CUSTOM-DESIGNED PRACTICE

Custom-designed practice ensures there's the right type and amount of practice. Here are some types of custom-designed practice (classroom-based, self-directed and/or e-Learning).

Type	Description	Custom-Design Best Practices
Real Life Scenarios/ Cases	During the learning event give the learners scenarios/cases that represent real life situations they need to handle.	Scenarios/Cases Preparation: • Observe real life, on-the-job performance to help identify the most effective scenarios/cases content to use. • Identify the key learning points ahead of time. • Ask several high performers to review the scenarios/cases to ensure they are representative of realistic job performance. Scenarios/Case Use: • Ask the learners to complete the cases/scenarios more than once, with added challenges.
Learner-Customized Scenarios/ Cases	During the learning event ask the learners to work in small groups to prepare their own real life scenarios/cases to use for practice.	• Provide the learners with a scenario/case template to guide their thinking. • Give specific guidelines for the learners to follow to ensure the effective preparation of the scenarios/cases. • Circulate the prepared scenarios/cases to other participants to use for practice. • Back on-the-job, ask the learners to capture new real life scenarios/cases, using the template, to practice during team meetings.
In-Basket – 'Day in the Life'	Give the learners an 'in-basket' of activities and tasks they need to complete that represent a typical 'day in the life' of the job they are learning to perform.	• Make the 'in-basket' or 'Day in the Life' as realistic as possible to the actual job performance. • Add additional challenges, i.e., interruptions, crises, missed deadlines, etc. as the practice unfolds. • Spend time debriefing (reviewing and discussing) each 'in-basket'. • Repeat the 'in-basket' and/or provide another one.
Live or Video Recorded Demonstrations (Role Model)	Show the learners a video or live demonstration of the job skills performed by an expert. Ask them to try out and demonstrate what they've seen.	• Include ineffective and effective demonstrations. Learners typically think the ineffective example is actually a good demonstration because it looks so 'normal' or familiar. • Spend time going over each part of the effective live or video demonstration to identify the knowledge and/or skills used by the expert, based on a performance model and/or checklist. • Ask the learners to repeat (or model) each part of the demonstration (many times).

Types of Custom-Designed Practice, cont'd

Type	Description	Custom-Design Best Practices
Video Record and Play Back Live Learner Practice	During the practice sessions, either as a large group or in trios, video record the learners' practice for review and feedback purposes.	• Show parts of each learners' video to the large group of participants so they can see examples of what was done well (as well as some examples of what could be improved on). • Give the video recording to the learners to take home to view later on. • Video record over a period of weeks to show improvement.
Games and Quizzes	Ask the learners to use their newly acquired knowledge while competing in individual, pairs, or team games and/or quizzes.	• Make sure there is a lot of repetitive use of new knowledge and/or skills as part of the game or quiz. • Add-in levels of difficulty to challenge the learners' recall skills. • Provide recognition and reward for 'winning'. • Use well known game or quiz formats like jeopardy, bingo, etc. • Create innovative games and quizzes that are organization-specific or theme-based.
Individual Coaching	Provide the learners an opportunity to practice their new knowledge and skills with personal coaches who provide feedback and support.	• Focus the coaching on what is being done well, not just what to improve. • Conduct the coaching over time, i.e., 'Interval' coaching, spaced for optimal 'perfect' practice. • Keep track of learning achievements based on knowledge and performance indicators (e.g., log, checklist, testing, etc.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Valerie Dixon, President of Learnware Design Inc., is a leading expert in the field of Training and Development. Valerie has over 40 years of experience in all aspects of training needs analysis and multi-media based learning design - including designing competency-based technical and management training programs, managing training designers and major training design projects and facilitating the successful implementation of training initiatives within both the private and public sectors.

Learnware Design Inc. offers a wide variety of training programs, tools and resources needed to achieve *Accelerated Competence™* – helping corporations, employees, training professionals and individuals learn faster, better and smarter.

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