

Classroom to Cleanroom....

.....Why doesn't my Training Transfer?

An article on the problems with transferring training from the classroom to the workplace.

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Mary's Problem

Mary is a training specialist in a well known pharmaceutical company and is responsible for the continued training in cleanroom best practice. Mary spends a lot of time preparing her sessions and likes to feel that she has the subject well covered. Certainly, her attendees are attentive and score well in the assessments at the end of the session.

However, the cleanroom manager has recently pointed out to Mary that the little bad habits that people had before the training were still there after it. It would appear that the training made little difference in the workplace.

Training Transfer

Mary's problem is common and significant. Training could be regarded as a pure compliance exercise, in which case we are happy to have the training records and the successful assessments. But this is a high risk strategy and a poor return for investment. High risk because the behaviours that we set out to promote were not adopted. This must cast a doubt on all our training initiatives. A poor return because it is very expensive to schedule downtime for training and see no real benefit in the workplace.

Training transfer is a real chestnut in the training industry. It is widely recognised that classroom

training is particularly challenging. The trainee is not in the environment that you expect the training to be applied and unless you carefully craft the prompts for implementation, you may see very little benefit from the training. Somewhere between 'any other questions' and 'welcome back' nothing happens!

Training Transfer Tools

So what tools can we use to promote training transfer? How do we ensure that our trainees recall the training, but also recall it at the very moment that we want them to implement it? Well let's look first at what doesn't work...

Many training sessions these days are served up like a buffet. 'Take what you want from the table'. This, of course, allows the trainee to decide what was worth remembering and taking away. This is unreliable to say the least and, no doubt, not everyone will walk away with the same buffet platter.

Our suggestion is that the trainer must UNDERSTAND and OUTSTAND. Understand is to focus on the key learning points from the session. Trainers should not be overly ambitious in what can be achieved in one sitting.

Recall

Studies show that students have difficulty recalling more than

seven things from a training session immediately after the session. Even less as time goes by. Therefore, the trainer must try not to overload the training session with too many learning concepts. Confining the sessions to fewer learning objectives and concentrating on the transference of these may produce more benefits in terms of transfer than information overload.

The trainer should also set the menu, ensuring that the items recalled are the learning objectives. Therefore, these points should stand out from the rest of the session. Being realistic about what the audience need to know and ensuring that these are the 'take-away' items are the major goals of training transfer.

The GMP Services Method

At GMP Services we take great time to clarify the training outcomes. We separate this from the background information that people may find interesting and useful, but which will not change their behaviour. We make sure that we are truly focused on the actual behaviours or practices that we are engaged to promote.

We then divide these objectives into 'bite-size' and related chunks. We try NOT to cover too many unrelated concepts in the sessions. So if we are asked to give a GMP training session – we would define with the client those GMP practices that the client is most concerned to emphasise and change.

For example, a client may ask us to cover documentation practices. We can, of course, go through every GMP documentation rule known to man, achieve good scores in the assessments – but find that our clients documentation errors are still of concern. Our approach would be to probe the problem areas, the challenges to good records, the improvements that the client would like

to see. By doing this we find that, the message can change subtly. Now it may sound more like 'take your time' or 'think like the inspector'. Defining the message clearly and ensuring how it relates to the actual change in practice is the first hurdle.

Often a client says, can you cover documentation practices, housekeeping and perhaps the mess in the changing room. Without a clever linking system, these topics are quite disconnected and it is likely that at least one will NOT be recalled and applied after the session. Another approach is to change the message – perhaps we could ask 'What evidence could be found in the plant today, that we are careless?' ANSWER: Our sloppy documentation? Our poor housekeeping? And what about the mess in the changing room?

The more your training objective relates to the actual workplace and the change that you are trying to engineer, the more successful it will be.

In the next article we will look at how to make these learning objectives OUTSTANDING. Tune in next month.....