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**A Guide for Workplace Learning and Engagement**



# What We Teach How We Learn

## Why Learn?

**Why not?** It is simply amazing to me how many people feel that the only way you can learn is through attending a physical class or having a person who has a certain level of expertise stand in front of you and lecture tidbits and facts through an hour or a day.

While this is the way we have approached transferring skill and knowledge in the past, it is important to realize that there are new tools and approaches in allowing the learning engagement to become simpler.

## Why an E-book?

I have been contemplating a way to develop and transfer ideas, tips and thoughts to many of us who need a little re-energizing. Ways to spark thinking for those of you that develop people in some way shape or form. To share ideas and rev ourselves up.

It all started with ReThinkHR.org. I thought that there might be a need for a different perspective. Not one that is against any current or proven model but rather something with a twist. Just a few different ideas around the same common approaches!

So I reached out. I asked a few of my colleagues to share their own ideas around learning. How you do it now, How you do it wrong and how you can do better!

Hope you enjoy it but most of all; I hope you put these ideas into action or it sparks some new ideas. Because what is the point if you do nothing?

*- Benjamin McCall*



## Learning Watch

Learning is about growth.  
It is about forward movement.  
It is about stumbling, falling and ultimately getting back up!

Learning is about succeeding...  
Learning is about failing...

**So what have you learned today?**

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# What We Teach How We Learn

A Guide for Workplace Learning and Engagement



## I Recommend...

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### *Read*

Not only read but retain what you are reading to use later!

### *Reflect*

Take what you are reading here and think about how you can use it.

### *Take Action*

Now that you have some information and have thought about ways you can possibly use it within your career, job, and life; now put those things into action!

### *Review each section*

The Articles – Read them

Reflection – Write down your thoughts after you read each one in the “*Article Reflection*” after each article.

Resources – Use the visual resources to enhance what you do, what you have and the people you facilitate.

*Enjoy!*

**LEARN  
SMARTER:  
Experience &  
Repeat**

## Empowering People through Development

Erin Schreyer

Companies spend a lot of money on training and development. In most cases, it's because they want to teach their employees the skills they feel are necessary for success within their organization or industry. Sometimes, it's added to the budget for employee retention purposes. Companies want to show their people that they value them enough to invest in them. That's a great thing too. But what if there was another, perhaps even more compelling reason to develop people?

What if the reason was to promote a leadership culture within your organization? What if companies were willing to engage their people at a level that, in fact, they weren't simply *engaging* them, but actually *empowering* them? Empowering them as leaders who don't just learn things, but who leverage their best talents and strengths to make an impact.

It makes sense after all. When you ask most people what they're looking for in their next position, the answer is almost always the same...

*"I need to make enough money to provide for my family and lifestyle, and I'd like to be able to leverage my skills and experience...but what I'm REALLY looking for is the opportunity to make an impact on an organization."*



If companies want to further develop their people, the best thing they can do is engage them to do what they want most.... make an impact! How do they do they do that? Allow and encourage them to lead from who they are and where they are within the organization!!

Here's how:

- Encourage employees to clearly identify and communicate their strengths to make their greatest contribution to their team and

organization. Everyone should understand what activities help them to feel their strongest, and they should be aware of and consider their co-workers' strengths too.

- Provide training opportunities specific to an employee's strengths, where they will have the greatest transformation. Growth will always be more exponential in areas of strengths, versus weaknesses.



*"If companies want to further develop their people, the best thing they can do is engage them to do what they want most.... make an impact!"*



- Provide opportunities for people to challenge themselves by further leveraging their strengths to maximize their development. Training people is only part of the equation. People become proficient at things they practice. You need to help them build their strength "muscles" and then allow them to be flexed.
- Empower your employees to be visionary, to think outside of the box and to do things differently than they may have been done before...and encourage everyone that it's okay if new ideas don't work. Encourage – don't stifle – creativity!
- Create a leadership culture with clear communication and support for leadership at all levels. Be deliberate and consistent in promoting this style of engagement, and be intentional about pulling the best out of everyone.
- Communicate and celebrate new personal accomplishments. Make a big deal out of each person's growth and development and the positive effect it has had on the organization. That is, after all, what they *REALLY* want to do, so be sure to tie it back for them and others to see!

**Erin Schreyer**

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# Article Reflection

**Main Points?**

**My Reactions?**

**Possible Changes in Behavior/Actions?**

**Possible Approaches I can take from this Article?**

## Adults Like to Learn. No, Really

Jennifer V. Miller

Ever show up to facilitate a training session and sense that you've walked into hostile territory? There is a way to help turn things around: respect your learner's adult-ness. By doing this, you will diffuse much of your learners' dysfunctional behaviors.

