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DESIGNING AND DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SALES TRAINING PROGRAMS

> Understanding the needs of high-tech salespeople
> in a learning environment

"Back to school"—not words high-tech salespeople might expect to hear in a professional selling environment. Yet many adult learners attending professional sales training programs fall back into familiar learning patterns from their school days. This white paper investigates how instructional designers and instructors can develop and deliver effective sales training programs that recognize the needs of adult learners and transform their experience of being back in the "classroom" to one that provides results on the job.

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Moving from Instructor-Centered to Learner-Centered Models

Malcolm Knowles held that adult learners have a deep psychological need to be self-directed and they expect others to see them that way

In the past, traditional models of instructional design for adult learning centered on the instructor. These models focused on the role of instructors in the learning process and how instructors performed when delivering information and interacting with learners. This approach overlooked the primary objective of the instruction process, which is to cause learners to learn.

Thirty years ago, Malcolm Knowles, a pioneer in adult education, offered his theory of adult learning—a theory he called *andragogy*. Following the work of earlier educators who recognized the vital role of experienced-based, self-directed learning for adults, Knowles contrasted this theory with pedagogy and constructed it on the premise that adults learn differently from children.

Knowles shifted the emphasis from the performance of instructors to the performance of the learners. Instructors become learner-centered, giving close attention to the things learners do to prove they are learning. Andragogy emphasizes instructors' roles in planning and monitoring the activities and exercises learners complete. In addition, instructors should provide preliminary models of new concepts before learners apply the new processes and techniques to case studies or their own situations.

Knowles held that adult learners have a deep psychological need to be self-directed and they expect others to see them that way. He also postulated that adult learners assume more of the responsibility for their own learning than educators previously believed. Adults bring to the learning process a unique body of knowledge and experience that provides a rich resource for associative learning. They define themselves by their experience and assimilate new information as it relates to that experience. Their readiness to learn rests on a compelling need to meet the immediate demands of life and not simply on a desire to master a subject for some remote application. Their orientation to learning is problem-centered rather than subject-centered, and they're more often motivated by internal factors such as the desire for increased self-esteem and the ability to perform more effectively than by external factors like high marks and instructor approval. (Knowles, 1988)

CHAMPIONING THE SPECIAL SCIENCE OF ADULT LEARNING

Knowles' theory was warmly embraced by trainers and adult educators keenly aware of the shortcomings of traditional, subject-centered instructional design in their special field because it validated their profession. They welcomed Knowles' concept of andragogy as a formal, theory-based body of knowledge that recognized the contribution of the mature learner to the education process and the vital role of the facilitator in this self-fulfillment. It caused an immediate stir within the education establishment.

Prior to Knowles' groundbreaking work, instructional designers held the academic high ground. They were essentially unchallenged by the instructors themselves. Most academics studying the learning process focused on how instructors organized and delivered subject matter. They viewed instructors as stewards of subject matter, whose mission was to deliver the material according to a clearly defined plan and to measure its assimilation. If they viewed instructors as little more than messengers, they viewed and treated learners as ciphers—essentially passive elements in the process...empty vessels waiting to be filled with new content.

Using Knowles' approach, academics realized that effective adult learning should center more on the activities and exercises that instructors must plan and deliver and less on how instructors perform. Learners become the most important people in the classroom—and instructors' knowledge of the content is only as valuable as their ability to convey the benefit of their experience to learners.

Taking a 60-second overview of adult learning principles and theories

Adult learning has been defined in a variety of ways, but most of the basic theories can be traced to four main orientations:

Behaviorist	Changing a learner's behavior through training
Cognitivist	Understanding how a learner processes information
Humanist	Facilitating the learner's desire for personal development
Social Learning	Modeling a learner's role and environment

A five second overview of learning models

Behaviorism is rooted in the classical conditioning experiments made famous by theorists such as Skinner and Pavlov. Behaviorists define learning as a change in behavior and view the purpose of learning as producing a behavioral change as part of an overall process. To behaviorists, the instructor's role is to optimize the learning environment to achieve the desired behavior from the learner.

