Remote learning – the future of training? – Hands on training

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Hands-on training is usually delivered to smaller groups, in a classroom and has sizable hands on practical elements throughout the training. Due to current social distancing restrictions hands on training is currently all but impossible, and will probably remain challenging for some time. The logical alternative is remote training. But what are the differences compared to classroom based training? What are the best practices when delivering remote training? And what does the future for remote training look like?

What makes classroom based hands on training so effective and how does remote training compare?

1. *Constant instruction and feedback from the trainer.* This is equally possible when training via remote conferencing services. As the trainer can be continuously seen and heard, and simultaneously share their screen with delegates, remote training should be equally effective. As with any training it is essential to the pace of the training well. With remote training more beaks are required as peoples attention spans are shorter when watching on screen. Also some additional time needs to be factored in for resolving any problems delegates might have. Because of this the amount that can be covered in a remote hands on course is slightly less than a classroom based course, but not significantly so.

2. *Tailoring the pace of the training and explanations to suit delegates learning speeds and understanding.* With remote training the trainer has similar flexibility to tailor the speed of the training and explanations to suite different delegates.

3. *Delegates are able to ask questions of the trainer whenever they like*. Asking questions within the training can actually be easier with remote training. The chat facility in remote conferencing services is actually big an advantage. It is often the case that quieter delegates in a classroom are too nervous to ask a question or flag they have a problem verbally. With a chat facility they can type a question directly to the trainer without the other delegates being able to see it. Also delegates not physically being in the same room changes the group dynamics and makes it les likely for louder members of the group to dominate questions and discussions.

4. *A rapport between trainer and delegates that aids learning*. Gaining an initial rapport between delegates and trainer is harder and requires more effort on behalf of the trainer. It is a good idea for the trainer to start a session with a general preamble and get everyone to introduce themselves. This helps break the ice, as it

does in a classroom. Not having communal breaks / a communal breakout area does make general interaction, between the trainer and delegates, and between the delegates themselves a bit harder, but factoring in time for small chats and group discussion throughout the course helps.

5. *The ability of the trainer to read a delegates facial expression and body language to ascertain if there is a problem or lack of understanding.* Reading facial expression and to a certain extent body language is still possible via the delegates video connection. It is absolutely essential that delegates keep their video connection on throughout the training. This helps in gaining a better rapport with the delegates from the trainers perspective, as you can actually see them, but is also important within the training itself. It means that as with classroom training facial expressions and to a certain extent body language can be read.

6. *The trainer can physically see the status of training projects and offer help if required.* The trainer can't see the status of delegates training projects instantly although they can be seen upon request. This does mean that the trainer I much more reliant on the delegates them selves flagging that they have a problem. It is a good idea for the trainer to constantly check that the delegates have finished each stage of the training successfully. And in addition emphasising on a regular basis that if there is any form of problem, the delegates should let the trainer know immediately is.

7. *Instant help is provided and the trainer can instruct a delegate how to resolve a problem or take over and show them instead.* Resolving a problem is just as easy remotely. Instant help can still be provided but this is a bit more time consuming than walking over to a delegate in the classroom and is probably the main area where the pace of the training can become slightly slower. However a delegate can via video conferencing services, share their screen so that the trainer can see it and direct them, or let the trainer take remote control of their computer, so resolving a problem is just as straight forward.

There are some forms of course where there are complex physical elements to the training that may not be as suited to remote training. However for most hands on training it is a great delivery medium. There is an inherent convenience to remote courses as well as potential time and cost savings to delegates. As people become more experienced in conducting meetings and socialising remotely they will become more at home with remote technology. This will lead people to increasingly consider remote training as a viable option. The current social distancing restrictions will only serve to accelerate this process.