

Training Efficiently



Most trainers—even those with many years of experience—can easily forget the basic strategies for ensuring all tasks are completed effectively. Frequently, trainers’ time is pulled in many directions at once: preparing for a new certification exam, reviewing new training materials, learning new software applications, and attending night school.

If this sounds like your schedule, make sure you take time each day to ask yourself “Am I working as efficiently as possible?” Take a step back and evaluate the basics of each training project in which you’re involved.

Here are five tips that will help you stay on top of each project and keep you ahead of your competition.

Prepare by reading and reviewing

If your vendor has provided printed or electronic documentation, read it. Also check the vendor’s website for recent updates. Before you start make sure you’ve got all your the information you’ll need to successfully complete the project. Check especially for prerequisite requirements and possible conflicts. New software frequently conflicts with existing installations. Knowing what to expect and the possible work-arounds will make a software upgrade go much more smoothly.

If you’re installing new software, check to see if any patches or updates have been released since the product was packaged for retail sale.

Plan, plan, and plan some more

When preparing new training materials or course handouts, make a list of the learning objectives you expect the learners to accomplish. A simple handwritten list of objectives stated in simple sentences or bullet points will help you create lucid, targeted exercises.

Think about how long each objective will take to train. How long for tutoring sessions, how long for large seminars? Is the exercise appropriate for both tutoring and group sessions? If not, go back and create an exercise that works well in both venues. You’ll save yourself and your coworkers a lot of effort in the long run if one series of exercises can be used for all audiences.

If you find yourself making a lot of exceptions once your plan is put into effect, you might need to revise it rather than weaken it with a lot of last minute changes.

Document procedures & reasons

Get a notebook and keep it with you at all times. I use a 5x8” hardbound journal that I bought at the bookstore. This has become my technical bible. In it I’ve got notes about network configurations, ideas for new training guides, and lots of other tidbits of information. I force myself to jot down not only how I do each project, but why. And, I keep track of what I learn while completing a new task. Within a

few weeks of starting this technical journal I found myself referring to it over and over again rather than trying to remember how and why I did a previous task.

I make this journal available to my coworkers so they can share my experiences. It’s almost as if it were a training reference for trainers.

Ask for help before you need it

Always make sure you’ve got a backup. Pride goes before the fall, says the sage.

Especially if you’re training project will affect others, get their input and assistance from the start. You may be the subject matter expert, but your training guide will be much better received if your coworkers think they had input to its preparation.

Also, if you get an unexpected invitation to the beach for next week, you’ll be able to ask your team members to help you complete the project on schedule.

Doing it right takes less time

It takes less time to do something right the first time rather than missing the target and having to do it over again.

Arrange all your preparation materials and make sure you’ve got access to all the computer systems you’ll need before you start in on the project. Taking a few minutes to prepare can save you hours in the long run.

Twice during the 1990’s we moved our company offices to larger facilities. We planned to have office and classroom equipment moved on Friday and resume training on Monday.

Because we would be installing 40 network drops and a mile of cable over the weekend, I made sure all components would be available ahead of time; our component vendors would be closed on the weekend, and we couldn’t risk running sort of anything.

Each time, I double checked all supplies using a very detailed inventory sheet. I even borrowed a pickup truck and personally moved the network servers, hubs, cables, and accessories. I watched each classroom workstation as it was loaded and unloaded. Our administrative computers and furniture might get misrouted, but there was no way our classrooms wouldn’t be ready by Monday. With careful planning, we never missed a beat. Both times we started teaching again on Monday morning.



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