

## **8 Principles of Accelerated learning**

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### **1. Primacy and Recency**

Sounds Latin doesn't it? It means, of course, the beginning of your session and the end of your session. People remember most from these two spots. Zeigarnik's research shows that providing real interruptions leads to higher recall as you have more starts and endings. So the magic answer is for us to make more of them.

Here're some suggestions:

- Incorporate energisers during the session to break it up and create an new start
- Have more mini breaks of say 4½ minutes (the ½ is important as it is unusual and will be remembered)
- Alternatively try 8 x 45 minute learning sessions rather than our normal 4 x 90 minute sessions

### **2. Chunking**

Sounds awful this one and might be something you can get jabs for from the chemist. But it's a really important principle when teaching adults things. Firstly you chunk up and then you chunk down.

Chunking up is where you leave the detail and look at the overall context and principle governing the information you're teaching. You see people like to see the bigger picture or context and to understand the rules and principles first and then they can see where the detail fits in. For example when I'm teaching people about pensions, I'll start by looking at why saving for retirement is vital and some of the key benefits the government grants pensions such as the tax reliefs and fund options. Then I'll go into the detail of each pension product.

Chunking down is the opposite and this is where we break down a particularly difficult subject into small bite sized chunks to enable easy digestion and understanding.

Remember when designing your content think chunking and because the title is unusual, you'll probably recall this one first.

### **3. Unfamiliar to familiar**

A few years ago a bunch of Americans were held captive and demands made of the United States Government for their release. The Iranian Government, commenting on the situation, said "the hostage crisis is like an orange where all the juice and goodness has been squeezed out, let them go"

It's like....I bet you've used this kind of thing before to help people understand something. Make something that appears unfamiliar become more familiar by providing an "it's like". This gives people a connection in their brain which will aid understanding.

A unit trust is like a variety pack of breakfast cereals. For the same price as a big box of one breakfast cereal you get a selection of cereals to enjoy each day. A unit trust gives you a loads of shares to invest in.

Here's some ideas to make unfamiliar to familiar:

- Create case studies so people can see how the subject relates to the real world
- Ask the group for examples of analogies for the subject

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### **4. Senses working overtime**

A classic XTC number from the 80's and one to get us thinking about all senses learning which is a cornerstone of Accelerated Learning. Seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling. Think about your content and delivery and ask yourself the question "am I involving all the senses here or just one".

A typical PowerPoint presentation involves hearing only. Arguable they are looking at the slides but, in most cases, they're only reading the words!

Taste and smell senses are cultivated by die hard accelerated learning aficionados who put special sweets on tables and spray smells around the room. Clever stuff really but not always practical and you could excite an allergy for someone in your group. The sense of smell and taste has been proven to get to the brain far quicker than the main 3 senses (sight, sound, touch)

Touch first. When a human touches something it sends millions of signals to the brain and stimulates blood movement around the body. Physical movement does this as well as touching using hands. Here's some stats for those analysts reading this article. People remember...

10% of what they read  
20% of what they hear  
30% of what they see  
50% of what they see and hear  
70% of what they say  
90% of what they say and do

Here's a few ideas:

- Little fiddly toys are great on the table just to get people fiddling
- Use physical energisers as well as neuro ones
- Have people pick notes up and touch them as they read
- Bring in actual props to touch and pass around or samples of the subject you're teaching
- Get people moving for a purpose, whenever you can.

Seeing. The main competitor to your training courses is not other courses or school...but the TV. Adults get most of their new information these days via the TV and the telly thrusts out visuals that are really captivating. If you use visuals as well as sounds and hearing you double the connection to the brain and then the learning happens quicker and stays put. It's like eating sausages and adding tomato sauce. It's still one meal but much tastier. Here's a few more ways of having visual associations:

- Pictures are good on PowerPoint. Very easy to get nowadays using Google to search for photos and pictures. Print out your slides and pin them to the wall in a random fashion
- Use the flipchart to draw. Then put your flip sheets on the wall to create wall peripherals
- Learn to draw cartoons
- Tell vivid stories which get people to open up their imagination

Finally sound or hearing. Powerful sense and the one traditionally used in adults learning. The trainer talks and they listen. Here's some tips:

- Get some voice coaching to make your voice sound more interesting
- Play music
- Tell stories
- Encourage discussion and one to one coaching

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### **5. Fun**

I mentioned earlier about the telly being our fiercest competitor and good learning programmes on the box use humour. Not slapstick but entertainment. We should do the same. Having a sense of humour helps enormously – it relaxes people, shows our real selves and shows modesty too. By the way, successful trainers leave their egos in the car when they train people, they don't bring it in the room with them.

Don't be childish but be child like in your approach to training. Use fun where appropriate, learn to laugh at yourself, play with toys and make games to encourage learning.

Children by the age of 5 have learnt 75% of their total learning. The first 5 years is vital as every parent would tell you. But how do they do this learning. Predominantly through play and fun.

### **6. Distributed Practise**

Now this principle is really clever. The basis is that when you remind yourself or practise something you've just learnt, it really begins to stick. The key is to provide regular reviews to the learning at different times and different durations. This has been proven to make the learning stay put. Here's some ideas:

- Provide handouts after the course, maybe 24 hours later via email
- Review each learning session at the end and at the beginning of the next session. Recall the TV make over programmes, you know when someone is doing up an old house. Just after the break, the presenter always recaps for us.
- Hold quizzes, tests etc to provide a review.
- Start each day reviewing what was learnt
- Email questions to the members days after the event to stimulate a review.
- Provide a variety of review methods
- Don't leave it all to the end of the course to review. Honestly, people just want to go home then and it's a bit late really.

### **7. Arouse**

Careful with this one but it does sound interesting doesn't it? Have I aroused your curiosity? The problem with training sessions is that people's attention dips in the middle. Now you might be providing shorter sessions with more starts and stops but people's attention will dip somewhere in the middle. Von Restorff is his research, found that if you put something outstanding in the middle, something unusual perhaps, then you'll re-ignite the interest.

So next time you're designing a session, put the best bit or the most unusual bit right smack in the middle to arouse people's attention. Don't leave the best to last, as we often do, leave it for the middle. Here's a couple of tips:

- Put funny MPG movies connected to the subject, in your PowerPoint slides.
- Play a fun game connected to your subject in the middle
- Just leave the best bit for the middle

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### **8. The Rhythm is going to get you**

Rhythm and rhyme are brilliant methods to enable long term learning and great as memory devices. We know dozens of these from our childhood.

- 30 days have September, April, June and November, all the...
- Richard of York gave battle in vain (colours of the rainbow – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet)
- Righty tighty, lefty loosey (screws)
- Bid to get rid (unit prices)

Try and incorporate rhythm and rhyme in your learning events. Encourage group members to create their own memory rhymes. Hold small competitions for the best ones. Invent some yourself. Teach people the basics of limericks and let them write a limerick to remember some key points of a subject.