Training skills

Introduction

This paper covers a range of issues involved in delivering a training course. It does not cover presentation skills which are the subject of a separate paper. It focuses on courses concerned to impart knowledge and understanding or to develop interpersonal skills. An annex describes the approach to delivering instruction in practical skills like replacing a component in a mechanical system.

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Annex: Instruction

1 Propositions about how adults learn

Anyone can *learn*

No one is too old, too stupid or too good to learn new things.

Learning is a voluntary process

Learning is an internal process which in the end people do to themselves. So people will not learn if they are not willing to do so. This means they need to accept the possibility that they could learn, see the relevance of the training to their situation and accept the validity of what they are being told. One implication of this can be that on a training course people may have to be made aware of their existing limitations e.g. through testing or feedback. The role of the trainer therefore is not so much to **teach** as to **facilitate learning**.

There are different things to be learned

These form something of a hierarchy of difficulty.

Knowledge covers the things a person gains information about or understands, or will need to know about or understand in the future.

Skills covers those things that a person can **do**, or will need to be able to do. These can be divided into technical skills like using a spreadsheet or reading a balance sheet and interpersonal skills like giving feedback or negotiating. It is easier to define objectives for skills than the other two components.

Attitudes covers the values, beliefs and preferences which guide behaviour. Attitudes can't really be taught, although training is often used as part of an attitude change process.

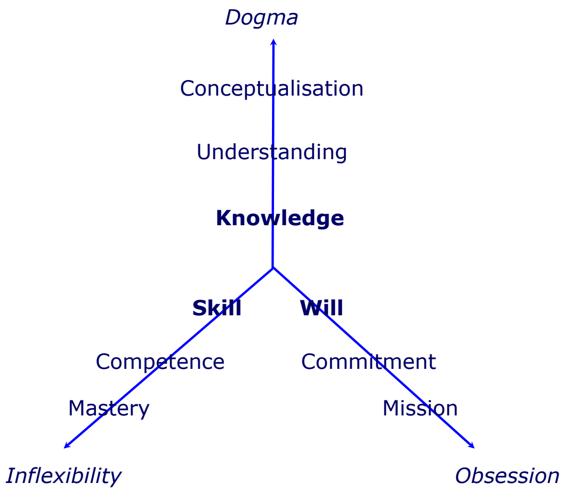
Self-awareness. Could be seen as a particular type of knowledge (i.e. knowledge of self), but in some contexts underpins everything else. Lack of self-awareness can be a major barrier to learning.

Style is a composite of knowledge, skills and attitudes but in some situations it needs to be focused on as a thing in its own right, for example in managers, consultants and indeed trainers.

There are different levels of learning

The diagram below suggests a hierarchy of learning from shallow and superficial to deeper and more profound. Again, the desired level of learning needs to be reflected in the objectives for a training event and in the methods which are used. A deep level of learning cannot be achieved by a one-way learning process. The diagram also suggests that it is possible to learn so thoroughly that it becomes a barrier to further learning.

Levels of learning



Learning is an active process

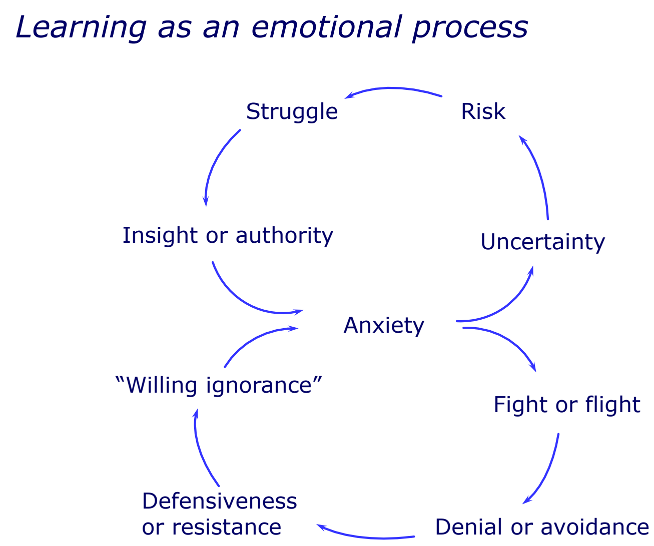
Very little is learned by purely passive reception. Training design needs to find ways of involving and engaging people actively with the subject matter. The clearest expression of this proposition is contained in Kolb's Learning Cycle (described in a separate handout).

