ZIPL!NE
PERFORMANCE GROUP

Tips and Techniques from Zipline

10 Practices to Avoid in Your Next Training Program

There are many practices that produce great instructor-led virtual or classroom learning experiences. When balancing your intention to create the best experience with the pressures of limited time and resources, you can render your training ineffective by cutting corners in preparation, presentation, or follow-up. Try to avoid the following practices so you can ensure that you and your learners have a successful experience in the classroom and beyond.

1. Cutting out essentials. We recently outlined the essential components of a training program. For example, learning objectives, assessments, participant guides, and activities should be included as a regular part of your curriculum. Without these essentials, knowledge acquisition and retention may suffer.

2. Ignoring adult learning principles. Well-established adult learning theory states that your learners need to be motivated and involved. So that they can connect with the curriculum, relate to the learners' current experiences, provide opportunities for interaction, and give positive feedback. Omitting adult learning principles leads to learner inattention and frustration.

3. Remaining out of date. With the rapid pace of technology, some content can change soon after learners complete the program. Poor performance on the job can be traced back to outdated knowledge in the classroom. So, always stay up-to-date and keep making changes to the curriculum as needed. If possible, provide learners in earlier classes with new information so you can help improve their performance long after they receive a certificate of completion.

4. Dropping off the radar. Your responsibility as a trainer continues beyond the classroom as you provide additional reinforcement with new learning resources. Don't consider the end of each class of learners as the end of your involvement with them. If you do, they'll likely forget about you, as well as a large part of what they've learned.

5. Using the Web indiscriminately. You can search the Web for inspiration and ideas when necessary, but you should use Web content sparingly (if at all) and only with attribution and after making sure it's correct. When you "borrow" content without giving proper credit or having regard for its accuracy, your learners will know that you are not an expert and that you condone plagiarism.

6. Leaving the program untested.
The program isn't ready for launch until it has gone through an extensive beta test. For example, ask your peers to review the program and provide their input. Then, after you make initial changes, conduct a session with a group of learners who already know the material. Seek feedback and continue to revise the program until you launch. An untested program is usually an ineffective one.

7. Disregarding the scope.
Identify the parameters of the scope of your program before developing your learning objectives. This practice increases the likelihood that you will not venture into areas unrelated to the topic. If you don't define the scope beforehand, your learners will notice how often you digress, adding to information overload and confusion.

8. Believing "one style fits all."
When preparing the curriculum, incorporate audio, video, product samples, and role-playing exercises for learners to experience. This takes into consideration their individual learning styles and their need to be challenged and involved. After all, not many learners can maintain interest if you speak in a monotone, show one bulleted slide after another, and provide no leave-behinds.

9. Asking no questions.
In addition to assessments, throw out questions frequently during the program for learners to test and apply their knowledge. The alternative—waiting until they're back on the job so they can practice what they've learned—usually leads to performance problems that reflect poor training on your part.

10. Skipping the evaluation.
Requiring learners to evaluate their learning experience and your presentation gives you the incentive to improve it every time. Read their feedback and decide how you can integrate it. On the other hand, if you think learners rarely complete an evaluation sheet—so there's no need to give them one—their feedback to you may come in the form of costly indecision and mistakes on the job.