



PERSONAL TRAINING

Blanket training can be ineffective and costly and arguably does not benefit those that it is designed to help, argues David Towlson. The world of learning is changing and technology means it will become more personalised.

Too much safety training can be counterproductive. That may sound strange but giving training to those that don't need it, to those that already know what to do, and to those that find it is not relevant, does not benefit anyone.

Training should at least be effective and change what people do. To take an example, I once visited a company that had a policy of delivering asbestos training annually to all of its employees. While the training was well-intentioned, I found from talking to the trainees that most of them never encountered asbestos yet had had the same annual refresher training for the last five years.

While the trainer was excellent, motivated and upbeat, arguably the training was not really relevant to most of the employees. For

those that it was, a 30-minute test to check whether they needed refreshing would have been more appropriate.

In some cases, those that need the training might not know that they do. One particular case is those that are certain they are always right and yet are frequently wrong.

It is possible to identify such individuals by setting multiple choice questions that not only ask you to identify the correct answer but also ask how certain you are that the answer selected is correct. This can be an indicator of reckless or dangerous behaviours in the workplace that may need addressing by re-education.

However, it is the opposite of this, where training can be given to those who don't need it or at least don't need a lot of it. Or to give it a positive spin, there are many examples of generic training and refresher

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training to deliver skills you never knew you needed.

Blanket training is sometimes done because it is easy to implement and ‘brings everyone up to the same level’. There is a place for this, especially with formal qualifications where there is little room to modify. But, is it value for money and is it really effective?

CPD for the professional safety person used to be like this too; like stamp collecting but for course and conference attendees. It didn't matter whether you liked the CPD activity or even found it useful. Someone else decided for you what was CPD-worthy and how valuable it was – even allocating CPD points.

You could trade CPD points in for a higher form of currency called “kudos”, “respect” or even “relief”. It was transactional. You needed CPD points; they had them. All you needed to do was pay and attend.

The world has come to realise that CPD is lifelong learning and is contextual and individual. The industry has also begun to trust that professionals can decide for themselves what is valuable. In some respects, this has mirrored the change from prescriptive to risk-based approaches.

Fundamentally, what you learn and develop (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) has to be useful, so CPD can come from challenges in your day-to-day job. Of course, you can also attend courses and on-the-job training, but it's important to make sure they're useful and not just a collector's item.

The way we learn has also changed. Technology means we can now learn on multiple devices – laptops, smartphones, and eReaders. We learn in multiple contexts (work, home, socially, formally) and have the ability to contribute far more to our own learning.

We have begun to create, upload, personalise, curate and share our own learning content. That's always been there with things like NVQ portfolios, but technology has made that far easier and immediate. That's both exciting and a challenge for course providers. ■

David Towlson is director of training and quality at RRC Training – see page 4 for more details