



Blend Your Training Until the Lumps Come Out!

By J. B. Bowden

I've been in training longer than current training media. . . even video tape! I'm beginning to see a problem resurface that I thought was resolved long ago.

In the *old days*, we had self-study booklets some of which were well-crafted training programs. The problem was that they were not **administered** properly or **reinforced** for greater understanding and performance. It was just too easy to distribute the booklets, and eliminate that expensive class. Well, if you read the training history books, you'll see that the approach failed. More and more self-study booklets were replaced by live classes, and the cost of training soared.

Fast forward to today, and all of a sudden, the self-study book has a slick new look and a convenient delivery system, and well. . .here we go again!

This time let's learn from our mistakes. The online technology offers training opportunities barely dreamed of a decade ago. Here's how to keep history from repeating itself:

- Recognize the differences and strengths as well as the weaknesses of the technology based self-instruction, such as computer-based training (CBT), multimedia training on CD-Rom, web-based training (WBT), and others. They provide great potential for learning when they are properly designed. The key is that they must be **captivating**. Flash animation, full motion video, and engaging interactivity all "captivate" the learner, and improve retention by accommodating different learning styles. A screen of text with a picture and a "next" button is an *electronic pamphlet*, and will surely suffer the fate of its self-instruction ancestor.
- Where possible, **blend** facilitator-led training with technology-based training, but do it right! Use both methods' strengths. Self-paced learning helps *acquire* and *assess* knowledge and certain skills. Facilitator led programs can *reinforce* and *experience* that knowledge, and *apply* to work situations. Blended properly, the resulting program is smooth, but use one or the other improperly, and it's lumpy!
- Finally, *administer* both phases of the training, and make your learner understand the value of each. Self-instruction is not something to rush just before coming to class, and the class is not the forum to repeat all the knowledge for those who didn't complete the self-instruction.

We have opportunity today to create a learning environment superior to any other time period. Let's not make the mistakes of the past. Make your facilitation-led training experiential, and your self-instruction captivating. Blend the two smoothly. . . and take out the lumps!

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