Think about it: A training session has the potential to set up a dynamic that feels like, "You're here because you don't know something. I, as the facilitator, know more than you." If that's the vibe, it puts learners in a vulnerable position. People who feel vulnerable don't always behave nicely.

OK, so I know you would never say those words, nor do you believe them. Here's the thing: people have had some unfortunate experiences in a learning environment, going as far back as kindergarten and continuing right up to that deadly boring Safety Training class last week. You are working against pre-conceived notions about what learning is as soon as the participants walk in the door.

Whether or not you as the facilitator know more than they do isn't the point. The point is for the learners to hear you acknowledge that they are smart and do have experiences worth hearing about. That's respecting their adult-ness.

True, some folks show up to training acting more like a belligerent three-year-old than an adult. Look past this. Treat them like the grown-up you know they can be and soon enough, they will come around. Maybe they won't be all smiles and enthusiastic participation, but they also will not be sabotaging your every move during your learning session.

### How?

1. Greet every person by name, look them in the eye and shake their hand. It's difficult for someone to be a jerk if you've created a personal connection with them.
2. Early in the session, find a way to acknowledge their experience.
3. Trainers never come out looking good in a debate. If someone contradicts your suggestion, ask, "How would *you* handle it?"
4. Relate on their level—literally. Sit down in the front of the room or kneel down next to their table when talking with them. Don't hover over them. It's too reminiscent of school and authority figures.

Everyone knows learning must be serious and difficult and you must remain seated at all times. No fun allowed.



So, the next time you're faced with learners resistant to training, stifle your urge to "show 'em who's in charge". Instead, take a deep breath and do some role-modeling of adult behavior. They just may surprise you and follow your lead.

*"The point is for the learners to hear you acknowledge that they are smart and do have experiences worth hearing about. That's respecting their adult-ness."*

Jennifer V. Miller

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# Article Reflection

**Main Points?**

**My Reactions?**

**Possible Changes in Behavior/Actions?**

**Possible Approaches I can take from this Article?**

## The question: “How might you use this?”

**Steve Boese**

Over the years most of the training programs, sessions, courses, etc. I have delivered to corporate groups, individuals, or to college students have had a strong technology focus. With technology training there is always a strong element of the ‘nuts and bolts’ and the practical skills that are needed to understand and master the technology in question. Whether you are learning to use a new workplace system, to drive a car, or to play the trumpet, the basics certainly have to be well drilled and ultimately mastered in order to eventually achieve higher order capability and even virtuosity.

But I think often in the learning of a new skill, tool, or concept many students can become bored, disengaged, and even frustrated by what can be a lengthy process of mastering the basics. This concept is no different from the grumpy elementary or middle school child that seems to spend at least a few years of their youth constantly questioning ‘Why do I have to learn this?’ and ‘I will never need to know this once I get out of school’.

As parents and teachers of these students, we usually do make an attempt at linking the topics in school to some long-term aspirational objectives, but since that usually fails to convince the student of the importance of the content, we often resort to more persuasive reasoning, the ‘because I said so’ declaration.

For training and learning developed in the corporate context or in the adult education environment, the need for the instructor to effectively connect the training and the content to important organizational and/or personal development objectives and outcomes would seem to be less important. After all, the ‘students’ are not 9 year old kids, they are employees, adult learners, they have elected the training course for a reason. They should fully grasp the reasons why they are participating.

But the truth is even in these corporate contexts training can still be seen as a necessary evil, something to be completed to be checked off a list and to be quickly forgotten about once they return to ‘real’ work. I think one of the best ways to try and mitigate this fairly common and natural tendency of students is to challenge them, early and often with some simple questions - ‘**How might you use this?**’, ‘How can you envision applying this in your department?’, and ‘What is the situation at your company that can be improved with this insight?’

Unless you are working towards some kind of lofty, philosophical understanding of the universe simply for its own sake, or sitting on top of a snowy mountain pondering the meaning of life, for training and development programs to be worth the time and effort to prepare and deliver them, they have to resonate and connect with the learners at an individual level. Just like the petulant 9 year old that wants to know ‘**Why do I have to learn this?**’

*“After all, the ‘students’ are not 9 year old kids, they are employees, adult learners, they have elected the training course for a reason.”*

You as the instructor have to address that question with your adult learners, but since they are adults, you can challenge them to come up with their own answer to that question. Once they do, the value and commitment will follow.

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**Steve Boese**

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# Article Reflection

**Main Points?**

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## The Importance of Training Assessments (aka "Everything is Not a Training Problem")

**Sharlyn Lauby**

One of the most important and sometimes most overlooked steps in the training process is the conducting of an assessment. The assessment phase of a training project allows you identify the gap between what is currently taking place and where it should be. It also helps you make the determination if the gap can be solved with training.

