

Greetings!

Train in Vain?

We hope your company's training programs are achieving the desired results, but we also love that song by The Clash. We thought we'd step off the grammar bandwagon for a while and impart some training concepts. In this edition of *KB CommEntary*, we introduce a multi-part series of information and tips for designing, implementing, and measuring the effectiveness of training programs.

What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB COMM, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us busy. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Creating and revising job descriptions for the Careers website of a high-tech manufacturer
- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including communications to employees from the CEO and executive leadership team, customer letters, trade show presentations and materials, and product marketing brochures
- Writing, formatting, and performing quality control reviews of large, complex chemical residue studies intended for regulatory submission on behalf of a federally funded, cooperative research organization
- Writing supplements and formatting modules of electronic submissions to FDA for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company

KB COMM LLC is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

Tips and Tales

Training for Success, Pt. 1: Basic Principles

Employee or customer training is best viewed as an investment that can pay great dividends if done correctly. For that reason, we recommend engaging training professionals to design and implement your training programs if you don't already employ such individuals on your staff.

Even when professionals are involved, your training programs will be more successful if the decision-makers in your business understand some of the basic concepts and principles that contribute to effective learning.

Adult Learning Characteristics

First, it's critically important to understand that adults learn differently than younger people. Admit it: we have a harder time texting, listening, gaming, and searching simultaneously than those whippersnappers. In 1970 (back when cell phones were bigger than a breadbox), Malcolm Knowles first identified six characteristics of adult learners that today form the basis for all well-designed training programs. A good training program should:

1. *Be Practical and Problem Centered:* Give overviews, summaries, and examples, and use stories to link theory to practice.
2. *Promote Their Self Esteem:* Help them become more effective and confident through guided practice and establishing routines.
3. *Integrate New Ideas with Knowledge:* Help them recall what they already know from their prior experience that relates to the topic of learning.
4. *Show Respect for the Individual Learner:* Provide a quality, well-organized, differentiated experience that uses time effectively and efficiently.
5. *Capitalize on the Experience:* Don't ignore what they already know, because it's a resource for you. But also be aware that they may have learned inaccurate information or behavior.
6. *Allow Choice and Self Direction:* Ask what they would like to know about the topic.

Adult Learning Styles

Most adult learners develop a preference for the way they like to learn. These learning styles are usually described as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Unless you know for certain that your audience unanimously prefers one approach to learning, you need to design training in a way that accommodates all three of these styles or preferences.

Visual learners prefer seeing what they are learning. Pictures and images help them understand ideas and information better than explanations. They prefer written instructions with diagrams and will read and follow the directions as they work.

Auditory learners prefer to hear the message or instruction. They like to have someone talk them through a process rather than reading about it first. Some of these learners may even talk themselves through a task, and should be given the freedom to do so when possible. Adults with this learning style remember verbal instructions well and prefer someone else read the directions to them while they do the physical work or task.

Kinesthetic learners want to sense the position and movement of the skill or task. These learners generally do not like lecture or discussion classes, but prefer those that allow them to "do something." These adults do well learning a physical skill when there are materials available for hands-on practice.

In a Nutshell...

Adults learn best when teaching strategies combine visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches. Ultimately, adults learn best by doing. Active participation, which can take many different forms, is the cornerstone for both the style of learning and the principles of adult education. Active learning results in longer-term recall, synthesis, and problem-solving skills than learning with verbal instruction only.

In our next issue, we will talk about some of the mostly commonly used delivery mechanisms for training in a corporate setting.

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

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KB COMM

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