

PARTICIPATING IN WORKBASED LEARNING GROUPS



Why use a workbased learning approach?

When people are asked how and where they learn best, most respond that most of what they have learned came from doing the work itself with their co-workers in a work place.

Using this experience as a guide, workbased learning has been promoted as a way of:

- applying learning immediately to real workbased issues/ tasks rather than an artificial situation
- linking learning to tasks
- using valuable time and resources efficiently to achieve learning and project outcomes
- bringing the learning into the view of all in the workplace – co-workers, supervisors and managers
- encouraging participants to take responsibility for their own learning and what works best for them
- learning through doing with support and expert input at relevant times
- learning from the experience of learning
- transferring the learning process from one situation to a range of other situations.

Participating in a workbased learning activity

Participating in a workbased learning project requires a certain amount of self direction and motivation to keep on track.

Being a participant means:

- being involved in the planning and learning process rather than have this determined by a trainer or facilitator
- taking charge of your own learning
- understanding how you learn best
- reviewing and reflecting on the progress you are making.

This doesn't mean to say that you will be on your own. The other group members, your supervisor, your mentor and/or your facilitator will work with you.

Planning for workbased learning activities

When planning a workbased learning activity it is important to do the following:

- secure commitment from senior management – this assists in allocating time and other resources required
- identify what you want to achieve – clarify goals and purpose and let everyone concerned know what's planned
- identify the different people who will be involved – participants, facilitator, content experts, managers, coaches and mentors
- develop an action plan which sets out what you plan to do, how you plan to do it, when this will happen and who will be responsible and involved
- if using a facilitator to guide the process, make sure that he/she understands the task and the learning needs of the group and is able to create a learning environment where everyone is able to achieve their goals.

Some key success factors

Before starting up a workbased learning project within your workplace it's worth keeping the following points in mind:

- have a clear understanding of your goal – what you want to achieve
- identify who needs to be involved – participants, managers, facilitator and content experts
- map out an action plan with timelines, responsibilities, tasks and learning required (this action plan may seem difficult to construct at the beginning – but by spending time up front on getting it as good as possible – the rest will be easier)
- work through the action plan as a group so that there is a shared understanding of what needs to be achieved
- use the action plan to keep the plan moving along
- identify dedicated time slots for workbased learning activities
- invite 'outside' people in when and if the group gets 'bogged down'

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- celebrate achievements as they happen – report these to managers and other interested people
- make sure the end of the activity is clear and spend some time evaluating the overall outcomes
- use the facilitator to keep the project moving, not to drive it.

What role could a facilitator play?

The facilitator of a workbased learning activity is likely to be involved in:

- developing an action plan which identifies the goals for the group and the learning outcomes
- creating a supportive, open and honest communication and learning climate
- identifying individual learning needs and approaches
- reflecting on what has been learned
- modelling workbased learning as a methodology for staff training and development.

Further reading

Skippington, P. (2002), 'Learning@Work' *Good Practice in Workbased Learning*, ANTA

Mitchell, J., McKenna, S., Dau, E., Perry, W., (2004) '40 Ways of Shaping our Future', ANTA

Mitchell, J., Henry, J., & Young, S., (2001) 'A New Model of Workbased Learning', ANTA

Reframing the Future flyer, *Facilitating Workbased Learning Groups – ideas and suggestions*

Reframing the Future flyer, *Self-evaluation Strategies for Project Teams*

Reframing the Future flyer, *Evaluating Projects*

This publication uses extracts from *A Guide to Action Learning* NSDC 1995 ISBN 0642235724

These and other publications are available from the Reframing the Future website <http://reframingthefuture.net>

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