I know, I know...I'm a training pro. So you would think I'd say training is the answer to everything. Not true. One of the worst things companies can do is try to solve a non-training related issue with training. The outcome will be all wrong and ultimately, it gives training a bad name.

### Here's an example:

The VP of Operations comes into your office. He says, "We need a time management training program for our supervisors. They just can't seem to get things done." Can you implement a time management training program? Sure.

Will it fix the problem? Dunno. Because we don't know what the problem is.

Using this particular example, there are several possible reasons for the supervisors to be missing deadlines.

- Unclear expectations from senior leadership
- Lack of accountability
- Inadequate tools, materials or work space
- Non-existent feedback and coaching

Some people get all wonky when they hear the term assessment, thinking some consultant is going to charge a lot of money and spend a lot of time only to state the obvious. So here's a simple 3-question assessment I've used in the past to determine if training might fix the problem.

- Does the employee have the ability to do the task?
- Does the employee have the willingness to do the task?
- Is the employee being allowed to do the task?

If the answer to all 3 questions is "yes", then training likely isn't the answer. For example, using our time management example above, the answer could be an equipment problem. Maybe a machine isn't calibrated properly or computers need to be updated so they can process information faster.

If the answer to #1 is no, training may/may not be the answer. The solution could also be individual performance coaching. It's possible a supervisor could need training via a refresher course. But it's also possible that they have distractions at home keeping them from being focused.

*“One of the worst things companies can do is try to solve a non-training related issue with training. The outcome will be all wrong... it gives training a bad name.”*

A "no" for #2 could indicate a motivation issue. Looking at your recognition and reward systems might be necessary.

And lastly, a "no" for #3 might represent a policy or procedural matter. Looking at a process from start to finish to see where potential deviations occur might yield the answer.

Combinations of yes and no answers can signal the need for additional assessment. Using these 3-questions has provided me with enough information to determine if a full-blown training assessment makes sense. Or maybe the company should explore alternatives.

Taking a moment to review the situation and asking a few questions can help you make the proper determination. Making sure you can solve the problem with training is the first step in setting your training program up for success.

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# Article Reflection

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## Making a “Contribution”

### Matthew Stollak

As a professor or trainer, the bane of any classroom setting is silence and maybe even more the appearance of disinterest on the faces of those in the audience. You are excited about the topic and you work actively to engage those in front of you, but you may be met with resistance. Some students/trainees may be reluctant to speak up in front of their peers. How does one increase topic interest and willingness to participate?

I believe the audience is only slightly less responsible than me in making each class meeting entertaining, informative, and inspiring. One way I have thought of to attempt to encourage this responsibility is to ask students to bring a written “contribution,” i.e., a critical (positive or negative) comment, observation, or question, to class meetings for class discussion.

*“...the audience is only slightly less responsible than me in making each class meeting entertaining, informative, and inspiring.”*

This could be considered class participation which could be given points or credit. How does it work?

1. Each contribution must derive and emerge from the student or trainee’s attempt to understand, relate, integrate, or resolve discrepancies in the textbook and other readings, if possible, and relevant prior class lecture and discussion, and/or one’s own life experiencing. The contribution may also consist of a statement of what might have been an important and a positive addition to their understanding of the purpose, meaning and utility of the material.
2. Students/trainees are not to write about an issue raised in the readings that does not directly relate to the course or training content.
3. I find, in my own work, that it is very difficult to present the relevant information necessary for the presentation of a contribution and, for example, the theoretical and empirical support

for one or both sides of an “argument” or question that leads to a meaningful contribution, in less than 200-300 words. These words must also include necessary and attributed quotes.

4. Volunteers willing to share their contributions are elicited at the beginning of each class meeting or training session.

The end result is that the focus for class discussion shifts to the student/trainee and what from what was read was relevant and, hopefully, important.

First, you get buy-in from the student/trainee. Instead of being asked to discuss something he or she may be ignorant about or have little interest in, the student/trainee controls the initial focus on the topic of conversation. It is he or she who chooses the subtopic or issue of interest to write about and share with the class.

Second, the student will likely be more willing to share their thoughts and point of view if it is written down and able to be read rather than needing to be expressed extemporaneously which may provoke anxiety and possibly embarrassment.

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# Article Reflection

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## Train for the minimum, fail half the time.

### Ben Eubanks

How do you recognize when someone has been trained to do something? For instance, if Bob is training for a marathon, you can plainly observe the results of that preparation when he finishes the race, right?

