

## *Tips and Techniques from Zipline*

### **10 Essential Components for Any Training Program**

*Have you ever attended a class where the instructor talks through a set of slides, then everyone leaves? Is that training or an informational meeting, and what's the difference? Training involves: 1) greater intention on complete coverage of a body of information and 2) assurance of the transfer of knowledge. On the other hand, a meeting: 1) puts forth information but isn't intentional on how complete it is and 2) doesn't ensure everyone has understood it. So how do you ensure that you are training rather than informing? The following list of "must-haves" for training programs will help you accomplish that.*

**1. Learning objectives.** These are (or should be) developed before any curriculum can be designed, and are essential when developing assessments. Make sure your learning objectives identify specific knowledge or performance behaviors that can be measured, such as "List and demonstrate the procedures for replacing a toner cartridge in the MegaPrint 3000x."

**2. Curriculum map.** This is the outline of all the content that you'll be using in the class, plus any supporting information. The map usually includes the sequence of topics, the important points of each topic, learning objectives, references, and classroom materials and activities. You can use the map to create an agenda for distribution and to guide your PowerPoint presentation.

**3. Participant guides.** You may want "all eyes" on you as you speak, but adult attention spans often don't allow that degree of focus. Instead, a participant guide distributed before the class enables everyone to follow along, write notes next to the relevant topic, and stay alert throughout the presentation. The guide also serves as a reference to reinforce learning long after the class is over.

**4. Assessments.** A pre-assessment, usually with multiple-choice and other question types, several days before the class helps you identify which topics you should focus on. To assess performance objectives, be certain that participants can demonstrate what they've learned. Always make sure both pre-and post-assessments cover all of your learning objectives.

**5. Media and more.** If your concepts are presented with different types of stimuli (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), your participants will learn better. So, instead of standing up and showing slide after slide of uninspiring bullet points, make use of photos, illustrations, clip art, SmartArt, audio, video, interactive multimedia, and physical items that everyone can examine.

**6. Participation exercises.** Whenever possible, consider dividing the class into small groups to collaborate on practicing a procedure, solving a problem, or working through a role-playing scenario. Not only do these exercises break up long stretches of sitting down and listening, they also provide interactivity that helps boost understanding of abstract concepts.

**7. Leave-behinds.** In addition to the participant's guide, provide other materials that your class can take with them to continue their learning. These can include lists of helpful tips, manuals, specification sheets, PowerPoint slides, and additional exercises. To save paper and printing time, keep your documents available for download from the company's intranet site.

**8. Demonstrations.** Why only tell your class what they should know—when you can also show them? Their performance will improve if you demonstrate a procedure and also give them the chance to demonstrate it to others. “Show and tell” is valuable not only when teaching how to use new equipment or software, but also how to improve interpersonal behavior.

**9. References.** Offer your participants the gift of extended learning with an annotated, categorized reference list of books, articles, web sites, and other sources. A few weeks later, follow up with the class by email and provide interesting excerpts from several of the sources; this will provide participants with the incentive to continue learning on their own.

**10. Q&A.** No instruction should be without a question-and-answer session—if not several. The decision is up to you as to whether the floor should be open all the time or only at the end of each topic. However, adults learn best in informal environments, so more Q&A is better than less. The quality and quantity of questions will also help you tweak your presentation for the next class.