TRAIN ON THE FAST TRACK

Training instructors for performance-based results

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Your best experts are on the factory floor – but are they your best instructors? They can be if you train them on how to effectively transfer knowledge. The key is tailoring your instructor training to their strengths and weaknesses with a program like ICP – our Instructor Certification Program. One participant (who resisted training at first) enthused, "It's tough eating my own words, but … ICP was worth my time."

Better training through better equipped instructors

Your average train-the-trainer program treats all instructors as if they were the same. The problem is training just doesn't work that way. Your instructors have a lot of valuable skills and knowledge, but they may have very different ways of transferring it to their colleagues. If your instructor training isn't tailored to their individual teaching styles, you'll be leaving big gaps in their ability to transfer knowledge.

Five Simple Steps

You can see significant improvement in your instructors' effectiveness, just by following five simple steps:

1. **Identify the best instructor –** it may well be someone on the factory floor

2. **Find the time –** effective instructor training done right won't take as long as you think

3. **Identify the competencies –** know what makes a great instructor

4. **Know your instructor types –** understand the instructional styles of your different instructors

5. **Match competencies to training types –** leverage their natural strengths; fill in the gaps in their abilities

Now, let's take a look at each step and what it means….

1. First identify your instructors.

The best instructors are your own people. But they aren't instructors. Or are they? The people who work the factory floor every day know your systems inside and out. They have the expert knowledge needed to train others. And with the right preparation, they can learn to be effective instructors. Start out by determining who has both the interest and the skill.

ICP training makes a real difference in real life knowledge transfers

- **Define** the role by developing a good job description. This will help your candidates understand the expectations and duties.

- **Observe** interactions to identify those who have knowledge and are willing to share that knowledge with the team.

- **Interview** team members and find out who everyone turns to when equipment breaks or the line stops

- **Audition** potential candidates to narrow the list and see how they transfer knowledge in various classroom and hands-on situations.

2. Next, you have to find the time.

Your instructors are often your most productive employees. So actually finding the time to train your instructors in the midst of a hectic production schedule is a major challenge. The idea of pulling your most productive employees out of everyday work may sound daunting, but the payoff in the long run is well worth it. If you plan your training program properly, it won't take as long as you think.

At Polytron, we take care to set a goal and delivery process that ensures training is deep enough to cover the subject, but not so long that it hampers production. Our Instructor Certification Program (ICP) is fast-paced, because we tailor it to the individual types of instructors. People get the concepts faster. Everything runs better. We're doing it all the time and seeing incredible results.

3. Then, you identify the competencies every instructor needs.

What competencies make an instructor more effective? We focus on the four cornerstone competencies that every instructor needs, plus 10 other instructional competencies. Whether you're in the process, packaging, manufacturing, or distribution industries, these 14 competencies form the foundation for successful knowledge transfer. An effective instructor must know how to:

1. **Assess the materials:** Analyze course materials and learner information

2. **Prep the "classroom":** Assure preparation of the instructional site

3. **Inspire confidence:** Establish and maintain credibility as an instructor

4. **Manage the environment:** Control the learning environment

5. **Communicate effectively:** Demonstrate engaging communication*

6. **Present effectively:** Demonstrate dynamic presentation*

7. **Ask the right questions:** Demonstrate effective questioning techniques*

8. **Give the right feedback:** Respond appropriately to learners' need for clarification

9. **Motivate learners:** Provide positive reinforcement and motivation*

10. **Know the best methods:** Use instructional methods appropriately

11. **Make it multimedia:** Use media effectively.

12. **Evaluate learner performance:** Know how well each learner did

13. **Evaluate instructor performance:** Assess the delivery of instruction

14. **Report the results:** Get feedback and learn from the evaluation information

(***Cornerstone competencies)

We adapted these competencies from standards established by CompTIA and the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction (IBSTPI). The ultimate goal for any train-the-trainer program is to equip instructors in some of these competencies. Our Instructor Certification Program focuses on all of them.

