



ACCESS TRUMPS KNOWLEDGE: CHANGES *for* TRAINING DELIVERY

- CHARLES JENNINGS

The well-worn phrase “knowledge is power” can be traced back to the seventh century Islamic leader Imam Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. The full text of Imam Ali’s utterance, as recorded in the 10th century Nahj al-Balagha, is “knowledge is power and it can command obedience.” Although this was true in a world of information and knowledge paucity, it is not wholly true today.

THE NEW TRAINER CULTIVATES A CULTURE OF INQUIRY.

Today’s world is not one of information paucity, but of information and knowledge abundance. The concept of a profession whose primary role is to keep and disseminate knowledge using traditional teaching methods is rapidly disappearing. While our schools and universities – and, to some extent, our training and development departments – will continue to provide education and training, one important aspect of their function is changing. Their primary focus is changing from packaging and disseminating information to helping people improve their ability to find the “right stuff” when they need it, and make sense of it when they have located it.

The fundamental role for teachers, trainers and learning professionals is evolving from one with a focus on transferring information to one of supporting and enabling continuous learning; from teaching content to helping develop transferrable skills; from providing learners with detailed information to providing

strategies and cues to find the right information when it’s needed.

Work may still require that we memorize and store core concepts in our heads, but we don’t need to memorize all the additional detailed information that’s necessary to complete every task; we simply need a map of where to locate it quickly when it’s needed.

OUR OUTBOARD BRAINS

Detailed data is increasingly stored in our “outboard brain” – in physical data stores across the Internet, in data inside our organizations’ firewalls, in our personal files and applications, and in our colleagues and contacts.

The challenge for training professionals is to find ways to adapt their approaches to this new world of information abundance and knowledge accessibility. Designing and delivering content-rich and experience-poor training courses is no longer either appropriate or useful.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING CULTURES

We are fortunate that technology, the force which has made information and knowledge so easily accessible, can also help learning professionals embed more useful approaches in their work.

Ubiquitous connectivity and the ability to retrieve information in seconds has removed the need for dense content-rich training courses. The best training is flipping from being content-rich and experience-poor to being experience-rich and content-light.

The new training delivery is part facilitation and part curation. The role of the trainer is

becoming one of a guide who signposts and helps people understand general principles, techniques and behaviors. The new trainer is also a curator, helping people make sense of information and knowledge, and adding value to it while doing so. The new trainer cultivates a culture of inquiry.

THE ROLE OF SENSE-MAKER

The new training and development department has an important role to play in sense-making, or supporting people to build personal knowledge mastery (PKM). PKM is a way we can ensure people will work more effectively. My Internet Time Alliance colleague Harold Jarcho has spent several years working on the PKM framework using the seek-sense-share approach:

- **Seeking:** finding things out and keeping up-to-date.
- **Sensing:** personalizing information and putting into practice what we have learned.
- **Sharing:** exchanging resources, ideas and experiences with our networks.

When training delivery is interpreted as meaning delivery of an agile, capable and continuously learning workforce, and the training and development department has played its part, then we should be proud of the way in which we have embraced the changes. 🔄

Charles Jennings is a director of the Internet Time Alliance. He is the former chief learning officer for Thomson Reuters. [Email Charles.](#)