In direct contrast, **cognitivists** focus on the internal, mental processes of the learner regarding how information is processed, stored and retrieved. They also examine how aging affects an adult's ability to process and retrieve information as key steps in the learning process. They believe learning can take place only when learners can relate subject matter to concepts already imbedded in their cognitive structure. Cognitivists view the instructors' primary role as structuring the content of each learning activity. Piaget, Gagne and Karl Lewin are known for their work in this area.

Humanists believe that learning is a personal act to fulfill potential. Maslov's classical hierarchy of needs forms the roots of humanism. The desire for self-actualization—to achieve maximum potential—is embodied within learners themselves. Humanists view learning as a function of the learners' desire for personal growth and development. They view instructors as people who facilitate the development of the entire person. Carl Rogers and Malcolm Knowles are two such theorists who follow this approach.

Social learning theorists focus on the social setting in which learning takes place and the critical interaction between people in a social context. They view the instructors' modeling of desired roles and behaviors as essential to the learning process. Bandura and Rotter are two theorists grounded in social learning.

FINDING A NEW SET OF METRICS FOR TEACHING ADULTS

Educators and trainers working with adult learners know from experience the inadequacies in any one of the models previously cited. They've seen that, as individuals reach maturity, their varied experiences, their evolved qualities of character, their complex motivations and their cognitive development move them beyond any single approach to the learning process. Knowles and his disciples recognized that these aspects of adult learners' makeups are the most pivotal factors in the way they learn. This alternative view of adult learners also produces distinctly different approaches to instructional design. This learner-centered approach casts learners as the managers of their own learning, using their unique experiences as the foundation, while instructors serve in the alternating roles of facilitator, guide and coach.

Educators see Knowles' humanistic, learner-centered approach to teaching adults as a milestone in terms of what really makes a difference in the eventual outcome of the learning process. Furthermore, Knowles' approach provides a basis for effectively organizing and delivering classroom instruction. Instructors can broadly apply and incorporate his principles in both program design and in preparing adults to actively participate in learning programs. Within each of these areas, the basic principles of how and why adults learn can provide instructional designers, as well as instructors, with the necessary knowledge and insight to successfully structure the learning event.

APPLYING CONCEPTS OF SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO ADULT LEARNING

Once instructors have incorporated adult learning principles and techniques into the design of the training program, they must next consider the maturity or developmental level of the salespeople who will participate in the program. They can assess the level of learners' maturity or development by observing learners' general competence, motivation or ability to perform a given task or set of tasks. The basis for this theory is contained in the precepts of situational leadership, a management technique originally developed by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard.

The concepts of situational leadership suggest that leadership styles should match the levels of competence and commitment of the subordinate. In reality, each stage of development (or readiness) is a combination of motivation and competence. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) concluded that these stages of learners' development are situational; in other words, the stages of development vary by task or by project. They also concluded that managers should use the concepts of situational leadership to match their own leadership styles to the development levels of the employees reporting to them.

Similar relationships appear to exist between instructors and learners. Gerald Grow (1991) roughly categorized learners into four stages of readiness that he defined as follows:

- **Stage 1:** Dependent learners are passive and dependent on instructors for direction and activities. In this stage, instructors are the authorities who deliver the information. Primary activities at this stage include lecture and drill with immediate feedback.

- **Stage 2:** Interested learners begin to exhibit confidence but still depend somewhat on the instructor to deliver new concepts. At this stage, the instructor provides a higher level of motivation, weaving more discussion into the delivery of instruction.

- **Stage 3:** Involved learners exhibit a higher level of skill or knowledge and are more involved in their own learning. At this stage, the learners may also exhibit critical thinking skills and the ability to work effectively in a team environment. Here the instructors act as facilitators and peers in the learning process.

- **Stage 4:** Self-directed learners establish their own learning objectives and play an even more expanded role in the learning process, working on independent projects. At this stage, instructors serve as a consultants and mentors to the learners and to provide a level of encouragement and support.

In developing most training programs for professional salespeople, designers have to consider the probability that learning will occur in team or group environments, where each team consists of learners who are at various stages of readiness.

A graphic illustration of this model is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Learner / Instructor	Authority/ Expert (I1)	Salesperson/ Motivator (I2)	Facilitator (I3)	Delegator (I4)
Self-Directed Learner (L4)				Independent projects. Learner-directed discussions. Discovery learning. Instructor as expert, consultant and mentor.
Involved Learner (L3)			Application of material. Facilitated discussion. Teams working closely with instructor on real problems. Critical thinking skills exhibited.	
Interested Learner (L2)		Intermediate material. Lecture/Discussion. Applying the basics in a stimulating way. Instructor as motivator.		
Dependent Learner (L1)	Introductory material. Lecture. Drill. Immediate feedback.			