What would have occurred if Bob trained not for the marathon, but for a half marathon? He wouldn't have been successful! Then why do companies train supervisors to recognize the minimum acceptable standards but not much more?

### Painful realization

I had to sit in on a supervisor training session recently, and it was painful to watch. All of the material was geared toward teaching them how to reach just above the minimum acceptable level (how not to get sued), but the training never went farther by teaching how to give positive feedback or how to have a difficult conversation with their staff.

If we train people only to recognize the minimum acceptable standards, but we don't give them anything more, then they won't know how to do--and be--better.

There's a neat little thing called a "normal distribution curve" in statistics. In short, it depicts an array of data where half is above the average and half is below. If companies train people using the midpoint as their target, half of the people will always be below acceptable levels. Instead, if you use some point above the average as a target, people will be above average more often than not.

Start training your people for the marathon. It's much tougher to complete, but the rewards are greater, too. Are you training your people for the minimum standards?

*“If we train people only to recognize the minimum acceptable standards, but we don't give them anything more, then they won't know how to do--and be--better.”*



### Two Thoughts

A great comment I love from career coach Dan Miller is this: Don't just move away from something to get away. Know what you're running toward so you'll know when you have arrived. Don't just train people for the minimum acceptable levels of behavior. Yes, it's important to define the bottom end of the range, but it's even more crucial to guide and direct them toward the high end of the performance spectrum.

**Ben Eubanks**

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## Become a Storyteller

### Chris Ferdinandi

Training isn't just about delivering information from one brain to another. It's about getting people to both remember it and act on it.

When most training programs fail, it's not because they haven't taught people anything useful. It's that people either don't remember or don't apply what they learned.

How do you ensure that doesn't happen?

We don't pay attention to boring things.

John Medina is a brain scientist. (His actual title is a lot longer and has a lot of initials after it.) He wrote an amazing book called *Brain Rules*. In it, he explores how brain science might impact how we run our organizations.

One rule that really jumped out at me: We don't pay attention to boring things.

When you're developing a training program, don't just inform people. Entertain them.

*“Humans are natural storytellers.  
It's in our genes. Before written  
language, it's how we passed down  
information.”*

People are more likely to actually retain and use the information that you give them if they have fun while they're learning. So how do you make learning more fun?

### Become a Storyteller

Humans are natural storytellers. It's in our genes. Before written language, it's how we passed down information.

Make storytelling part of your training program. Share your own stories. Ask people for theirs. And build a “story” into the program itself. What's the key message? How does the way you dispense information



build on that message? Is there a story arc?

Garr Reynolds is author of the blog and book *Presentation Zen*. While his focus is on presentations with slides, he talks at length about the importance of storytelling when spreading ideas.

His insights have drastically changed the way I deliver training programs... and the response I get from people!

Obviously, running an effective training program is more than just telling fun stories. You have to understand the needs of your audience, align behaviors with business results and so on. But if you want to ensure that people remember and act on the information that you share, make it fun.

Become a storyteller.

**Chris Ferdinandi**

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# Article Reflection

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## Helping Employees Help Themselves

### Lance Haun

Corporate training and development might not go away completely, but in some industries (especially high turnover industries), it is disappearing slowly.

This is bad.

In fact, if your company is losing the turnover battle, I can't tell you the foolishness of eliminating training and development as a strategy.

It is an anti-strategy.

Whether your future in training and development is solid or on shaky ground, one thing that can help you is getting people pumped for training and development.

*"Yeah! T&D! I'm so excited!"*

Okay, so maybe excited or pumped is unrealistic. But demonstrating the value isn't.

**Here are a few key things you can do to help your employees help themselves.**

#### **Sell. Sell Hard.**

Sell training and development like your job depends on it. Because it does.

If you don't believe in it enough to sell it, get out of the business.



*"Your programs and your attitude must be able to adapt to changing requirements and business needs if you want to thrive"*

#### **Find examples**

In your organization and out that have used training and development resources to move up and be successful.

#### **Get your data**

People with valuable certifications and degrees are in high demand and rarely unemployed. T&D can lead to better job security and higher pay.

#### **Staying current**

If you have a role that is impacted by developing technologies, laws or competitors (I'm looking at all of you), this is a huge advantage.

#### **Adapt, adapt, adapt**

Your programs and your attitude must be able to adapt to changing requirements and business needs if you want to thrive.

Operating your training and development program with these principles in mind will help your program stay relevant in a time when companies are looking to cut.

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# Article Reflection

**Main Points?**

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## MAKE IT STICK!!

### Steve Browne

When it comes to training in today's work environments, too many HR professionals get stuck on the creation and magnitude of their programs. "Is it relevant?" "Is it catchy enough?" "Will it span the various Generations?"