Learning builds on existing knowledge, skills and attitudes

Adults learn by taking existing knowledge, skills and attitudes and using these as a foundation to build on. They have already developed mental models and ways of thinking, which may not necessary be explicit. It is usually therefore most effective to start from what people already know and move towards things which are completely unfamiliar. Similarly, learning should move from the simple to the complex. If this is not possible, it should be recognised that completely novel learning will require more repetition and reinforcement.

Learning is an emotional as well as rational process

The diagram below suggests that any learning process will produce some anxiety in the learner. This may either produce a positive cycle in which the anxiety is faced and managed (the upper part of the diagram) and a negative cycle (the lower part of the diagram in which it blocks learning taking place)



Participants’ behaviour on training events is influenced by a variety of personal agendas

For example:

- Their existing level of competence.
- Their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Personality factors.
- Past experience on training events.
- Things which are happening in the organisations in which they work.
- Events in their private lives.

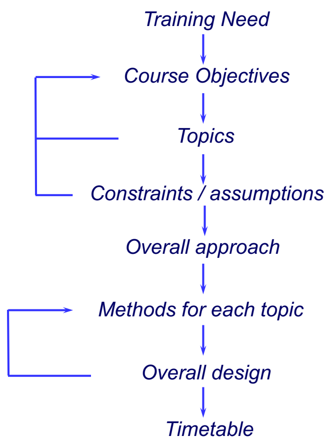
Most of this cannot be known in advance, only dealt with in the “here and now” on the course.

2 Course design

Introduction

This section describes the steps in designing a training course. It ignores the wider questions of overall strategy and how the need has been identified. A view of the design process is shown in the diagram below. The following sections describe each stage.

Course design process



Course objectives

These are statements about the outcomes which the course is intended to produce. They may begin life as a broad aim: e.g. improve the way in which projects are managed, which is then refined and made more specific. The simplest way into this is to think of the objectives as the end of a sentence which begins: "By the end of the course / session, participants will ... (be able to … , know … , understand … , etc.) "

The feedback loops in the diagram indicate that the initial definition of objectives may need to be modified once the topics have been identified and the constraints have been assessed. It may be that what was initially intended is too ambitious, unrealistic or insufficiently specific.

Topics

Once specific objectives have been framed it is possible to identify the broad topics which will need to be covered. The question to ask is: In order to meet the objective, what do the course participants have to know or understand, be able to do or have to regard as important or valuable. For example, if the objective is for participants to be able to undertake an performance review, the topics might include: the performance management process as a whole, structuring an interview, preparation, giving feedback, interpersonal skills such as listening and asking questions. The list of topics which is developed will of course reflect the course designer's understanding of the subject area. The process is essentially one of decomposing or breaking down the objectives into their component parts - there is no one right way to do it or one right outcome.

Constraints / assumptions

These are usually a mixture of factors, some imposed from outside and others self-imposed, which limit the choice of design options. Typical factors are:

- Time available (i.e. the duration of the course) - perhaps because of work pressures or the willingness of participants to attend.

- Number of participants. Larger groups have different dynamics and may make tutored small group work impracticable. In general, the larger the size of the group the slower the pace of learning.

- Characteristics of the participants, especially their level of existing knowledge or experience.

- Number of trainers, relative to the number of participants.

- Accommodation, in particular the availability of syndicate rooms.

- Equipment.

- Budget.

- The availability of key contributors.

- Length of the working day, start and finish times.

The constraints obviously have to be taken into account in developing the design and may be such as to lead to a reappraisal of the original objectives or proposed list of topics.

Overall approach

Between them the objectives and constraints will have shaped the overall parameters for the course: how long will it last, who are the participants, will it be residential or non-residential. Before beginning detailed design, it is also necessary to think about what kind of course it is intended to run. Some of the questions to consider are:

- Will there be a single standard programme or will there be any elements of choice for the participants?

- If there will be a choice, will it be from a fixed list of alternative or will you offer to respond to whatever they identify as being needed?

- Will the programme involve a major case study or simulation or a site visit?

- Will the programme be delivered in one block or in two or more separate blocks?

This process may also identify whether to plan any pre-work for the participants. This may be indicated by their level of experience or knowledge: perhaps there is something they have to have read or done before they will be able to profit from the training.

Methods for each topic

A wide range of possible methods is described in the next section which gives some pointers as to which methods are appropriate for different types of training objective. Of course each topic does not necessarily require a separate session - some may be combined in a single activity. Equally, some topics may be sufficient important to require mope than one session and therefore method: for example a presentation followed by an exercise.

