



THE INFO EDGE - ISSUE 2. MARCH 2007

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Dear Colleague,

Here are some more ideas from **ATTE – The Training Edge** on how to enhance your training practices. Our aim is to share information and ideas to create a community of best practice for all learning and development practitioners. So, give us some feedback or send your requests for topics that you would like to see discussed in future issues.

This month's issue focuses on not falling into the "**content trap**" when designing and developing learning material.

Mercia Rous and Wencke Bolt

IT'S THE ACTIVITY STUPID



This is one of my pieces of advice for faster, cheaper, and better training design. Many trainers fall into the *content trap* and waste their time and resources. More importantly, content-based training is proven to be ineffective.

Trainers are often pushed into the content trap by their clients, subject-matter experts, and

instructional designers. These people aid and abet each other in the belief that the key to training effectiveness lies in analyzing, organizing, and presenting content to participants so they understand and recall everything. Eventually, participants also fall into the content trap and everyone believes there is a direct correlation between how much you know and how well you perform on the job. They also believe that there is one—and only one—specific set of content that will guarantee perfect performance.

A Tragic Story of Training

Here's how these people design training: They take a topic such as *leadership* and read a lot of books and consult several subject-matter experts. Confused by different leadership theories, styles, models, principles, approaches, and other things, they decide to place all their trust on the latest bestseller or the most popular guru. They analyze and arrange all the content using the BLM (“Be Like Me”) principle that postulates that if the organization of the content makes sense to the training designer, it should make sense to everyone else. They gleefully produce hundreds of PowerPoint® slides, graphics, handouts, job aids, and glossaries. In the end, transmission of these pieces of content becomes the goal of training.

Trainers now present the content through a variety of modes: lecture, handouts, manuals, and electronic page-turners. They make sure that participants understand everything and can recall the facts, terminology, steps, principles, and what not. They also effectively pass on their belief that once the participants master (and recall) this slice of content, they should be able to perform perfectly on the real-world job.

After the training, everyone gradually finds out that none of this stuff transfers to the job. Participants can recall the five steps of

communicating their vision and the seven components of the vision statement. But they cannot apply any of this inert knowledge to real-world job requirements. So the trainers (aided and abetted by subject-matter experts) recall the participants and fill them with more content. They explain molecular details of each step, complete with lists of things to avoid. They subdivide the seven components of a vision statement and generate a total of 47 subcomponents.

This type of remedial training does not work. All of these content presentations appear to have nothing to do with the realities of the job.

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CUTTING EDGE



- This years HRD EXPO happen from 6 – 8 June. Come pay us a visit.
- Don't forget about the **next All Africa IVETA/IFTDO/ASTD conference** happens in Mauritius 13 – 16 May 2007. check out the website <http://ivetaafrica2007.intnet.mu>
- **Keep an eye out for** the new ODETDP Diploma Level 5 and level 6 Post Graduate Certificate has been approved by the SAQA EXCO.

EDGY TIP

So how do you avoid the content trap when you design programmes? Here are a few *hot* ideas:

- Ensure that you involve the right stakeholders (current job holders, learners and line) to agree the end result and outcomes of learning.
- Focus on the end result of learning and build your programme content and assessment “back” from the intended outcome.
- Integrate critical cross field outcomes in your programmes and to encourage problem solving and critical thinking.
- Design learning activities that allow learners to practice the skill as required on the job.

- Build activities to involve learners. Get them to actively participate in constructing their own meaning.

BUSINESS EDGE

Action At The Training Edge

- We trained 497 moderators for the Services SETA and achieved a fabulous 85 % portfolio submission rate.
- We trained the 2007 intake for the University of Johannesburg on the ODETDP qualifications at levels 4 and 5.
- We are coaching designers at a financial institution on the curriculum design and development process. The programmes developed are a big hit with the business!
- We are very busy developing learning materials across a number of industries with great results.
- Check out our website for exciting skills programmes available to ETD practitioners.

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If you are interested in applying for one of the two following positions at this dynamic company.

- 1. Training Co-ordinator/administrator**
- 2. Experienced ETD Practitioners (3 – 5 years), who can design, deliver and assess learning.**

Qualified *equity* candidates please apply.

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