Adapted from: Teaching learners to be self-directed. Gerald O. Grow (1991)

The goal of the designer and instructor is to match the general developmental needs of the group or the general stage of development of the majority of the learners in the group. If most learners are at Stage 1, the program designer must have the instructor deliver the training primarily through a lecture format. If the group approaches Stage 2, the instructor may use a socratic approach, asking the participants to respond to questions and enter into interactive discussions with the instructor.

The more competent and motivated Stage 3 learners usually take more responsibility for their own learning. As a result, instructors can engage learners through more of a facilitative approach, prompting or guiding learners certain directions. Finally, Stage 4 learners usually have already demonstrated their competence and motivation to learn at very high levels. Instructors can empower and encourage Stage 4 learners to be more self-directing in their learning initiatives.

In developing most training programs for professional salespeople, designers have to consider the probability that learning will occur in team or group environments, where each team consists of learners who are at various stages of readiness. Therefore, to remain effective and to optimize the learning process, instructors will have to adjust their delivery strategy by matching—as closely as possible—the task development levels of their program participants.

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DESIGNING A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE SALES TRAINING PROGRAMS

The underlying objective of nearly every training program is to upgrade and hone the learners' skills, making them more effective and productive.
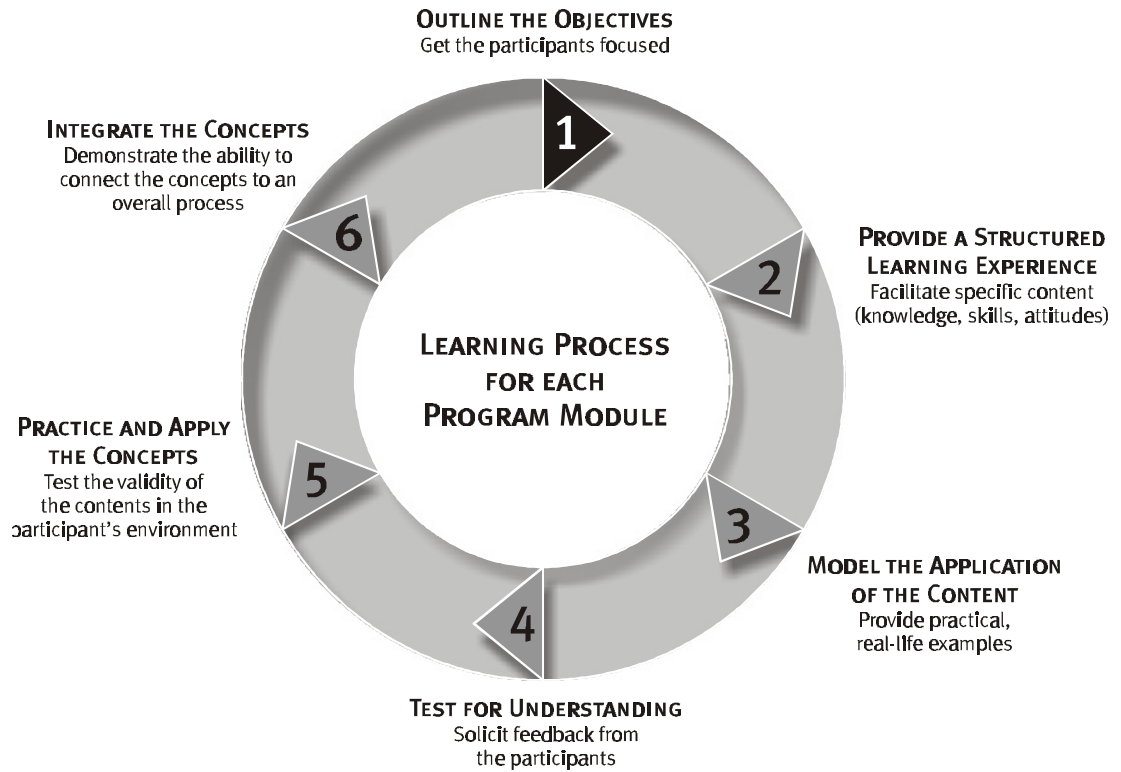
To design effective sales training programs, designers use the concepts of situational leadership to maximize the learning experience while also providing value to the organization that sponsors the learning event—usually the learner's employer.