Overall design

Having though about how to address each topic, the event as a whole will begin to take shape. It is important to think carefully about the separate demands of the beginning, middle and end:

Beginning	Middle	End
The main issue is participants' anxieties and expectations. It is usually appropriate to surface these issues, to provide a high level of structure, face validity and relevance.	Initial concerns have been resolved, though there can be a crisis of relevance. Less structure, less face validity, more challenging feedback, greater risk taking, more open-endedness.	Lower energy, thoughts turn to home or work. Focus on closure, tie up loose ends, link to job / role and application of learning, avoid opening up new issues.

It is vital to have some overall logic to the design. Some possibilities are:

- To follow the life cycle of the subject matter e.g. the stages of a project.
- To move from the simple or basic to the complex or advanced.
- To move from what participants already know to what is new to them.
- To present an overview then examine the components and then conclude with an integrating case study or simulation.
- To have a diagnostic phase followed by a development one.

The overall design should also include a variety of methods, with so far as possible successive sessions employing different methods. There may need to be a feedback to the design of individual elements of the course to ensure this variety. For example, it may be noticed that two successive topics are planned to be dealt with by means of a presentation.

With experience, it is possible to sequence the topics and methods to produce a predictable "dynamic" to the event: the overall level of energy, involvement and feeling experienced by the participants. This is an idea which is easier to experience than to explain!

Timetable

Finally, the course needs to be timetabled, at least approximately. This too may require fine tuning of the timings of individual sessions or changes to the overall design. Depending on the nature of the event and the expectations of the participants the timetable may be published or simply used to guide the trainer(s) in the delivery of the event.

3 Training methods

Introduction

This section reviews a wide range of methods which can be used on training courses. It presents a brief description of each method, including alternative ways of using it, and an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Each section concludes with suggestions as to the appropriate use of each method.

The following terminology is used throughout. “Plenary” describes any activity involving the whole group of course participants in the main room in which the course is taking place. “Syndicate” describes situations where the course divides into sub-groups of typically 4-7 participants who each work in a separate room or area. Each syndicate may have a trainer or it may be “untutored”. “Buzz groups” are groups of 2, 3 or 4 who engage in discussion within the plenary group. “Pairs”, “trios” and “foursomes” are groups who go off to do some activity, sometimes within the main room, sometimes further afield; they are always untutored.

Presentation

The trainer presents some information, ideas, models, methods, tools. It is commonly used to precede one of the more active methods, but can also be appropriate **after** an exercise or role play to help participants make sense of the experience. This option should always be supported by some sort of visual aids, even if only a flip chart. Participants should always be given the opportunity of asking questions. Back the presentation up with a handout.

It usually appropriate to alleviate the inherent passivity of presentations by keeping them short (less than 30 minutes) or breaking them up by posing questions for discussion, employing buzz groups or setting individual tasks.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Ensures that participants have all been given the same message. Practical and economical for large numbers. Can be interactive - people can hear about something and then ask questions to clarify their understanding. Predictable and controllable length of time required.	Basically passive, involving one way communication. Places the lecturer in an “expert” role which is not always appropriate. Retention of the information presented is limited unless there is subsequent practice.	Most appropriate for larger numbers, novel information or inexperienced audiences.

Plenary group discussion

There are two distinct versions of discussion: **open discussion** where issues, concerns and implications are explored, but without any particular product or conclusion being required and the **discussion task**, where participants are asked to talk about a particular topic or issue and reach conclusions. This sort of discussion is covered under the heading of syndicate group discussion.

Open discussion may be planned, but often arises spontaneously, especially where the subject matter is controversial or has obvious linkages to participants' lives: for example, a session on "managing change" will frequently generate lively discussion on how change is managed (or often, mismanaged) in participants' organisations.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**	**Use**
Values participants' own experience. Seen as responsive. Participants may clarify their own thinking and persuade each other. Spontaneous discussion often cathartic, relieves tension and lets off steam.	Time consuming. May seem inconclusive and pointless. Little gained if some participants hold fixed views. Perceived as manipulative if the trainer is trying to get agreement on a particular point of view.	If the training is intended to promote attitude change. To allow people to release pent up emotion and express concerns. Therefore most appropriate early in a programme before getting down to real work.

Syndicate group discussion

Syndicates or buzz groups are given a question, problem or topic to discuss and reach conclusions which are then reported back to the main group.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**	**Use**
Usually energising, especially if the topic is found to be interesting People's assumptions and beliefs are exposed and may be re-evaluated. Participants learn from each other's experience.	Unoriginal tasks or those seen as irrelevant may provoke derision. Group dynamic issues in the syndicate group may interfere with learning e.g. if there is unmanaged conflict or one member dominates. Report-backs rarely do full justice to the group discussion.	To get people "into" a topic - can be followed by a presentation to address it in a more structured way. To break up a long lecture. To allow opportunity for the tools and ideas to be tried out.

