Effective Delivery Formats

Face-to-Face Delivery Formats

The following face-to-face delivery formats are adapted from the work of Thomas J. Sork.[*]

Workshop (W): A relatively short-term, intensive, problem-focused learning experience that actively involves participants in the identification and analysis of problems and in the development and evaluation of solutions.

Seminar (S):   A session or series of sessions in which a group of experienced people meet with one or more knowledgeable resource persons to discuss a given content area.

Institute (I): A short-term, often residential program that fosters intensive learning on a well-defined topic. New material is presented to add to the knowledge which the participants already have on the subject.

Clinic (C): A short-term program that emphasizes diagnosis and treatment of problems that participants bring to the session. Experts available at the clinic, rather than participants themselves, have primary responsibility for diagnosing problems and prescribing treatment.

Short course (SC): An abbreviated, more focused version of the class typically found in colleges and universities. Designed to update or deepen the knowledge of those in a particular field, the expert dominates the sessions because it focuses on communication and on acquisition of information within a short time.

Advantages of Each Format
- Many people can attend (W/S/SC)
- Very transportable (W/S/I/CS)
- Immediate application of results of problem-solving efforts (W/C)
- People interact in novel ways (W/I)
- Isolation from distractions of day-to-day concerns (W/S/I/SC)
- Problem-solving skills refined (W/C)
- Little need to reorganize facilities and equipment once they are in place (W/S/I)

Limitations of Each Format
- Fatigue and information overload are always possible (W/S)
- Mid-stream corrective action difficult when learner problems occur (W)

- Teacher burnout (W/SC)
- Little flexibility if timing is not maintained (W/SC)
- Individual feedback to learners rarely possible (W/S)
- Learners are not always effective participants (W/I/C/SC)

Criteria for Selecting a Format
- Learning objectives emphasize problem solving (W)
- Solving problems that are relatively complex and generalized and that require intensive analysis (W)
- Resources necessary to engage in problem solving are available where they can be effectively incorporated into workshop activities (W)
- Skilled leadership is available (W/S/I/C/SC)
- Participants come with, or can be provided with, the group process skills that they need to engage in effective problem solving (W)
- Important to remove participants from their "natural" environment to bring about the desired changes in capabilities (W/I/C/SC)

*Adapted from Sork, Thomas J. "The Workshop as a Unique Instructional Format." In *Designing and Implementing Effective Workshops*, edited by Thomas J. Sork, pp. 3-10. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984.

Distance Learning Formats

Distance learning is training that takes place with registrants and instructors separated by locations and time zones. Registrants may receive materials and instructions for assignments via their computer or mail and are asked to return completed assignments to their instructor using the same media.

Advantages of the Distance Learning Format
- Allows registrants to take classes where and when they choose
- Alleviates cost, time, and work constraints
- Increases choices for more registrants
- Doesn't require a "brick-and-mortar" classroom
- More suited to the mature adult learner

Limitations of the Distance Learning Format
- Requires more time and work to deliver than does face-to-face training
- Registrants may feel isolated
- Can be more of a challenge due to lack of structure and interaction with others
- Administrative support needed may increase with larger number of registrants
- Necessitates high start-up costs and longer time frame for recouping expense

Criteria for Selecting the Distance Learning Format
- Requires simple and direct writing by the instructor

- Activities and self-assessment exercises must be interspersed throughout, building to the end goal
- Must be able to map a visible path when introducing the course in order to show registrant where he/she is at all times
- Works best when concepts, ideas, and theories are repeated often

Distance learning may be delivered using many techniques and technologies. E-learning is the distance learning form that uses the most "bells and whistles," but there are other successful ways of delivering distance learning. These include the following:

- **E-learning** is delivered via computers using internet technology and programming that allows registrants to interact with the materials via chat rooms, black boards, video conferencing, etc.
- **Recorded programming** uses a series of pre-recorded programs designed to convey techniques and theory. Delivery via cable, tape, podcast, or DVD is most common.
- **Web seminars** involve the use of a PC and telephone, allowing instructors to present a short program using a PowerPoint presentation and interacting with registrants via phone and email.