The training program based on concepts of situational learning follows six steps:

- **Step 1:** Outline the objectives
- **Step 2:** Provide a structured learning experience
- **Step 3:** Model the application of the content
- **Step 4:** Test for understanding
- **Step 5:** Have learners practice and apply the new concepts
- **Step 6:** Ask learners to demonstrate the ability to connect the concepts in an overall process

Figure 2 describes the specific objective(s) of the instructor at each of the six steps in the process, to give both the program designer and the instructor a clear picture of what should happen at each step. We've applied this model to the design and delivery of a sales training program directed at professional salespeople selling in the high-tech marketplace. The underlying objective of the training program is to upgrade and hone the learners' skills, making them more effective and productive.

F I G U R E 2 : O V E R A L L P R O G R A M D E S I G N

OUTLINE THE OBJECTIVES
Get the participants focused

INTEGRATE THE CONCEPTS
Demonstrate the ability to
connect the concepts to an
overall process

**PROVIDE A STRUCTURED
LEARNING EXPERIENCE**
Facilitate specific content
(knowledge, skills, attitudes)

**LEARNING PROCESS
FOR EACH
PROGRAM MODULE**

**PRACTICE AND APPLY
THE CONCEPTS**
Test the validity of
the contents in the
participant's environment

**MODEL THE APPLICATION
OF THE CONTENT**
Provide practical,
real-life examples

TEST FOR UNDERSTANDING
Solicit feedback from
the participants

The learning model in Figure 2 outlines a six-step process that should occur within the classroom. Each of the six steps is more fully described as follows:

Step 1: Outline the objectives. Instructors must help learners focus on the relevance and value of the information they are about to receive. More importantly, instructors must relate the program content to the participants' environment, particularly at the beginning of the learning program, when the participants may need to be convinced of its value. In today's professional selling environment, particularly as it relates to high-tech salespeople, instructors should review changes that have taken place in the dynamics of the salespeople's markets, their customers and their own companies to help convince them to upgrade or enhance their skills. By clearly outlining the overall objectives of the program, the instructors can hope that the participants will focus on the overall value of the learning experience they are about to encounter.

Step 2: Provide a structured learning experience. Instructors engage the learners in the learning process, beginning by reviewing the entire program contents and placing each step or module in the context of the overall program. Instructors then relate each program module to the level of the participants, demonstrating the connections between the program content and the learners. When learners sense the content is relevant in terms of specific value to them, they will engage in the learning process.

In the structured learning experience, instructors focus on achieving some clearly defined goals that will provide specific benefits to the participants. The end results of the training program must be well defined and capable of being transferred to the participants' own environments. Instructors can use a variety of instructional delivery techniques to link the program content to the participants' environments.

Establishing realistic objectives at the beginning of each module is the first step in this process. Continually linking those objectives to the participant is even more important during this step of the model.

Step 3: Model the application of the content. Instructors should provide practical, real-life examples, tailored to the participants' environments, where possible. For sales training programs, having instructors who have professional sales experience is a critical factor in accomplishing this objective. Facilitators without sales experience can learn to deliver the key concepts in a sales training program, but their credibility will be significantly diminished when they can't address the first question of substance posed by a senior salesperson.

This might be even more important in the high-technology arena, where professional salespeople are typically highly paid, highly motivated, extremely gregarious and not very forgiving. They usually expect and demand excellence and don't tolerate ambiguous or misleading advice. They expect the person facilitating the sales training program has walked a mile in their shoes and can provide them with examples that illustrate the key points being delivered.

By applying the program content to practical, real-life examples, instructors enhance their own credibility and increase the overall value of the program to the participants. This critical requirement transcends the entire program, but it is brought clearly in focus at this particular step in the model.

Step 4: Test for understanding. Instructors solicit feedback from the participants at critical points in the program in a non-threatening' fashion, using a variety of probing and questioning techniques.