Exercise

This option takes a number of forms but typically involves working in small groups in which participants engage in some practical activity or task, which may be technical or interpersonal in nature. The output and/or the process by which it was achieved are reviewed afterwards in a way which may involve individual feedback for the participants. The feedback may come from fellow participants, trainers or both. Examples would be: decision making exercises; questioning or listening skills practice; fishbowl (where one group observes another discussing something); constructing a project plan; analysing some data. Exercises differ from role play (see below) in that participants are simply themselves and do not take on any particular role.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**	**Use**
Opportunity for feedback and increased self-awareness. Opportunity for ideas and models to be tried out. Energising and involving.	Face-validity may be questioned by participants. Time constraints or unreality often used as a defence. Participant-only feedback may be unperceptive or unhelpful.	Whenever the objective is to develop skills.

Case study

Participants are given a description of a true or at least plausible situation to work on. Case studies are most often presented on paper but oral and video presentations are also possible. For example, a case study might describe how an organisation tackled a particular issue or might describe an organisation and present a problem or challenge which is facing it. The task which can be done individually, in plenary or in syndicate groups (probably the most common) is to analyse what happened and identify what was done well or badly or to propose what the organisation should do in the light of analysing the description. A distinctive way of using case studies is the Harvard Case Teaching method in which the instructor poses questions to individuals in a plenary session which are designed to draw out the main lessons of the case. In principle, case studies can describe anything drawn from life: an individual, a relationship, a project, a social problem, a nation state. Finally, the amount of material presented can range from a comprehensive description to a short vignette. A whole course can be based around a substantial case study with more information being released in stages or the task being worked on in stages.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Usually energising, especially if the case is seen as highly relevant. People's assumptions and beliefs are exposed and may be re-evaluated. Participants learn from each other's experience.	A case seen as irrelevant may fail to energise. Group dynamic issues in the syndicate group may interfere with learning e.g. if there is unmanaged conflict or one member dominates. Participants may become so interested in the content that they lose sight of the learning objectives..	To provide opportunities for learning to be integrated - typically work on a case study draws together separate themes and elements in a course. To allow opportunity for the tools and ideas to be tried out. To relate theory to practice. To develop analytical skills.

Role play

Role play involves participants engaging the kinds of encounters they face in their work by taking on a role in a scenario which is given to them or perhaps created by them. Typical role plays would cover manager-staff member, buyer-seller, consultant-client, management-trade union. Despite the often-heard comment that "I can't act", role play is more like improvisation than acting: once underway the script becomes of secondary importance. The roles may be relatively detailed or quite sketchy and may be written in advance or constructed in the training room. Role play differs from case study in that the situations are described in much less detail and are acted out rather than discussed. After the role play has taken place participants are given feedback on how they handled the situation. Sometimes role plays are videotaped and the video is used to inform the review.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Gives insight into handling real world problems. Role reversal can be very insightful. Opportunity for feedback and increased self-awareness. Opportunity to try new things Energising and involving: can be surprisingly real. Low risk: the consequences are not real.	Face-validity may be questioned by participants. Time constraints or unreality often used as a defence: "But in the real world ….." Some participants express discomfort with role play. In the review stage some participants focus too much on the content of the situation rather than how it was handled.	Whenever the objective is to develop interpersonal skills. To supplement exercises by providing a more lifelike context. To provide the opportunity to rehearse handling situations which will be faced in the future.

Simulation

Exercises and role play typically focus on parts of a process: particular stages or skills. A simulation tries to give participants an experience of the whole thing: running a business, the complete life cycle of a project, an entire consultancy assignment. The design challenge is to confine the simulation to a manageable period of time while maintaining sufficient realism and complexity.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Maximum realism and impact. Usually highly energising. Popular with participants.	Can be expensive and time consuming to develop and run. Often logistically complicated to run.	As the culmination of a series of exercises and role plays. As a diagnostic activity early in a course. As a running theme throughout a course, perhaps broken up by other methods.

Self-assessment instrument

Participants fill out a questionnaire on aspects of their personality, preferences or behaviour. Well known examples are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, FIRO-B, Belbin Team Roles, Learning Styles questionnaire. Frequently participants are invited to discuss the outcome or the implications in pairs or small groups.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Provides potentially unique insight not available from any other method. Stimulus to reflection and self-analysis and may encourage participants to seek further feedback. Enables learning of the underlying concepts or theory.	Least effective for people who are highly self-aware or unaware and defensive. Danger of "so what" reaction.	To increase self-awareness. To increase acceptance of the need for change. To help develop relationships within a group or team.

