
LERN/EON Learning Exchanges

The 25 Most Important Things in Contract Training

A LERN client recently posted a question in our web consulting suite, asking, “What are the 25 things in a contracted training?”

Interesting question. Since each training should be a customized response to a client’s needs, the 25 most important things vary from job to job, even if only slightly. But there are some themes that we can identify.

Relevant to the specific business

This one is key. The content and delivery methods should be meaningful to the client. They called you for a reason, of course, and when you understand both the client and the need, you can design a curriculum and deliver a class that satisfies.

Just-in-time

Like us, our clients are likely to be on a tight schedule. They need training when they need it, and where. The result of delivering training on time will affect retention, carry over the learning to the workplace, and so many other important factors.



Based on an accurate needs assessment

It’s hard to deliver a good to solution to a problem you don’t thoroughly understand. Frontload most of your effort into needs assessment and the training will practically develop itself! This needs assessment may also uncover needs beyond the client’s original request so be on the lookout for that, as well.

Based on inputs from multiple perspectives of need

The best needs assessment will include the perspectives of multiple people on the problem. Talking to more than one person engaged with the problem will also give you more contacts inside the company — useful in case someone leaves.

Built around learning objectives

From an instructional design perspective, the real function of contract training is to improve performance. Having done a needs assessment, you can easily pull out a few key learning objectives. They should be the things, which achieved, will close the gap between the performance the company has, and the one it wants in this particular area.

Evaluated for learning

Having performance change by virtue of the training is only half of the equation. You need to measure the change — hopefully an increase. There’s an old maxim in business that “if it isn’t measured, it doesn’t exist.” While this may not be true, we can guess that “if it isn’t measured, it doesn’t really matter!” Make it matter. Measure.

Evaluated for effect on the bottom line

This is ROI — return on investment. Fundamentally, a good training will meet or exceed in dollar value in improvement in performance what it cost to do the training.



Evaluated for change of behavior in the workplace

The same thing is true for change of behavior. This measurement aims to tell you that not only did people learn something, but they were also able to actually bring the new skill into the work place. A failure here is more likely to be a failure on the company’s part than yours, but as partners in learning we can help the company leverage their training dollars by making sure the company supports the transfer of learning to the work place.

Addressed to different learning modalities

Different people learn differently. It will stick when people get it. They will get it when you teach in the way they learn best.

Changed skills, knowledge and attitudes

Chart improvement in these 3 key areas. Let the participants say for themselves what they got in each area and report to all the stakeholders.

Convenient to the participants

Customer service is key here. Was it easy to get to class, be there, and follow up?

Blended learning (used technology as appropriate to provide an enriched experience)

How can you use technology, like intranets, to boost the effectiveness of the class? Extended resource materials, online quizzes and pre-testing for better placement are just a few of the ways.



Part of a holistic program, not a fragmented approach

The best learning will happen as part of a long-term plan.

Results documented and available to participants

Let participants know what you learned in your evaluation of the course. Adults like to self-direct their learning and this will help them do it.

Participants were well placed (not too hard, not too easy, relevant)

This relates back to your needs assessment.

Content is up-to-date

Using practitioners in the area of expertise will help keep content relevant — a must in contract training.

Sensitive to adult learning principles

Your subject matter experts must also understand how adults learn and apply the principles in the classroom or online. There will always be budget-related compromises, but apply effort here. Train those who don't know and help them make better courses.

Cost-effective

Regardless of price, the course must offer good value. Make it as inexpensive as it can be — but not cheaper than that!

Created a stronger relationship between client and provider

Every learning event is a sales and relationship building activity. Never forget!

Created a sense of motivation to learn more among participants

Motivation in adult learning is its own area of focus. Research shows that an adult learner who is motivated learns more and retains it longer.

Good instructional methods, good delivery

In business, you'll be competing with good "dog and pony" shows, so though performance improvement is number one, the entertainment aspect can't really be ignored.

Did not generate quality problems, or they were dealt with to client's satisfaction 100%

It's okay to make mistakes as long as you own them and follow up.

Provider and client had a post-training review to assess quality, what they learned and next steps

This follow up is your next sales call. Do it.



Fun

This piece is clear... right?

Client and participants felt good value for dollar and time spent.

All the things above should lead to a sense of value. Find out, from the client's perspective, if the class "worked," and add your own sensibilities to the conversation. What could have been better? What really did work?

The key in contract training is to focus more on *performance outcomes* and less on anything else, except possibly operating margins and long-term relationships.