When instructors question participants, they should ensure that participants understand the key points. In order to "test" for understanding, instructors may solicit examples of how participants may have used or applied some of the training concepts in real life. Considering the questions posed by participants, instructors can expand on points just covered or review key points they perceive participants may have missed. This process enhances the program content by applying the content to the participants' environments, thereby linking it to their world.

Using questioning techniques aimed specifically at the participants' level of knowledge, skills or attitudes, instructors receive direct feedback on how their current performance relates to the program content. In some cases, depending on the feedback they receive, instructors may adjust their delivery to the level of knowledge or skills displayed by the participants. Instructors' knowledge of the four stages of learner readiness, discussed earlier, also provides a data point for determining whether to adjust their delivery

This step in the model illustrates the advantage of having instructors with sales experience as the primary facilitators for professional sales training.

Step 5: Practice and apply the new concepts. Instructors set-up activities or exercises that are directly related, in the best case, to the participants' environments. Applying new program content to a "live" sales campaign, for example, clearly demonstrates the value of learning to the participants and validates their understanding of the content to instructors. This step helps the participants incorporate the skills, knowledge or attitudes into their personal job environment. Participants can first test this knowledge in a workshop or program setting and then consider how it might be subsequently infused into their day-to-day activities.

Step 6: Demonstrate the ability to connect the concepts in an overall process. Instructors test the participants' ability not only to apply individual concepts but also to connect them to a larger process. This step is perhaps the most difficult in the learning process; however, it also represents the most significant one. If the participants demonstrate this capability, the transfer of learning has probably occurred.

For example, assume that an objective for a program module on Sales Opportunity Assessment is "the development of a structured, repeatable process to assess a sales opportunity." If the outcome of that particular module is a comprehensive assessment of "live" sales opportunities for a number of the program participants, then instructors can assume the same participants can apply these concepts to future sales opportunities.

Determining Readiness to Engage in a Learning Experience

If adults are about to learn new concepts and acquire new skills and knowledge, they must be ready to receive that information. Instructors must have the full attention of the learners focused on the material they are about to deliver. To prepare adults to learn, instructors can take these four steps:

1. Set the Climate for Learning

The instructor should create a physical and psychological environment conducive to learning—no theater or auditorium seating to reinforce the idea of the instructor as dominant. The classroom should be arranged to allow the participants to divide into small working groups, which supports interaction and discussion. The psychological climate should be one of mutual respect and trust between the instructor and the learners.

Instructors should greet the participants as they arrive and interact with them to determine their interests and levels of knowledge. By simply mingling with participants, instructors go a long way towards establishing an engaging climate for learning. The overall atmosphere should be one of openness and collaborative discovery. Instructors should also be supportive, actively involving the experienced learners throughout the program. Moreover, instructors should strive to make the learning experience pleasurable and exciting.

2. Establish why learners need the information

Adult learners must have valid reasons for acquiring additional knowledge and new skills. Ideally, learners should develop these reasons themselves, but instructors can help in this process by providing the learners with subtle reasons why this particular learning experience might be important. For example, an initial exercise or activity should clearly demonstrate how the learners might actually benefit from this particular learning experience. In some cases, if instructors' have backgrounds and experience in the same field as the learners, they can also quickly gain credibility. As stated earlier, instructors who have themselves been accomplished sales professionals are more effective at teaching sales professionals. These instructors can typically provide examples from their own sales experience, thereby enriching the learning process.

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3. Focus the learners on the critical aspects of the new material

Instructors should clearly identify the important new material they will deliver in each teaching segment. Salespeople also thrive on anecdotes or "war stories" that clearly paint a picture of the concept instructors are attempting to articulate. They also like to hear how instructors might have failed in their own initial attempts to apply the concepts they are discussing, but how they ultimately succeeded in applying the new concepts or approaches.

4. Use the participants' experience

All learners come to a training program with a significant number of real-life experiences that instructors can use to enhance the learning process. If learners can see the connections between the material they are learning and information and experiences they already connect with, the learning process is accelerated because they begin to see the relevance of the material. Deflecting questions from one participant to the entire group of learners is one effective way that experienced instructors can include the experience of the learners and recognize their value in a public fashion. Providing opportunities for the learners to share examples from their own experiences, if related to the topic, is another effective way instructors can involve the participants throughout the training program.