Individual work

Individuals are asked to do a task, read some material, solve a problem, review their past experience, make action plans. This may take the form of pre-work, before attending the course or happen during or indeed after the course. When used during a course it is typically followed by discussion in pairs or small groups, but reporting back to the whole group is also possible.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Encourages people to relate general messages ands issues to their own situation. Opportunity for practice without pressure. Can enable sensitive and confidential issues to be addressed.	No control over what they actually do: process may not be understood or may be treated too casually.	As a quick way of providing variety in a plenary session. To address personal issues.

Video

A specially prepared training video is shown and used as a free standing input in its own right or as a stimulus for a discussion. Sometimes news clips, episodes of TV programmes or even feature films are used. The film may be shown in its entirety or stopped at key points for analysis and discussion.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Use
Some messages can be conveyed more powerfully in images. The "right way" to do something can be demonstrated. Can be very effective at dramatising a message. Change of process offers variety and stimulation.	Participants often dispute the relevance of videos: wrong culture, wrong type of organisation etc. The "right way" often seems contrived and false.	As an alternative to presentation as a way of getting over new ideas. As a trigger for discussion. As external reinforcement of messages put over on other ways. As light relief.

Demonstration

This can be used in two ways: one formal and one informal. In the formal sense the trainer shows the participants the right way to do something by demonstrating it in front of them. This is obviously vital for many technical skills e.g. stripping down a car engine, and can be valid for some social and interpersonal skills. Such demonstrations may be planned or ad hoc. Secondly, trainers often need to demonstrate the behaviour they are advocating continuously during a course - this is often called role modelling. So, in a course or session on listening, assertiveness or equal opportunities trainers have to behave in a way consistent with their message or completely lose credibility. Conversely, by modelling the appropriate behaviour they can reinforce the message by showing that it is possible.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**	**Use**
Shows what has to be done and that it is possible.	The trainer may be showing off. Can be discouraging for participants.	For technical, complex, difficult skills. To silence doubters and critics.

4 Running training courses

Introduction

This section reviews a range of issues which arise when running training courses. Presentation skills are covered in a separate paper. Other issues in actually delivering the programme are covered subsequently.

Room layout

This may have been planned in advance or identified as a constraint, but it is amazing how many training courses begin with the trainers rearranging the furniture. The options are summarised below.

Option	**Description**	**Comments**
Horseshoe or U	Participants sit in an U shape, with or without tables. Trainers sit at a top table or at the front.	Preferred option for most management training. Tables make it easier to refer to papers, make notes etc., but increase formality.
Board room	All participants sit around one large table, with the trainer at the head.	Interaction can be difficult and eye contact can be hard to maintain. Unsuitable for more than about 8 people. Acceptable for syndicate work if it is mainly discussion.
Cabaret	Participants sit in groups at small tables spread around the room; trainers sit at a top table.	Ideal for large groups where the table groups can also be used as syndicates. Difficult to maintain control as side conversations readily develop.
Lecture theatre	Participants sit in rows with the trainer at the front	Best avoided if possible, but often inescapable for large numbers.
Classroom	Participants sit at individual desks, trainer at the front.	Inappropriate for training adults.

Whichever layout is used, check that you will be a comfortable distance from the participants, neither too close, nor too far away.

Starting the course

Four main issues in your relationship with participants need to be managed at the start of a course: anxiety, trust, credibility and expectations.

Anxiety

Anxieties may be relatively superficial e.g. will this course be a good use of my time, will it provide value for money, will I learn anything useful, will it be relevant to my job? They may also be deeper: will these people like me, will I be given hurtful feedback, will I be humiliated and embarrassed, will my inadequacies be made obvious?

Trust

This is only usually an issue on in-house training. Can I trust the trainer(s) with my honest opinions, feelings and behaviours or might they use them against me e.g. by reporting on me to my boss?

Credibility

Does this trainer know enough to run this programme?

Expectations

Most people come to training courses with expectations based on their past experiences. These may or may not be helpful. They may expect more or less than you plan to provide. They may expect to work in a different way.

What to do

Think about your personal presentation. It is important to be neat, tidy and business-like. It is normally appropriate to broadly match the dress style of the participants: too big a difference can cause difficulty being accepted. At the start stand tall, speak slowly and confidently, smile, look relaxed and confident.

