

Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water - Should instructor-led training be tossed? Part 2 (May 13)

By: Bobby Butler, May 16, 2013



Editor's note: This article is part two of a three-part series. The first segment discussed how the idiom "don't throw the baby out with the bath water" is analogous to threats to instructor-led training. Additionally, the seven problems inherent in using traditional instructor-led training today and how ILT's problems impact training's stakeholders were discussed. Part Two discusses four of the six attributes of a revolutionary systems approach to ILT that fixes its problems and how to make it more workable and impactful in today's workforce

The problems inherent in using traditional instructor-led training today are pervasive and impact all stakeholders. However, given its long-tenured utility, I contend that before we get rid of ILT (throwing the baby out..., if you will), we fix the problems and make ILT much more workable and impactful for today's workplace by making revolutionary changes.

This can be done by first building a training system and not a program, and setting up a platform better suited to today's working conditions. Additionally, standardizing the delivery timeframe and format, incorporating a participant-centric training approach, and including the components and tools needed to engage all parties responsible for employee development. And lastly, building in better cost controls.

Building a Training System, Not a Program

Constructing a training system involves ensuring all parties that bear responsibility for employee development are included in the design strategy. But, while all programs, seminars and workshops include materials for the instructor and participants, most do not take into consideration strategies for getting participants' supervisors and/or managers actively involved.

When designing from a system approach, components and tools must be incorporated to engage all stakeholders so that:

- instructors prepare, deliver and support the training
- participants prepare, participate in and implement the training
- participants' direct supervisors/managers reinforce the training and assess how well it is being used on the job

Additionally, the design strategy has to include modular, associative and accumulative features, so programs, seminars or workshops may be utilized independently—to address a specific developmental need(s), or collectively—as in a series for long term skills development.

Establishing a Platform Better Suited for Today

Single-day and multi-day programs, seminars and workshops are outdated and have to be replaced. But, what is the best way to replace them? Technology-based learning providers will tell you that their products, whether self-directed learning, e-learning or mobile learning, are the answer.

While I don't completely disagree with their assertions, and believe their products are a part of the solution, there still is a better way. And, that is by building a modern day ILT solution that simplifies the approach to training, delivery method and tools used (during preparation, in class and following training). Additionally, simplifying the content by distilling each skill taught down to learnable actions and/or behaviors that empower participants to implement the training immediately upon returning to their jobs.

Standardizing Delivery Timeframe & Format

The first order for standardization is establishing a platform where ILT is conducted with short-interval timeframes. Something less than a day-long program, seminar or workshop is key.

One-hour workshops are recommended, especially when teaching soft skills and many conceptual and functional skills. Moreover, hour-long workshops are most useful in today's workplace for a number of reasons. Most important of them; when teaching people to work better with others, an interactive and collaborative learning experience is essential, and it is difficult to produce this type of environment when the training's duration is less than an hour.

Additionally, to be effective, each one-hour workshop must follow the same design format. This is important for two reasons:

1. Given the short-interval timeframe, the instructor must have a standardized format to work from to consistently produce the best learning experience for participants
2. With a standardized format, participants will have (especially if they attend multiple workshops) a clear understanding and appreciation for how to get the most out of each streamlined learning experience

Using a Participant-centric Training Approach

Instructor-led training has historically been designed using one of three approaches:

1. The design itself
2. The training methodology
3. The content covered

All three quality approaches have proven their merit over the years. However these approaches have run their respective courses and are no longer well-suited for today's 21st century workplace.

Therefore, an updated approach is necessary — one that seeks to engage participants early in each training experience, retain their attention and interest throughout, and allows them to interact with their instructor and fellow participants. This is accomplished by building a solution that is participant-centric and comprises of three core developmental concepts:

1. Meet participants' fundamental expectations for training. For example, training that is timely, relevant, insightful, practical and useful.
2. Employ experiential learning and action learning strategies, methods and practices.
3. Participants' interaction and collaboration is the central focus.

This article focuses on four of the six attributes of a revolutionary systems approach to ILT to fix its problems and make it more workable and impactful for today's workplace. The remaining two attributes shall be covered in the article's final instalment.

This is Part Two of a three-part series. This segment discussed:

- Four of the six attributes of a revolutionary systems approach to ILT that fix its problem
 - Building a training system. Not a program
 - Establishing a platform better suited for today
 - Standardizing delivery timeframe and format
 - Using a participant-centric training approach

- How to make ILT more workable and impactful for today's workplace

Part Three will be available on June 18. It discusses:

- The remaining two attributes of a revolutionary systems approach to ILT that fix its problems
 - Provide all components and tools needed
 - Build in better cost controls
- How to make ILT more workable and impactful for today's workplace

*About the Author: Bobby L. Butler is CEO of **IMPACT60** Learning Systems™, LLC. He is creator of the **60 MINUTES for IMPACT™** Workshops Training Platform: a revolutionary approach to instructor-led training which addresses the seven (7) problems inherent in traditional training programs' platforms. He can be reached at blb@impact60learning.com. Learn about **IMPACT60** at www.impact60learning.com.*