

Principles of Adult Learning

- 1- The participant is a partner in the learning experience and should be encouraged and given the opportunity to influence the learning design.
- 2- Adults, particularly those who occupy senior positions in organizations are very capable of taking responsibility for their own learning. Self directed learning activities can, therefore, be built into training event design.
- 3- Learning is enhanced when two-way communication takes place. Therefore avoid too many lecture sessions. Encourage designs which encourage a free exchange of ideas and insights between participants and trainers.

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- 4- Adults will learn from reflecting on their own and other peoples' experiences. The use of interactive activities such as case studies, role playing and group activities will encourage reflection and learning.
- 5- What is perceived to be useful in everyday work situations will be learned; that which is perceived to have little reference to work or life situations will tend to be dismissed. It is therefore important that the learning design fit expressed and assessed needs. Try also to build in applications planning.
- 6- People expect to be treated with respect and learn best when they perceive that they are, being respected. It is therefore important to enquire about their problems and situations and demonstrate that due account is being taken of them.

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- 7- Interest will determine attention and regular 'review' and 'process' activities will help ensure that interest is maintained.
- 8- Whilst highly structured and formal learning designs are often appropriate for young people, adults, particularly managers will resent this. They learn better in a climate which is personal and relatively informal. The degree of informality will need to reflect the degree of informality normally found within peer groups in the organization (s). 'Getting acquainted' and 'Interpersonal' activities help facilitate a more personal approach.
- 9- Adults are self-motivated to improve effectiveness but they filter learning through their own developed value systems. Activities which focus on behavioral change and evaluation which is self directive will be helpful.

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10- Learning is enhanced when participants are supported in experimenting with new ideas and skills. Support can be given by establishing 'home groups' where experiences can be shared and progress reviewed.

11- Adults are more set in their ways than children. Fixed points of view are often a barrier to new learning, so do not forget the necessity for 'unlearning'. Personal feedback activities and opportunities for experimentation will enhance 'unlearning'.

12- Adults will be more likely to apply that which they have had a part in planning. Thus modifying the event design both before and during the experience will give a greater sense of involvement and a greater likelihood of application.