Try to surface the expectations and concerns. You can ask people to state their learning objectives when they introduce themselves (see below) or you can run an early syndicate exercise in which people are asked to identify their hopes and wants as well as their fears and concerns.

The introduction

This would typically cover:

- The "domestics": meals and refreshments, timings, health and safety, leisure activities, accommodation issues, etc.

- Course objectives and background.

- An outline of the programme and also the style and way of working.
- Personal introduction by the trainer(s) - but keep it brief.
- Personal introductions by the participants. Either the "creeping death" or some form of ice breaking exercise.

Notice how people present themselves: problem people often make themselves known right at the very beginning.

Dealing with problem people

From time to time you encounter course participants who pose unusual problems: highly opinionated, aggressive, resentful, persistently late, constantly negative, visibly neurotic. The specific solutions vary, but the general principle is that such problems should always be confronted. It is tempting to hope that they will simply go away, but all experience is that they never do. The choice is between confronting them privately outside the formal course sessions or doing so publicly during a session.

Redesign

Things do not always go to plan: sessions over-run, burning issues have to be dealt with as they arise, external events interfere. In all these situations it can be necessary to do some urgent redesign. Apart from just changing the timing of sessions, the other option is to change the method. There are always constraints on this, but some typical options are shown below. Most of these are about making up lost time.

- Replace a presentation by giving participants a handout to read and raise questions on.
- Replace a syndicate discussion with one in buzz groups (pairs or trios) or with an individual task.
- Abbreviate a case study by asking for the main recommended actions rather than a detailed plan.

Ending

The one thing you must do is end on time - or early. Finishing late causes great agitation.

It is usually best to end with a brief, decisive close: summarise the message, give an exhortation as to future behaviour, thank the participants for their contribution (if they deserve it) and say goodbye.

5 Posing questions

Uses

Sometimes questions are asked **rhetorically** during a talk or lecture. You pose the question “What can be done about this?” for example and then immediately provide a list of answers. This is a useful and effective device which focuses attention on your answers and starts the audience thinking.

Questions are frequently **posed to be answered in the course of an input session or lecture.** For example “What factors do motivate people?”. Or your may sketch out a problem or mini cases study and then ask “What should be done?”. This use of questions has the major benefit of making the session interactive by inviting the active participation of the audience and thereby increasing their interest and involvement. If the question was complex or covered a large topic it is often appropriate to write up the answers given on a flip chart for subsequent reference.

Questions can be used **to stimulate discussion**. These may range from the very broad “What do you think about …?” to the more specific “How does this apply to your organisation”.

Questions are also used to **guide review and feedback sessions** after exercises and role plays. Typical questions would be: “How do you think it went?”, “What was done well and what could have been done better?”

Guidelines

- Open questions work best in all these situations i.e. questions which allow the participants to answer in their own words - those beginning what, how, why, etc.
- Aim for short, clear questions rather than long, complex or wordy ones.
- Don’t panic if you don’t get a response straight away - some really good questions require a bit of thinking time.
- Be very careful in lecture situations to avoid appearing to play “Guess my list”. This can happen when the trainer poses a question and repeats it when the “right” answer does not come from the group. This is generally found to be irritating by most groups and can damage the rapport between trainer and group.
- Acknowledge and respond to all contributions even if they are wrong. Reinforce right answers and build on wrong ones. Be prepared to probe and clarify answers which don’t immediately make sense.
- If you write the answers on a flip chart, be very careful to use the person’s own words - do not write up your version of what they said (this can appear manipulative).
- There is always a choice between questions posed to the whole group and those posed to a specific individual. The former are more often used in plenary situations but risk always

being answered by the same few people. If this happens asking a specific individual can break this pattern and increase the level of attention. In small group work it is often more natural to talk directly to named individuals.

6 Running syndicate exercises

Introduction

This section deals with "untutored" syndicate exercises - that is where the whole group is broken down into syndicates and sent off by themselves to do a task. This is a common technique and apparently straightforward, but there are several areas to attend to ensure effectiveness.

Most often all syndicates do the same task but sometimes the tasks are interconnected: each syndicate works on one aspect of a problem for example. The role of the tutor is largely limited to briefing and debriefing and does not include facilitating the performance of the task itself, although it may be necessary to intervene in a group which has become stuck.

The focus in this section is on discussion tasks, but most of the points apply to other syndicate activities.

Choosing groups

There are a number of options:

- Random selection, usually based on how people are sitting.

- Self selection by participants. This is usually highly anxiety-provoking and is only really appropriate when the course concerns issues of leadership and power. It is a distraction on courses dealing with content and task level issues.

