

Making effective training interventions

A short guide to make sure you choose people who can train well.

If I had a pound for each time someone tells me they can train, I would be a very rich man! Many people have the confidence to stand in front of a group and inform them on their subject, but a good percentage, I would wager, are unaware that from the recipients viewpoint, they are not a very good trainer at all.

For many years, I commissioned training and development programmes and learnt a very hard lesson that action speaks louder than words. The market place seemed full of people who made a convincing case for the quality of their training, only to send a trainer that wasn't very good at it.

With a poor trainer, the bottom-line is that the session is a waste of time. At best, people have had a break and maybe taken away a couple of tips. At worst, they are turned off an important subject and possibly training, generally.

So just how do you engage, involve, motivate and get people truly learning?

At LTI Solutions, because we are in the training and coaching business, this is the first thing we make sure we can do. So let's share some of our secrets!

1. 'How' as well as 'what'

Know your stuff, of course, but don't make the mistake that content is the be all and end all. **How** you put it across is equally important.

2. Some 'how' issues that work

- Speak clearly and personably to your audience
- Speak in real or concrete terms, lessen the abstract, jargon and acronyms
- Use brief, easy to understand stories that illustrate your point
- Use a variety of methods that stimulate the senses and engage your audience in the subject
- Build rapport and trust
- Promote discussion through asking questions – don't just answer theirs.

3. Build rapport and trust

Make sure you are set up before your audience arrive so you can get to know people in a relaxed fashion over coffee

Dress appropriately to be the group leader

Soft sell your skills and experience in the subject early on to build credibility

Ask questions, listen and show understanding - don't dominate

Later in the programme - provide tailored advice to individuals based upon common understanding.

4. Take them on a journey...

At the beginning, the participants need to focus upon the objectives of the session and the topics and timings in the programme.

The journey will then be travelled together with participants engaged in a review of key learning points and plans at the end.

5. Start where they are at...

Use assessment tools to enable participants to focus on their current level of competence in the session's subject.

Engage with individuals in the subject to understand their current job context and experience level: also their hopes, concerns, needs and goals.

Understand motivation early on. Where there are group or individual problems: understand it, discuss it and deal with it.

6. Use a variety of training activities

Engage people early on with a group activity related to the subject.

Plan activities that:

- open up a topic
- enable focussed discussion and problem solving
- allow the practice of a skill
- enable application of skills to the participants work situation.

Make the purpose, timing and outcome from the activity clear at the outset. Choose methods that stimulate the senses – with creativity, colour and movement.

Talk in an engaging manner for a maximum of 20 minutes – usually following the review of an activity – to reinforce and maximise learning impact.

7. Strong follow-up

A course catches people's competence levels in time, like a photo catches our physical features. So whilst it is important to 'start where they are at', it is equally important to send participants away with a plan to improve their performance and the drive to achieve it.

Relevant workbooks are a useful source of reference later – enough useful information, written in plain business English with reading lists and useful websites.

8. And finally...

Be respectful and good-humoured. Be aware of and flexible to group needs.

Swiftly respond to reasonable requests eg light, heat, water, fresh air.

Remain unflappable, where nothing is too much trouble.

Start and finish on time.