Instructors may also recognize the value of the more experienced participants by having them play an expanded role in the learning process itself. Using senior-level people who are recognized for their experience as "table" or "team" leaders, for example, is one way for instructors to overtly exploit the valuable experience of the participants.

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Delivering the Learner-centered Training Program

Instructors can enhance how they present and deliver training programs for professional salespeople by following the concepts outlined below:

Understanding the learner's environment—well in advance of the training program

Prior to the start of a training program, instructors must be fully briefed and become knowledgeable regarding the customer's sales organization, their current business environment and their key business metrics-and that's only the start. Simply put, the more information instructors have at their command about this specific customer and the more relevant they can appear to the participants, the better participants will perceive them. Acquiring that type of information is getting easier every day. By simply accessing the customer's web site on the Internet, instructors can quickly obtain some of the pertinent information they require to deliver an effective training program.

Getting feedback from the learners during the learning program

Instructors need to validate that learners are acquiring the knowledge or skills they are delivering. Feedback from the learners must be continuous throughout the learning program and not simply left to an "end of program" test, exam or evaluation, when it's too late to discover that some learners failed to understand key points. Instructors should provide exercises and activities throughout the learning program that incorporate the concepts so they can monitor and confirm that learners understand the key points.

Modeling the concepts for salespeople and having them immediately apply the concepts to their "live" sales opportunities represents a particularly effective way for instructors to ascertain that learning is taking place throughout the program. When accompanied by these interim activities that confirm the transfer of skills or knowledge throughout the program, using a comprehensive end-of-program exercise or activity is then certainly a valid approach. More information on evaluating sales training programs is contained in another white paper on that subject.

DELIVERING NEW CONCEPTS IN SMALL DOSES

Learners can only absorb a limited amount of information, and instructors should recognize and support this point. Modeling a limited number of concepts and then immediately having the learners apply those concepts in a realistic activity is a good example of a "closed loop" approach to the learning process. For salespeople, this process is particularly effective when they are immediately applying the concepts just learned to their "live" sales campaigns or opportunities. It becomes significantly more difficult if they are asked to apply concepts to a contrived case study and then to "make the leap" to applying those concepts to their own work environment.

USING A VARIETY OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES

In an age of high-tech learners, instructors must infuse visuals and media throughout today's training programs. Instructors and designers should carefully construct visuals that use colors, graphics and media to punctuate the key points and intensify the learning and retention.

REAPPLYING THE THEORY

Learner-centered instruction is emerging more as a goal than a defining theory, and no adult can be entirely self-directed-especially in a corporate setting.

Early applications of Knowles' theory of andragogy delivered gratifying results and have been studied and taught widely. Today, most educators recognize Knowles' contribution to the science of adult education. However, many educators now hold that the adult learner is far more complex than even Knowles' andragogy model allows. Learner-centered instruction is emerging more as a goal than a defining theory, and no adult can be entirely self-directed-especially in a corporate setting.

What's more, many adults are most familiar with traditional pedagogic instruction. The habits of the classroom are hard to change. In a later work, Knowles acknowledged this obstacle to self-directed learning: "Typically, by the time people have finished school, gotten a job and a family, they come to see themselves as fully responsible for their own lives. But the minute they walk into a situation labeled 'training' or 'education', they hearken back to their previous experience in (K-12) school. They put on their dunce caps, sit back, fold their arms and say 'OK, teach me.' This demonstrates the fact that we've been conditioned to see the role of learner as a dependent one." Adults emerge from their K-12 experience with set notions about what education is all about, and this conflicts with their evolving needs to be self-directing.

Another tenet of Knowles' andragogy calls for focusing on and exploring the unique experience of each learner-an approach well suited for adult education programs serving a diverse population. However, this celebration of diversity is less important when the participants share a body of relevant experience- experience that could accelerate learning if the instructional design takes that experience into account as a starting point.

Victoria Marsick, professor of adult education at Columbia University's Teacher's College observed, "Working implies a commonality of purpose, needs and culture with others in the organization. An organization's particular culture, its goals and management style tie all of its employees together. Most theories of adult learning are focused on the individual and his motivation for being in the learning situation. They assume that the individual is out there making these decisions on his own. But in the workplace, it's not just what the individual wants." The cultural implications of the workplace and their impact on the individual learner, is a topic for another white paper.