- Experience / capability / input. Usually the people with most and least are spread out around the groups. This cannot usually be determined in the initial stages of a course.

- Attitude to training in general or this particular course. Usually the most positive and negative people are spread out, but occasionally a "dustbin strategy" of putting all the negative people in one group can be employed.

- Gender - most often genders are mixed, unless you are working on gender issues when single gender groups can be helpful.

- Type - if you have data from instruments such as MBTI, the Learning Styles Questionnaire this can be used to form groups based on the same type or a controlled mix of types.

- Development needs - groups can consist of people with similar or compatible needs.

- Group dynamic issues. Sometimes power struggles and conflict or personal animosity dictate that particular individuals should be split up.

There is also often the question of whether to keep the same groups or whether to change them. The latter helps to build the whole group, the former provides safety and familiarity within the small group. Sometimes both options can be used: participants belong to a home group for learning review purposes and groups which constantly change for activities.

Briefing

This should typically cover:

- The task in clear and unambiguous terms.
- The reasons for doing the task - the purpose or value.
- The outputs to be produced.
- Methods to be used or skills to be deployed.
- Any rules which apply.
- The time available.
- If a report-back is expected, indicate roughly how long it is expected to last.

The briefing should be written down (handout, flip chart, chalkboard, OHP).

Check out

Give the syndicates a few minutes to get settled then check out that they are clear what they are doing and have no problems. If you want to do more than this (e.g. sit in), explain the role you will take during the briefing.

Manage the report-back

Ensure that each syndicate has an equal opportunity to present a report of its work. Manage the time so that enough is left for the last group. Don’t let presenters get away with “the other groups have said it all” as an excuse to avoid making a proper report-back.

If several reports are to be heard addressing the same issue the second and subsequent presenters can be encouraged to focus on the parts of their presentation which cover new ground or disagree with what has gone before.

If the syndicates’ work varies in quality, try to engineer it so that the worst goes first and the best goes last so as to avoid ending with an anticlimax and a feeling of failure.

To maintain the energy level during report-backs, ask questions. Keep everybody on their toes by questioning things which are vague, ambiguous, incomplete or just plain wrong.

Respond

If syndicates have put some work and effort into an activity they will expect some response. Depending on circumstances this might be in the form of:

- Feedback of strengths and weaknesses.
- The right answer with explanations.
- Synthesis of the various points raised.
- Linking their reports with subsequent parts of a programme.
- Input which draws together or conceptualises what they have done.

Close

A good response should ensure this. Avoid the feeling "What was that for?" which can easily intrude if the exercise simply tails off into anti climax. Plan the punchline if possible.

7 Co-training

This section reviews the issues which need to be resolved whenever two people co-present a session, a course or a workshop. These issues and any subsequent difficulties should be addressed by contracting, i.e. by explicit discussion and agreement.

Benefits of having multiple trainers

- Makes it possible to work in tutored syndicates (e.g. doing role plays and skills practice).
- Offers variety of style for participants which usually helps to maintain their interest.
- Facilitates skills transfer and induction of new trainers.
- Trainers can play to their strengths and work on topics or in ways which suit their capabilities and preferences.
- Trainers can learn from observing each other and from feedback from each other.

Risks

- Conflict, competition or tension between trainers can get in the way.
- Very different styles can be confusing and prevent the event having a coherent identity.
- Lack of teamwork can look very unprofessional.

Issues for contracting

Roles

Several options are possible but in all cases somebody must be agreed to be in charge of the session and all sessions must have a defined responsibility.

Present alternately (one on/one off)

The trainer who is off may either sit in or sit out - the former can be helpful to monitor the course dynamic and to permit linking in later sessions.

Lead and support

One trainer runs the session but the other contributes as appropriate. Clear groundrules are vital here.

Speak and chart

One trainer runs the session while the other acts as scribe. Superficially attractive but it is difficult to play the role of scribe satisfactorily without asking clarifying questions so this quickly shades into lead and support.

Facilitator and expert

In workshops rather than courses it may be helpful for one to run the event leaving the other to play a role of expert contributor.

Groundrules for intervening

Sometimes the non-presenter simply cannot intervene without irreparable damage to the other trainer's credibility. In other cases it may be possible to intervene by indicating a desire to speak or doing so when invited. Having intervened, control should normally be returned to the person running the session. Conversely, it should be agreed beforehand if intervention is to be requested.

It shouldn't really be necessary to agree that the non-presenter should not show signs of boredom, disagreement or disapproval. Collective solidarity and support in the training room ought to be a basic expectation.

Decision making

Is one trainer ultimately in charge or is the responsibility joint? Who has authority to depart from the programme or timetable.

