or transfer the learning to real life situations after they leave the training venue.

* The designer / trainer can help learners to do this in a number of ways:
* Use as many real life examples and case studies as possible.
* Tailor examples and cases to the work / life situations of the training group.
* Focus on general principles and concepts, not just rote learning or memorization.
* Encourage participants to discuss with the group, situations where they might apply the learning, and the difficulties they might encounter.
* Build in an abundance of varying practice opportunities.
* At the end of the course, build in an opportunity for learners to develop an action plan which is a commitment to themselves as to how they will apply the learning after the course.