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Striking a Balance: A Checklist for Adult Training Programs

Adult learners have little patience with contrived or irrelevant activities centered on unrealistic issues.

The consensus among adult educators and trainers is that the complex mix of corporate and personal objectives, the nature of the material and the developmental level of the learner should all bear on the relative weight of learner-centered versus instructor-centered instruction. But the goal in instructional design for adults should be to employ Knowles' learner-centered andragogy whenever it's practical and rely on traditional pedagogy when it's not.

In striking this balance, consider this checklist for active training programs:

Employ behavioral as well as cognitive teaching techniques. There will always be some level of knowledge acquisition or cognitive learning as part of the overall training objective. However, participants more positively receive team and group activities that encourage interaction amongst the participants and aim at a common goal.

Employ a broad mix of instructional techniques. Often, instructors may approach a learning objective from several angles and illuminate key points through a variety of teaching devices, such as lecturing, group discussion, case studies, relevant exercises and the like. Instructional designers who use several different techniques and perspectives to address each objective keeps learners' interests high and increases the likelihood that each of the techniques will accommodate some of the learning styles of the individual learners.

Employ real-life problem solving activities and exercises. Relevance defines good instructional design for the adult learner. Instructors should use practical exercises to relate their instruction to the problems their learners face when they return to the job. Instructors should also invest their own time and enlist the aid of veterans to make their exercises real and relevant. Adult learners have little patience with contrived or irrelevant activities centered on unrealistic issues.

Engage learners in group activities to exploit the expertise and experience of each. A relevant, well-crafted exercise can elicit a unique and valid solution from every member of the group. Each perspective can help illuminate the learning objective for the group, which is why instructors must consider implementing problem-solving exercises and activities as a team, sharing many perspectives and stimulating each team member to relate the problem at hand to his or her own body of experience.

Bringing Experience to the Sales Training Table

Sales trainers must understand the dynamics that make each sales campaign, sales opportunity and client different and, more importantly, unique.

Program leaders for a professional sales training program must be carefully chosen for these assignments-not based solely on their capabilities as instructors or facilitators, but more importantly, on their experience as a salespeople, sales managers or sales executives. In most cases, professional salespeople can acquire the necessary skills required to deliver effective sales training programs; however, instructors can't readily acquire the sales experience required to establish credibility with the participants.

Sales trainers must understand the dynamics that make each sales campaign, sales opportunity and client different and, more importantly, unique. They must also understand their subject matter so well that they can relate the principles to specific sales campaigns and account situations and do it on the fly with well-directed references.

Instructors must also be creative leaders who share their authority with the group. They rarely tell the participants what they think participants should already know. Instructors' questions should lead participants to develop their own conclusions, which flow from their personal experience and allow them the excitement of discovery.

Program leaders do not accept a single statement as an answer. They ask not for a single reason but the reasons, not the cause but the causes, not the meaning but the meanings. They rarely summarize the positions taken by the participants because that may close the subject and cut off further exploration of the issue. Where possible, they encourage participant-to-participant interaction in a team environment, as opposed to instructor-to-participant interaction. They generally avoid acting as mediators or judges of the relative quality of ideas expressed. Their lessons have a clear objective but follow a course shaped by the responses of participants to the problems instructors present and not from a previously determined 'logical' structure.

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CONCLUSION

Adult learners, especially high-tech professional salespeople, need a training program that matches their developmental level and takes into account their real-world expertise.

Instructors of adult learners must take a learner-centered approach in their training programs. Adult learners, especially high-tech professional salespeople, need a training program that matches their developmental level and takes into account their real-world expertise. Instructors who have professional sales experience and who understand the needs of adult learners will create a more effective learning environment for enabling professional salespeople to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in ever-changing, high-tech environments.

In summary, an effective sales training program must:

- Take into account adult learners' needs to be self-directed
- Employ real-life problem solving models
- Involve a variety of instructional techniques, including team or group activities, question and answer sessions, and use effective instructional graphics
- Match learners' developmental levels and be flexible enough for the instructor to adapt to those levels
- Strike a balance between andragogy and traditional pedagogy
- Contain an effective method for evaluating how much participants learned during the program

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