What HR isn't asking is – "Does it matter?"

I'm finding more and more that the two biggest issues in the world of training and OD are:

1. Is the training engaging? and
2. Can people really use it? In other words – Does it STICK??

*...now we're focusing on the people first and not the material. Should have seen this going in!!*

At my current company we had an entire training center, certification of courses if employees completed all the courses, and hours and hours of classes with an annual printed catalog.

It was a great effort and the material was solid!! It was designed well and reflected how our culture could be successful. The classes were well attended and the instructors really were good at delivering the material.

The obstacle we faced was that when people went back to their normal jobs outside the training setting, very little of the training stuck. Some managers even stated that training is good, but it doesn't apply to what we REALLY do!! That was not the case.

The training was exactly what we wanted people to use. So, where was the gap?

The gap was that we continued to rely on traditional methods of classroom/lecture stick and carrot teaching. You know the great HR threat of "If you don't follow this . . . (cue the scary music)"

We knew it was time to change and we had to initiate it. What are we doing now? It's actually extremely simple

and it's proven to be very effective. We're taking training to the people in their locations. No more classes. No more lectures. No more death by Power Point.

We take a topic or a facet of a topic to the location, sit down with them in their work environment and make the training real. We focus on how the topic affects where they work by being where they work. Breaking down the topic to pieces that people can process, evaluate and apply has made a marked difference.

We're creating on the fly. We know what we "have" to cover, but we're seeing if one location needs something different than another and then meeting their needs. It's sticky!!

We'll see where this goes and how it evolves. It may lead to a class. It may lead to a method we don't even know exists. What we do know is that now we're focusing on the people first and not the material. Should have seen this going in!! Glad we found it!!

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**Steve Browne, SPHR**

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# Article Reflection

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## 10 tips: Preparation for your presentation!

### Benjamin McCall

#### I'm a facilitator by trade and practice...

...The learning aspect of it is something I really love. Many of you may have coached, facilitated, designed programs and interactions. You may have been in front of groups of one to one thousand. But if you are like me it never fails... something always happens. Before I get in front of a group; from a technical presentation, facilitation or leadership development – I always get nervous. Preparation is great, but for a few seconds between when I am introduced and that first set of words, I tend to go blank. So being prepared and having practiced helps!

#### Presentation Tips

Here are some not as common tips for being prepared; calming the jitters and helping the learner get what you are delivering.

1. **Do your research.** Know what you are talking about. At the very least, prepare to answer the questions that your audience may have in their minds. Know that anything can happen. **So be ready and comfortable with not being “ready or comfortable!”**
2. **Know your audience (Make a Connection).** You have to understand your audience in order to provide the right information for the most optimum engagement. The better you understand them, the more they will get what they need. Through this you can make a better connection with your audience.
3. **Be Learner Focused.** This means not delivering the way you always deliver. Be aware of how your audience may react to the style and material you present. Change up that style when appropriate. If you don't you could lose them.
4. **Use Multi-Media.** From video, drawings, activities, case studies and audio; you can use a variety of media formats to strengthen and engage the learner. Don't just lecture.
5. **Tell a story.** Regardless of how you deliver information, use the activities and material to tell a story that directly relates to the role your learner is in. You have technical data. Facts and figures help with relevance but if you want people to remember it easily and take action, a story from your own experience will make a solid impact. It allows the listener to paint a picture that is relevant for them.
6. **Make Eye Contact.** Your subject could be dry, deep or inspiring. But if you make eye contact with your audience it can come across as

passion. This simple act may help people *believe that you believe* what you are saying.

7. **Humor is key!** Maybe it is just me but humor helps lighten things up. It helps clear the air. Be careful though, like taste – your humor may not taste the same to everyone.
8. **Be concise.** I am constantly working at this. Example, in a format where a presentation must be 5 minutes, 20 slides, and auto-advance after 15 seconds – you have to get to the point. Make a point but don't milk it too much for each idea. This is especially true for technical info.

“...you want people to believe that you believe what you are saying.

9. **Move with a purpose.** Body language can have an impact on any presentation. Try not to move your hands, arms or whole body around too much. It can be distracting. Moving and standing in one place at the right moments can add meaning to you and your topic.
10. **Close with a call to action!** I think that at the end of every presentation there should be a call to action. A chance for others to engage in your cause or do something on their own to move forward toward action.

These are just some steps you may follow and while these may not be the end all be all, they can be used as starters to help point you in the right direction as well as keep the audience on your page. Is there anything that you do to connect to your crowd?

