

TRAINING TOOLS AND PROGRESSIVE DISRUPTION



If the phrase “important training tools” was ever offered to contestants for consideration on the TV game show “Family Feud,” we imagine when it came time for the host to utter the familiar line, “Survey says...” responses would be dominated by “things.” Because when people think of tools, they have long been conditioned to think of devices or equipment -- the tangible things you can employ to accomplish a task.

If the task in question is learning, there is an ever-increasing number of things (objects, instruments and mechanisms) dedicated to the process imbedded in the task. Flip charts, workbooks and job aids have been joined by apps, platforms and online libraries to exponentially increase the capability of trainers worldwide to help trainees learn, change behavior and deliver results.

Of course, in reality, the tool itself is only as functional as the person on the other end of it. For example, if something breaks in either one of our homes, we do not run to the garage, lift the latch on a meticulously organized toolbox and select a device we can expertly wield in a timely manner to solve the problem. Actually, quite the opposite! You see, both of us have repeatedly been discouraged over the years by members of our immediate families from doing anything other than calling someone who knows what they are doing in those circumstances. Evidently (in the opinions of our loved ones based on extensive direct observation), we can only serve to make whatever the problem is worse (in some cases, far worse!).

Unfortunately, we have a tough time defending ourselves on this matter. When it comes to home repair, neither one of us has ever consistently demonstrated anything remotely resembling skill. Beyond that (and truly at the heart of this discussion),

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neither one of us has ever been even casually motivated to develop that set of proficiencies. We suppose you could say that almost regardless of the expertly designed tools that are readily available to help us respond to almost any home maintenance emergency at a moment’s notice, the value of figuring all that out in no way approaches the value of maintaining the status quo and outsourcing responsibility for resolution of these periodic (but inevitable) problems.

Perhaps, oddly, this realization on a personal level leads us to a point in the context of the theme for this issue to offer up a blinding flash of the obvious: The functionality of a tool depends almost entirely upon the person who has the option to use it.

In the universe of all that is training, consider the notion that there is

absolutely nothing of inherent value in any tool of any kind:

- Flip charts and dry erase boards take up space in an instructor-led training setting until a trainer with a compelling message uses these “blank canvases” to capture relevant thoughts and drive engaging discussion.
- Workbooks and job aids sit on bookshelves and in desk drawers unless learners perceive benefit in reviewing their contents in preparation for a coaching discussion.
- Electronic and mobile resources (basically, technology of any form or fashion) containing an almost unending spectrum of games, microlearning potential, or “chat-room, peer-to-peer, post-training connectivity,” remain unopened and unused if access and operation aren’t tied to something valued by the learner.

So, what is the most important tool in training? Influencing your training professionals and the learners they serve to actually use the growing number of tools in their toolboxes in a collective effort to progressively disrupt the status quo. 🍷

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