



Designing Effective Training

Introduction

Designing training is a core skill of good trainers, yet it is one that is not often given proper attention. When learning to be a trainer, almost all development is focussed on delivery skills, and design is somehow expected to be 'picked up'.

Many experienced trainers may also feel that, because they know their subject and are good 'on their feet', spending time on design is largely unnecessary and can be kept to a minimum. Good training can only be achieved if proper thought, time and effort have been put into the design of the training.

Quality design goes beyond producing a few slides, half a dozen handouts and a few scribbled trainer notes. Quality design results in a well-structured programme, utilising a wide range of learning methods. It results in robust delegate materials, detailed trainer notes and bespoke activities, as well as appropriate pre- and post-course work to aid the transfer of learning.

Giving proper consideration to design means that the training is likely to be better targeted towards the individual and business needs, and aid the effective transfer of learning to the workplace. This is the ultimate goal of training after all!

Some trainers who are brilliant at bringing pre-prepared materials to life may struggle when presented with a blank piece of paper and asked to produce something from scratch. It is not always easy to put your ideas down on paper.

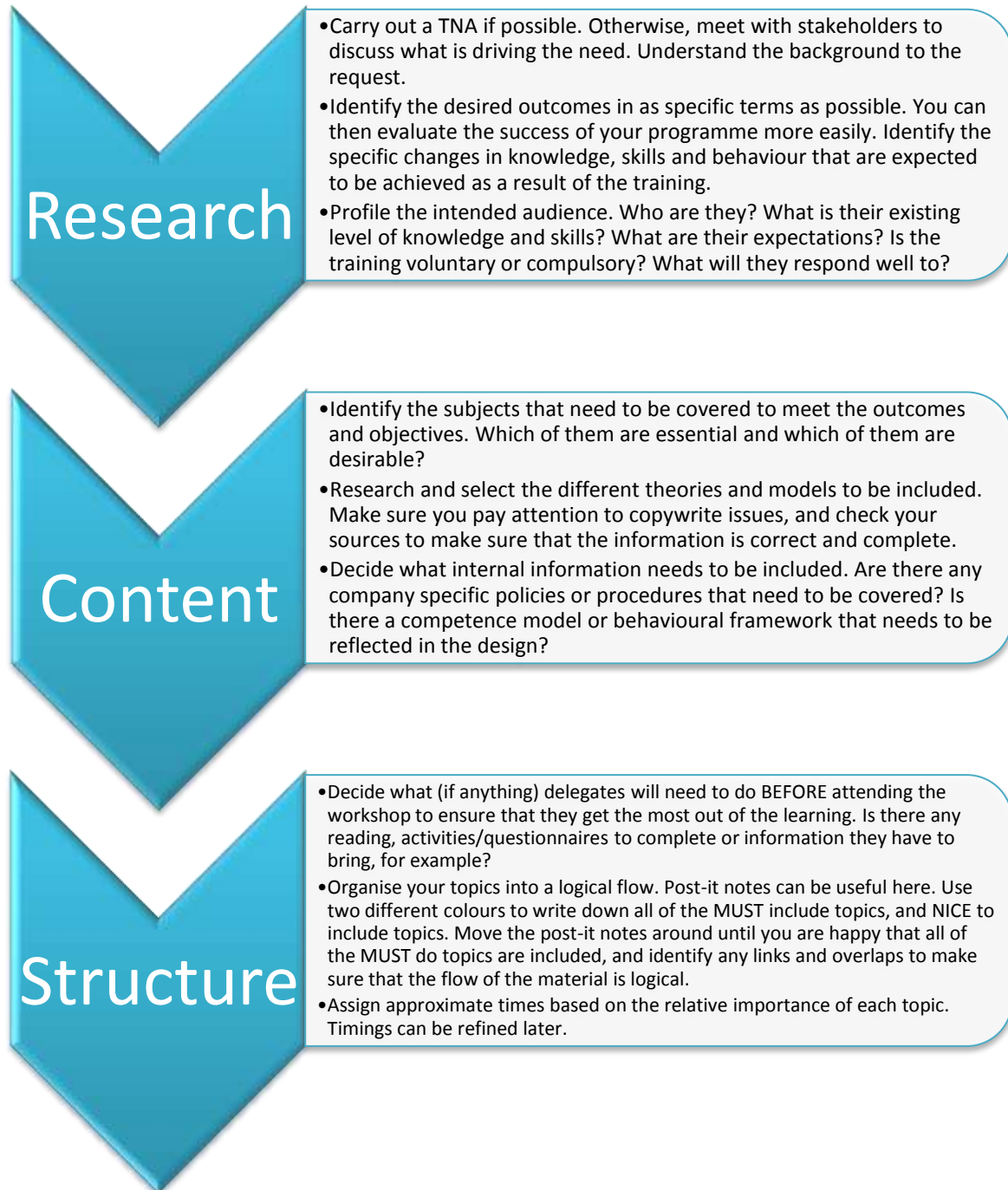
This brief document aims to help those with some training experience to design quality training by taking a structured approach. It follows a logical, step-by-step method, and suggests what should be considered at each stage.

Note: *It is intended that this document will be extended and include much more detail in the future. Any constructive comments and useful suggestions will be welcome. Please email me at: Sheridan@keystonedevlopment.co.uk or contact me via Twitter ([sheridan_webb](#))*



Overview of the Design Process

Below is a summary of the key stages of effective design.





Methods

- Having decided upon the topics to cover, you need to decide HOW they will be covered. Important topics need to be covered in depth using a variety of methods, whilst 'nice-to-do' topics can be covered in less detail.
- Make sure that the workshop is active, and appeals to a number of different learning styles (see Kolb for more detail). Apply the principles of accelerated learning. A mix of styles not only helps different people to learn, but it keeps the workshop interesting and interactive.
- Take into account any audience preferences and practical restrictions to make sure that it will be possible to run the workshop as designed, and that delegates will want to participate.
- Consider the visual aids and activities that will support the event. Are visual aids needed at all?
- Finally, consider how delegates will be able to apply the learning, and how it will be followed up/measured.

Write

- Even if you are writing for self-delivery, you should always produce a trainers guide, a delegate workbook or pack, and equipment and materials list and joining instructions. Visual aids are often also produced as well as additional handouts. This is to cover all eventualities, and to ensure that (if necessary) someone else could pick up the training and deliver it.
- Trainers notes should include timings, key points to present to the group, detailed instructions for activities, and key points for debrief/discussion. They should also indicate when supporting materials or visual aids should be used or referred to.
- Joining instructions should be produced to manage delegates' expectations about what the workshop is about, the benefits they will receive from attending it, any pre-course activities that they need to complete, as well as practical arrangements about the place, time etc. of the workshop.
- Delegate materials should be detailed and high quality. Badly photocopied handouts from different sources are not usually that useful, and look unprofessional. A detailed workbook means that delegates do not have to spend time writing things down, and can instead engage fully with the discussions/activities. Copies of slides alone are not usually that useful after the event. A proper workbook provides useful reference material and can include links to other sources of information.

Review

- The first thing to do is to self-review. Check that the workshop flows, makes sense and cross-references are accurate. Self-edit as much as possible. Check that you have not put too much content in, or included conflicting/unnecessary information. Refine your timings. Check that the content reflects the outcomes required by stakeholders, and delivers the required objectives.
- Proof-read all the materials, and if possible, ask someone else to proof-read for you, as you rarely spot all errors yourself. Check that things make sense, and that there are no silly spelling or formatting errors.
- Present the materials to the stakeholders for review, and ask for their feedback.
- Make any amendments necessary before finalising the materials, and preparing to run the workshop.