



Catalyst ConneXions

Engage.Enhance.Enable



WWW.THECATALYST.CO.IN

OCTOBER 2014

How we design our training programs

What is the best form of instructional design for any learning session? Obviously, one that is close to the learning stages of any learner. A basic study of the human brain suggest that typically, any learner moves through the following 4 stages of learning

1. Information - The information stage occurs when you personally observe something in your environment or when someone else informs you in word or print or visually about some fact or idea.
2. Action - The next stage happens when you physically take action based on information you have acquired for yourself or from others.
3. Feedback - The third stage takes place when your sensory systems are bombarded by complex environmental feedback from your actions in the world.
4. Incubation - These first three stages allow information to be efficiently placed into temporary working memory.

The incubation stage helps information to be planted in our long term memory. This stage consists of physically relaxed, mentally unfocused downtime, where information moves into long-term memory.

Passing through a complete cycle of the four stages of learning provides your brain with correct levels of different neurotransmitters at the correct times so that efficient learning and memory formation can take place.

We endeavour in our training programs to mirror this pattern of learning. Typically, each learning session consists of the following four stages

1. Mind Jog – The first stage where the learner is introduced to the subject/ skill being discussed – either through a story or a video or a small activity.

2. Activity/ Game – An engaging game (either a 'think' game or a 'do' game) where the learner is expected to create something/ make decisions using the knowledge or the skills he possesses.
3. Discussion – Post the game getting over, participants are engaged in a structured discussion where they reflect on their own behaviours and also receive feedback from others. The facilitator also introduces concepts or new information about the skill being developed.
4. Linking to Life – At this stage, participants reflect, discuss in pairs or triads and link back the new skill/ knowledge to their work life. They create an action plan about how they will use the newly acquired skill to improve productivity and performance.

How ‘Stress Based Learning’ stifles the learning process!

Recently, I shifted my 7 year old child from a conventional public school to a non-conventional school which follows the same curriculum but a very different approach to the way in which the learning gets imparted. In training parlance, both schools have the same learning content and learning outcome, but the mode of delivery varies. Whereas the previous school relied heavily on memorisation and endless practice, the latter relies heavily on learning by asking, doing and reflecting. The results are spectacular – my child seems to be happier, keener to learn and is discovering new things even about concepts learned earlier. To illustrate with an example, while he has known the concept of even and odd numbers for a long time now, its only recently that he discovered (on his own!) that when you subtract an odd number with an even number, the result will always be odd and so also for even numbers.

In the India that people of my generation grew up in, it was believed that pressure and stress could increase our ability to learn and be creative. This is the philosophy behind getting students to scurry from 45-minute to 45-minute cram-for-test sessions, forcing resident students to work over 80 hours a week, and why corporations expect employees to learn and perform at peak levels while working weekdays and weekends without respite.

But the research into the effects of stress on learning is forcing brain-based educators to conclude that the systems favoured by our learning institutions may in themselves

produce so much stress that not only is effective learning and creativity compromised but so too the capacities for big-picture thinking, future planning, and compassion. The result is scholastic, government, and corporate institutions are filled not with joyful, productive, creative, and compassionate learners but with disgruntled individuals who have behavioural problems and are unhappy and uninspired.

No wonder then that we face leadership issues at the top, that while our workforce is well equipped in functional skills, they lack higher order skills such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, empathy, ability to envision the big picture – all critical aspects of nation building.

The need of the hour is to question the basic premise on which our learning system is based as that is what will impact the character of our nation going forward. Is it important to create competitive robots each trying to outrun the other on parameters of

‘how much I know’ or is it important to create emotionally healthy individuals who are tolerant, inquisitive, aware and nurture a deep love for learning?

It is not only for educators and policy makers to imbibe the latter approach to education (and change the curriculum and the assessment and delivery approach accordingly), it is also for us as parents and guardians to change the principles on which we nurture our children. It is with this collaborative mind-set between the parent and educator community that the fabric of our coming generation can change.

Copyright 2003 by Randy Glasbergen.
www.glasbergen.com



“I learned about stress management from my kids. Every night after work, I drink as much chocolate milk as my stomach will hold, eat handfuls of sugary cereal straight from the box, then run around the house in my underwear squealing like a monkey.”

The power of 'Informal Learning'

How many times have you heard your employees say - "I love to learn but I hate to be trained." Training is something that's imposed on you; learning is something you choose. Employees of today thrive when given the freedom to decide how they will do what's asked of them. And that's exactly what informal learning does - 'informal learning' is learning without borders. People acquire the skills they use at work informally — talking, observing others, trial-and-error, and simply working with people in the know. It's a natural way to learn and grow.

Infact, in today's age, formal training and workshops account for only 10% to 20% of what people need to learn at work. Consider the following –

1. The generation coming into the work force has no patience for spoon-feeding, single-track instruction, or working alone.

2. As the global economy shifts from factory work to service work, workers need the human, judgmental expertise and emotional intelligence that one doesn't learn in class.

And yet, most corporations over-invest in formal training while leaving the more natural, simple ways we learn to chance.

But is informal learning a profit strategy – will it actually lead to any marked performance improvement? The answer is a resounding yes. Executives don't want learning; they want execution. They want performance. And that's what informal learning fosters. Informal does not mean unintentional. It is not to be left to chance. Consider the chart below which gives some ideas on planned/ intentional informal learning.

Organizations need to create more opportunities for informal learning by

removing obstacles, seeding communities, increasing bandwidth, encouraging conversation, and growing networks. Once planned in such a manner, returns in the form of enhanced productivity, reduced stress, generation of fresh ideas and innovation, improved responsiveness to self-development would be forthcoming.

For More Information

Please write in to us for more information on our training programs

Priti Agarwal
priti@thecatalyst.co.in

Shivani Manchanda
shivani@thecatalyst.co.in



Informal Learning

On-Demand	Social	Embedded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning courseware • Search • Books / Articles • Videos • Podcasts • Learning/ knowledge portals • Job aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wikis, blogs, forums • Expert directories • Social networks • Communities of practice • Conference and Colloquium • Coaching and Mentoring • Facebook, LinkedIn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance support • Reference Information • Feedback • Rotational Assignments • After Action Reviews • Quality Circles • Development Planning • Applications • Games