



## The Manager as Trainer

Just about anyone who has had the privilege of managing employees is well aware of all the hats that they need to wear to be effective at the role. Employees rely on their manager for effective responses to multiple situations, often simultaneously. While that has always been true, it seems like the pandemic has increased this.

When the requirement is to be sure that the work gets done, to our highest quality levels, on time and within budget, then the manager hat is the one clearly on the boss' head. When the need is to develop any individual or team of employees to produce their absolute best performance, then the hat changes to that of the coach. When the rules change, or we switch to new technology and new pathways of performance need to be explained and set in motion, then it's time for the trainer's hat.

Let's focus our attention on the role of the manager acting as a trainer or instructor. The difference between the two is determined by the outcome the manager needs to achieve through the approach he/she takes. When it's predominantly the dissemination of information, the manager is more of an instructor. When the requirement is the successful demonstration of new skills and techniques from all participants, the manager is clearly acting as a trainer.

For example, let's imagine that we've changed the equipment we use to get the job done. Better technology, reduced physical size, faster performance, etc., will likely place us in the situation needing to train or retrain our employees. Many of our manufacturing clients at Learning Dynamics make machinery and when that

machinery is sold, the price includes training for the new operators. But sometimes that training falls onto the customer service manager's shoulders to be sure that the new processes are producing the desired results.

To be effective as a trainer requires a different mindset than managers typically employ, but some of the components or tips of the trade fall easily within the realm of effective management.

### **Clear, Understandable Objectives:**

Trainers often work backwards from a clear understanding of exactly what is required for the learner to be successful. What is the end result of an effective training effort? While it appears that the end result is obvious, it is the place where trainers begin their planning. Adults need to know what to expect in the training and what are the expectations they'll need to achieve to be successful.

### **Basic Awareness of Adult Learning Guidelines:**

To pack a 90-minute training event with copious amounts of new information, procedures and regulations is likely a pathway to failure. Success as a trainer is not measured by what he/she said, but rather by what the participants actually received. The trainer's success rests in the learning outcomes of the participants rather than what was delivered. Adult learners need to be actively involved in effective training. They need to be able to think about what is being asked of them, to have the chance to process and test their understanding of the content and to practice new skills.

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### **Multiple Delivery Sources:**

Effective training today is multi-sourced as much as possible. Can we see a video of the new behavior? Is there a “Ted Talk” available on the topic? Is there a manual or a workbook for the new information? What resources will be available after the formal training event(s)? Who is available for coaching or questions?

The “modern” classroom has changed significantly because the learners have changed. For many employees, the chance to work from home, with their computer as their entire work station, and the freedom to research and explore new ideas has drastically changed the expectations about learning to be effective on the job.

### **Measurement of Success:**

As much as the manager/trainer needs to be clearly definitive about learning objectives, she/he

also needs to provide measurements and evaluations of the new behavior for the learners to access. The need for the learner to have ready and easy access to feedback about their progress through the learning process is a requirement for a large portion of the workforce today. The typical question from the trainer “are there any questions” is no longer an effective means of determining how an audience is doing with new material. Trainers need to know not “do you understand?” but instead “tell me what it is that you understand.” Trainers need to know how the learner is processing the learning experience.

Those managers who can successfully navigate the pathways to effective training have a distinct advantage over those who cannot. At Learning Dynamics, we have been providing that guidance to our clients for more than 40 years.