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# Article Reflection

**Main Points?**

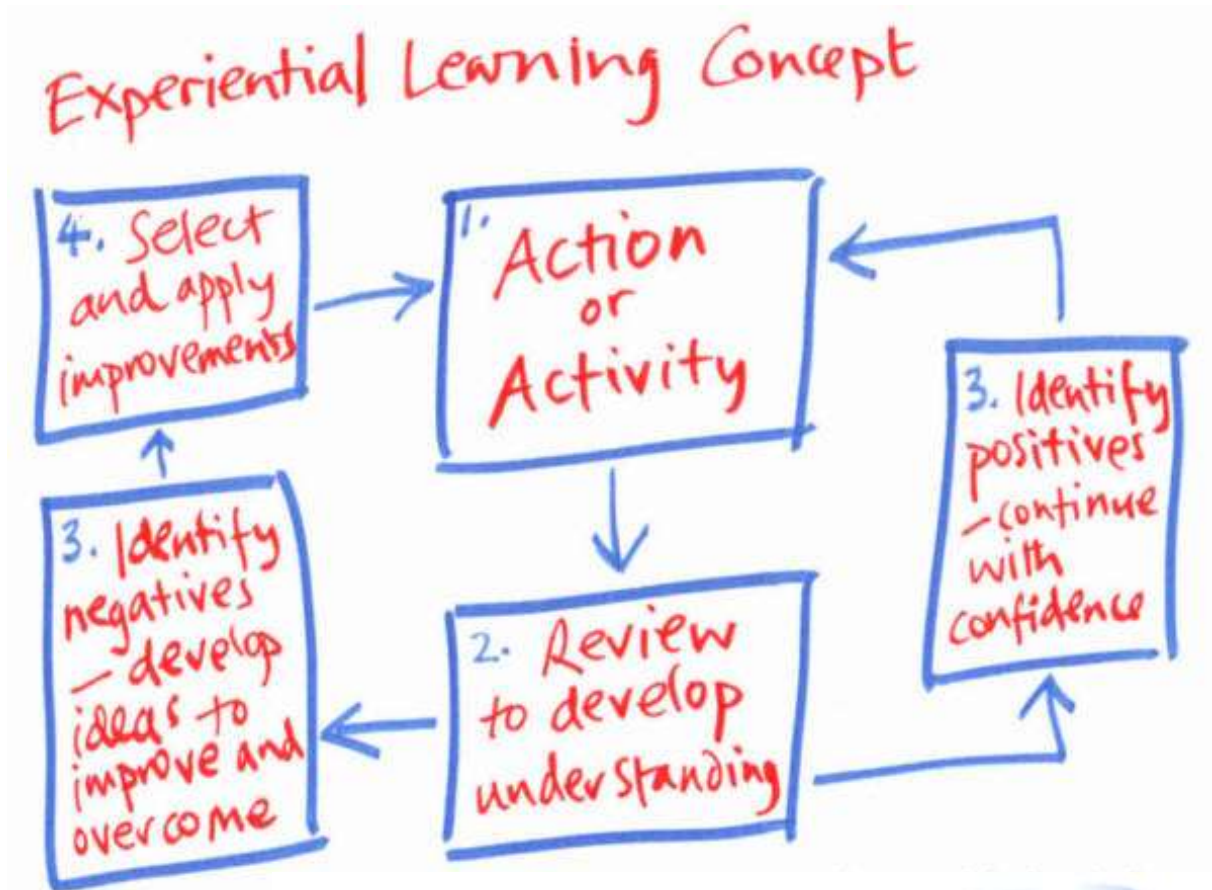
**My Reactions?**

**Possible Changes in Behavior/Actions?**

**Possible Approaches I can take from this Article?**

# What We Teach | How We Learn

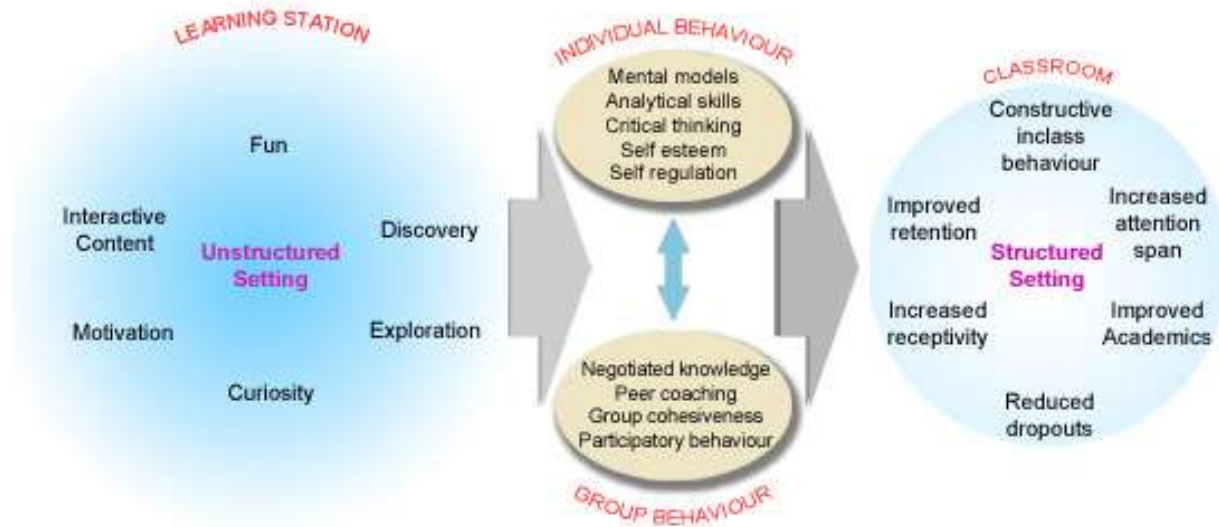
## Simple Resources



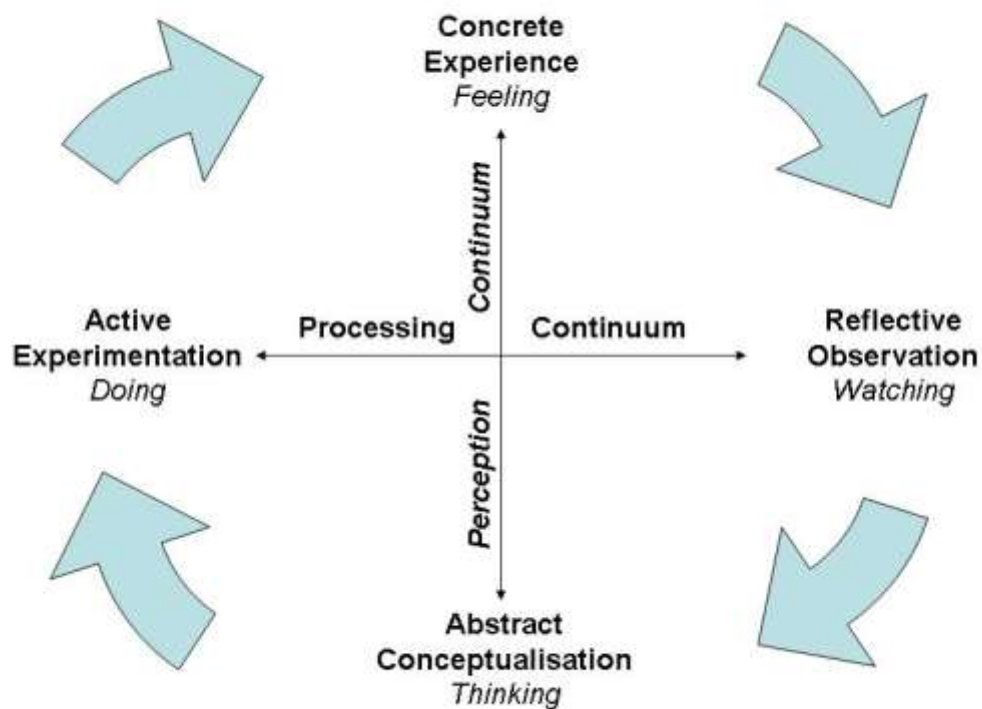
### The Cycle of Student Learning



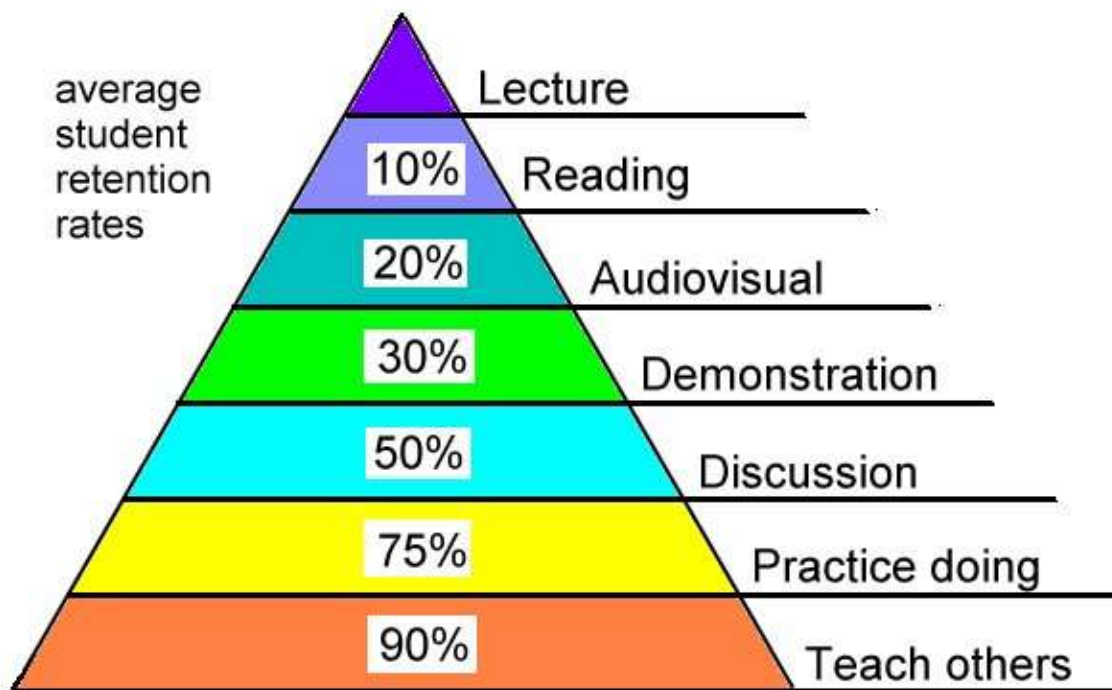
## LEARNING DYNAMICS



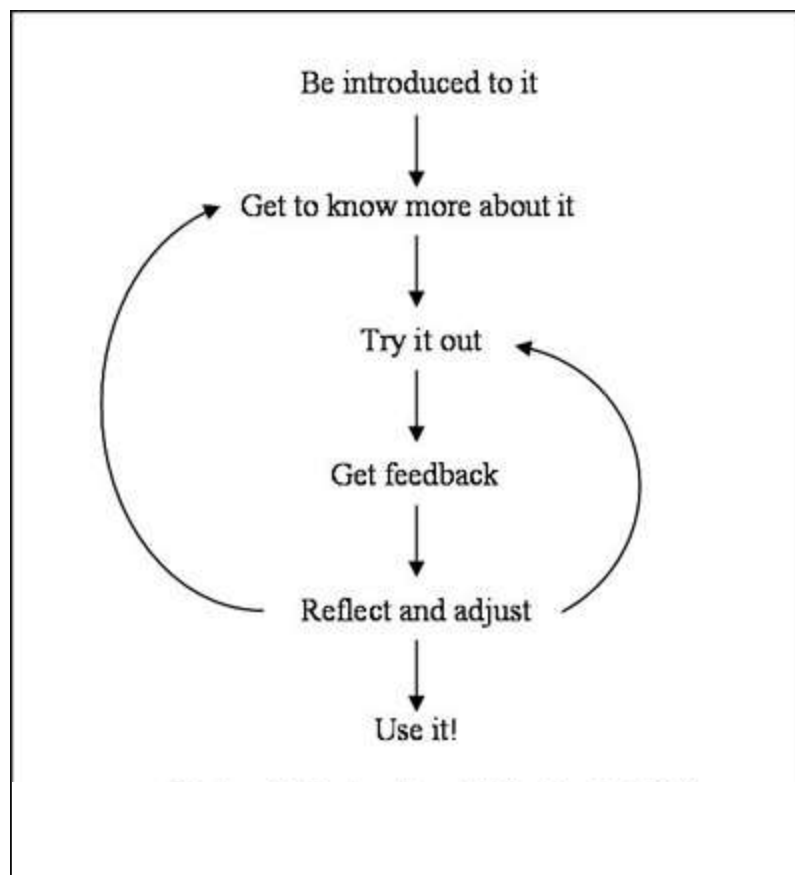
## Process & Perception Continuum of Learning Actions



# Learning Pyramid



Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine



# Notes

Reflect | Rehearse | Remember

# Notes

Reflect | Rehearse | Remember

# MY ACTION STEPS

**What 2 Articles rung true for me?**

**What were the main points that fit the way I deliver a learning process for others?**

**What were the main points that would fit closely with my current approach to facilitating the learning process?**

**What will I do as a result of these 2 articles that I read?**

**What new routines will I enable as a result?**

**What will be the results of my new actions?**

**When will I complete these actions?**

**How many days will it take to change these behaviors?**

# Contributors

I thank these individuals for their time and effort. Not only in their contribution, but also in their drive to help our profession as a whole!

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# What We Teach How We Learn

**A Guide for Workplace Learning and Engagement**

