

## **Planning and Designing a Powerful Learning Event**

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Obviously, you want your learning events to be a success. To accomplish this goal, there are a number of things to remember as you plan and design them. By properly preparing and striving to ensure that your content and delivery results in meeting the needs and expectations of your learners and their sponsors, you will increase the likelihood of their satisfaction and meeting stated objectives. You will also help ensure that you deliver a quality, professional learning event.

### **Get Copyright Permission**

There are many resources available on the Internet and in print that can contribute positively to your learning outcomes. No matter what your topic, there is likely a wealth of information available to you to reinforce concepts and add value to what you provide to your learners. Like me, the authors of most of these resources are typically happy to share their knowledge. In many instances, they will allow you to reproduce small segments of their publications or entire articles.

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### **Make Everything Meaningful**

You have already read that training time is precious. The challenge is to get learners to appreciate that what you are delivering to them meets their needs, matches their personal learning goals and is relevant. As adults and professionals in a given field, they likely already have a base knowledge of the content that you plan to share with them. For that reason, you must take the information learned from your needs analysis and create links or short-cuts between what they know and what you have planned. For example, if you are facilitating a workshop for a group of experienced supervisors, they likely have already been exposed to the basics of coaching, counseling, communicating, motivating, and providing performance feedback to employees. If these are topic areas covered in your session, you will need to think of ways to show learners how to more systematically and logically use the knowledge and skills they possess to improve their on-the-job performance. An easy way to help this occur is to provide the format or structure for using knowledge or skills, perhaps in the form of a model. You could then give learners a chance to work in small groups to determine ways of applying it in their work environments. Through this technique, they actually take what you give and customize it to their individual needs while receiving feedback from their peers on how it might be improved. In this fashion, when they walk out of the room, they have real-world knowledge, skills and strategies that can be applied immediately. This always adds value to any learning experience and enhances return on investment. It can also enhance your session evaluation results.

### Focus on Specifics

In order to be meaningful, provide targeted information rather than taking an approach of throwing out a lot of information and ideas in hopes that some will help learners or be effective. Most attendees will not have the time nor desire to sit through a session in which you provide unneeded or irrelevant information. For example, if you were teaching a class on effective creative writing skills and were talking about how to look up information in a dictionary, it would be unnecessary to cover every term in the book. Instead, you should teach them how to find a specific item in the text. Similarly, if you were showing learners how to use Microsoft Word® software to create a document and save it, it would be unnecessary to show them how to attach a saved document to an outgoing email message. Even though the latter is one of the possibilities with compatible software, learners do not need to know that technique in your session. By including the unnecessary skill, you would likely only confuse and distract learners from your primary goal of learning to create a document.

Use the old K.I.S.S. principle (**Keep It Short and Sweet**) when creating and delivering your workshop material. Focus only on what learners need to know in order to achieve stated learning objectives.

### Help Learners Make Connections

Adult learners appreciate information that they can add to their memory and which relates to something they already know. This cuts down on their learning curve and increases the learning experience. The “ah ha” moments or realizations and visual

applications come more quickly when learners can relate to something they already have stored in memory.

To help maximize learning, provide information in small digestible chunks (chunking) or small bits of material with which learners are somewhat familiar. This reduces the likelihood that you will overwhelm them with volumes of new information. In taking such an approach, you increase the likelihood that they will quickly understand and assimilate what you offer. Anything else can cause overload and shut learning down.

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