

HOW TO CRAFT A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT – PART 2

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SCHOLARS HAVE LONG HELD THAT when we see ourselves learning and growing, it creates an increased sense of competence, which in turn provides a great sense of meaning in one’s work. What a great gift to be able to provide for your team – an ecosystem that nurtures learning and growth.

But not all learning is created equal – at least not when it comes to how adults learn. Facilitating a meaning-rich environment of learning and growth in the workplace starts with being mindful of what adult learning principles have taught us about how adults learn. Follow these principles to turn your conference room into a classroom:

1) **DRAW ON THEIR EXPERIENCE AND WHAT THEY KNOW**

When adults receive new information, they will compare and contrast that new information with what they know; this process of reconciliation helps them to learn. You can help the adult worker draw similarities and differences between old and new experiences to help cement learning. Likewise, you can provide context on the bigger picture to further facilitate the connection to what the adult learner already knows.

2) **ATTEND TO ATTENTION SPANS**

There is a known data point that says the adult mind can maintain rapt attention for about 20 minutes of time. In today’s fast paced digital reality, however, that span has plummeted to about **8 seconds**. For any classroom or training program that relies on a speaker/audience approach, it is important to be mindful of this reality to maximize the power of the learning experience. Breaking up lectures or presentations with

visuals, videos, audio, discussions, and stories can substantially expand the mind's ability to stay engaged. Great content and context can further expand attention spans.

3) PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMMEDIATE PRACTICE

Adults want to put what they've learned to use, fast. Creating opportunities for adults to practice and play with what they've learned at work makes the learning stick and is more likely to create a feeling of increased competence.

4) MAKE CLEAR THE PERSONAL RELEVANCE/VALUE OF THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

While children will most often simply accept the process of being taught, adults need to understand why they are engaged in a learning process and how it benefits them. This is especially true in a work environment, where many priorities press at the would-be learning adult each and every day.

5) ENSURE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Adults want to be more self-directed and active in the learning process, whereas children are more passive in the process and dependent on an adult instructor to feed them the requisite learning. Adults don't need or want a lot of supervision. For you, this means facilitating the learning process versus overdoing oversight of the process. Micromanaging the learning experience will drain the potential fulfillment and meaning to be derived.

6) LEVERAGE MISTAKES AS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Adults view learning from mistakes as one of the most valuable, potent learning experiences of all. That is, as long as the fear of being reprimanded for those mistakes is completely absent from the potential learning environment.

7) TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

1. Divergers learn by watching and looking at things from differing perspectives.
2. Accommodators are hands-on, relying on intuition rather than logic.
3. Assimilators prefer a logical, precise approach to learning that includes explanations and logical theories.
4. Convergors first think through a problem and then use their learning to resolve that problem.