Training style

Both need to be clear what kind of programme they are presenting - is it cognitive and strategic or is it personal development or whatever. The appropriate kinds of behaviours follow on from this.

Style of dress

How formal.

Annex: Instruction

Introduction

This annex outlines a step by step approach to take when instruction has to be planned from scratch. The steps are:

1. Set objectives.
2. Analyse the task.
3. Plan the instruction.
4. Prepare your materials.
5. Prepare the environment.
6. Prepare the trainee(s).
7. Deliver the instruction.
8. Provide opportunities to try out what has been learned.

These steps are considered in turn, although the earlier steps may need to be revisited in the light of the later ones.

Set objectives

The key question to ask is, “What will the trainee(s) be able to do at the end of the session?” The answer should be expressed in clear, specific, behavioural terms.

The objective must also be realistic in terms of the time available and the starting point of the trainee(s): you can’t expect make experts out of people who are totally ignorant of the subject at hand or who would rather not be there, especially in a short period of time.

Analyse the task

In order to be able to instruct somebody else in a task you have to clear what exactly they have to know. This may appear obvious but very often the more experienced and competent we are, the less conscious we are about exactly what we do when we do a particular task - it becomes almost automatic. It is necessary therefore to self-consciously review exactly what is involved - this process is called task analysis.

The simplest way to do task analysis is to complete a form like that shown below. This involves breaking the total task down into a sequence of steps arranged in order and for each step describing:

- What is actually done.
- What it is necessary to know about or understand in order to be able to do it.
- Any other relevant information: safety points, risks, things to pay especial attention to, common errors, points of particular importance, important technical or jargon terms.

Task analysis

Step	*What you do*	*Knowledge needed*	*Comments*

The analysis is usually best done by roughing out the steps on a piece of paper and then working through a real example making more detailed notes. It is always shocking how difficult it is to do in the abstract and how many more points are identified by working through a practical example.

If the task comes in many variants, it is usually preferable to focus on the variant(s) which occur most commonly.

Describing the task may identify choices and variations - these may need to be described separately. Prior knowledge or decisions may also be identified.

Plan the instruction

Structure

The simple way to think about structure is in terms of beginning, middle and end. In the **beginning**, you should plan to cover:

- What the instruction is about, what it is to achieve.
- Time.
- Groundrules for questions, will handouts be available, breaks etc.

At the **end**:

- Brief summary.
- Conclusions, parting thoughts.
- Next steps.

The **middle** of course requires the greatest planning and we will consider it under the headings of sequence and methods.

Sequence

There are a number of possible ways of sequencing the material to be included in instruction. It is generally best to move:

- From the general principles to the specific details.
- From the whole task to the component parts.
- From the common or normal to the unusual.
- From the simple to the difficult.
- From the start to the finish.
- From the familiar to the unfamiliar.

It is however often not possible to satisfy all of these requirements at once. For example, where possible the natural sequence of the task should be used. However it often happens that the teaching sequence is not the same as the doing sequence, perhaps because certain skills are basic to the whole process or because the first step will not make sense until, the learner understands what follows.

Possible method

1. Start by describing and demonstrating the whole task.

2. Go over it again step by step explaining each action and give whatever information is associated with it.
3. Repeat the step by step description, testing the trainee's understanding by asking questions.

4. Get the trainee to try it out. Encourage the trainee to ask questions. Give feedback as the practice continues.

5. More advanced aspects - variations, problems, what if...

Step three may be too much, especially if the trainees are keen to get stuck in. In this case some questions may be included in step 2.

Prepare the materials

You may need some or all of:

- A brief - something to speak from.
- Visual aids.
- Tools, equipment, materials.
- Handouts.
- Samples.

Prepare the environment

You will need:

- Somewhere to deliver the instruction.
- To minimise distractions.

Prepare the trainee(s)

It will be appropriate to do some or all of:

- Check prior knowledge.

- Create interest in advance.
- Give advance notice: what, why, when, where.
- Deal with any concerns or fears.

Deliver the instruction

This is essentially about doing what you planned in the preparation stage. However, it is important to be alert for any need to change tack if what you planned is not working. If you are not sure how it is going, ask the trainee(s).

Provide opportunities for practice

It can be very frustrating to be given some instruction and then not have any opportunity to practice what has been learned. It is important therefore to plan to provide such opportunities and this may imply carrying out the instruction at a time when they will be available.

It will be important to be available to provide support, to review progress and possibly to check the product. However, the trainee should not feel that you are looking over their shoulder the whole time.