70% discovered their training abilities had improved

4. Know your instructor types.

You've planned time for training and identified instructional competencies. Now, you need to know your instructor types, so you can tailor your training to fit each instructor. In a production environment, instructors fall into one of three categories:

A) Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). These are plant personnel or OEM vendor instructors. They know a lot about specific equipment, tools, processes, or troubleshooting.

Strengths – Deep understanding of the technology, and knowledge of equipment process.

Weaknesses – SMEs often don't like to interact with others and don't see the need for formal training. Their knowledge transfer is often full of detail and given in a hands-on environment. It's valuable information, but it isn't organized very well. Results are sporadic retention and haphazard use of information.

B) Team Leaders. These people are in charge of groups, areas, or shifts.

Strengths – Great people skills, and highly motivated to train their teams.

Weaknesses – Knowledge transfer often emphasizes quick solutions or the most recent procedural change without factoring in prior knowledge and learning. This results in random application of information.

C) "Natural" Instructors. These are your "go-to" people within a department. If there's a question, they've usually got the answer.

Strengths – Constantly exploring new task methods and techniques; love to share their ideas.

Weaknesses – Knowledge transfer is often full of detail and confirmation of performance, but lacks logical flow. Result is short-term retention of information.

5. Now, match competencies to training types.

Taking the 14 competencies and three instructor types, we've identified which instructors need help with which competencies. The four cornerstone competencies are required by all instructor types. The other competencies are assigned to instructor groups based on individual training types. Here's how it breaks out:

Four Cornerstone Competencies – for all instructors:

• Demonstrate engaging communication

• Demonstrate dynamic presentation

• Demonstrate effective questioning techniques

• Provide positive reinforcement and motivation

Competencies for Subject Matter Experts:

- Analyze learner information

- Manage the learning environment

- Respond appropriately to learner's need for clarification or feedback

- Use instructional methods appropriately

- Evaluate learner performance

Competencies for Team Leaders:

- Analyze learner information

- Use instructional methods appropriately

- Evaluate learner performance

Competencies for "Natural" Instructors:

- Analyze course materials and learner information

- Evaluate learner performance

- Evaluate delivery of instruction

What does all this look like in real life?

Using this approach, we conducted our Instructor Certification Program for a client in the bottling industry. We began with a classroom session that covered instructional theory and hands-on activities aimed at applying the theory to real-world situations. To be as true to life as possible, these job-related knowledge transfer situations were determined by the participants themselves.

ICP was such a success for our client that they increased the number of sessions and participants each year for the next two years

Everyone learned the 14 instructional competencies at a high level. But each group of instructor types also took a deeper dive into the specific competencies known to be most important for their group. We did this by designing end-of-program activities that brought participants through the complete training process – preparation, knowledge transfer, and confirmation of transfer – while focusing on their specific competencies

Two months after attending the ICP session, 70% of participants saw positive results when they engaged in knowledge transfer within their department. Most train-the-trainer programs will improve knowledge transfer skills to a certain extent. But our emphasis on identifying, adapting, and focusing specific competencies to specific instructor types – along with the targeted real-world activities – greatly improved participants' overall effectiveness**.**

In their own words

Subject Matter Expert
"I fought this training from the moment I was told I had to attend. But my presentations had lots of information and were so disorganized I lost the students. Now I set training objectives and define the terms, and students listen. It's tough eating my own words, but I guess I have to. ICP was worth my time."

Team Leader
"I've attended two train-the-trainers before. This ICP gave me what I needed to focus on the students' needs. During a recent line change, I was able to pull together several training sessions in a very short time and then roll these out for my supervisors to train. The process worked."

Natural Instructor
"I've always enjoyed sharing knowledge but thought I was not giving enough information. It turns out, I was. Now, asking the right questions gives me the feedback to know."

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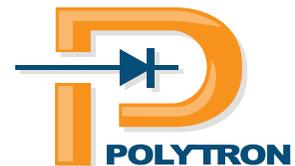
Want to know how you can use ICP to speed knowledge transfer at your company? Just give us a call today. Or learn more and register for classes at www.polytron.com/icp-classes.

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