



MAXIMIZING YOUR LEARNING POTENTIAL

You already know the importance of learning for career success. Knowing how to take in and process the right information in the right way at the right time makes you a great asset to your organization. Learning how to learn faster, smarter and better is a major competitive advantage, no matter your age, status in life, or occupation. Learning is a skill just like any other skill.

However, you may not be consciously aware of or intentional about how you are actually learning. You may not be maximizing your ability to learn. Do you know how to learn at the speed of change?

Here is an overview explanation of Learnware Design's **6Cs Learning Maximizer™ Process** that describes how to maximize your ability to *gain, retain, recall* and *reuse* new knowledge and skills.

PHASE A: Clarify the CONTEXT

Having the big picture of how something works or knowing how the parts relate to each other is the foundation for learning. As a learner, you gain context by asking for or receiving information about the 5Ws (who, what, when, where and why). Sometimes you need to see a visual representation (i.e., picture/diagram, flowchart, or model) to quickly gain an overall perspective.

What often causes your brain to be confused and experience 'brain pain' is a lack of context. Once you have the big picture it's easier to mentally engage with the learning materials and media and to then understand the details.

Learning Action: Next time you walk up to a group of people who are carrying on a conversation, recognize that you're missing the CONTEXT of that conversation. You need to quickly figure out several of the 5Ws, especially who, what, and why. Or, at the beginning of a meeting, make sure it starts with CONTEXT setting so everyone is on the same page, literally and figuratively.

PHASE B: Make the CONNECTION

Think of the last time you were excited about learning a new hobby or sport. Why were you willing to jump into the learning? It was more than likely because you were working towards a goal of mental or physical achievement you valued. Once you focused on the positive difference the learning would make in your life you were primed to learn. You also connected the learning to what you already knew and looked forward to learning more. This motivation to know or do something new had a specific pay-back.

Let's face it, real learning takes work. It typically doesn't happen unless you are excited about and interested in learning the new knowledge and skills. Great advertisers and marketers know that we buy first based on emotions and then logic kicks in. It's the same for learning.

Learning Action: Take time to reflect on how you can you increase your own motivation to learn new knowledge and skills. What's in it for you (WIIFM)? How can you increase the excitement, challenge, rewards and recognition associated with the learning?

PHASE C: Define the CONCEPTS

Every profession on earth has a unique vocabulary or set of terms. People in various professions learn the meaning of specific words and then use them to communicate with each other. Knowing how something is defined (i.e., learning the dictionary definition) is a critical learning moment.

So, when you see a word that you don't know, look up the definition. Also, notice that the new word is more than likely followed by an example, non-example, analogy and/or story to help explain what it means. If not, then think of an example or ask an expert to tell you their understanding of and experience with that concept.

Learning Action: Spend time browsing your organization's online glossary or list of acronyms. If your organization doesn't have one, create one.

PHASE D: CONSTRUCT the Content

You can learn new knowledge and skills faster and easier if you make the learning content pro-cognitive or 'brain-friendly'. You do this by purposefully constructing the content so that the underlying patterns, structure and organization are maximized for visual, auditory, verbal and kinesthetic learning. The layout and format of the content plays a key role in supporting your brain's ability to process information.

Learning Action: Construct at least one performance support tool (i.e., checklist, flowchart, diagram, if/then chart, procedure table, fact sheet, etc.) that will make the information easier for your brain to access and reuse. Share freely what you've created with others.

PHASE E: CONDUCT the Skills/Use the Knowledge

Learning is an active process. Taking action anchors what your brain is processing. These actions can include writing down the information, discussing it, drawing a visual representation, repeating it in your head (verbal talk) or a myriad of other individual, pair, small group or large group in-person or online interaction strategies.

You need to repeat what you've seen, heard, felt, touched and/or handled more than once for the new knowledge and skills to stick. If you can't recall and reuse it, you really haven't learned it.

Learning Action: Use it or lose it! Just reading about the 6Cs is not really learning about learning. Take action by following the Learning Actions documented in this article.

PHASE F: CONSOLIDATE the Learning

What's the point of trying to learn something if you can't remember or use it later on? Consolidating the learning involves recalling and reusing (and a lot of other 'Re' verbs) the CONTEXT, CONNECTION, CONCEPTS, CONSTRUCT AND CONDUCT.

So, when you're learning new product knowledge, computer applications, policies and procedures, and new job responsibilities integrate what you're learning into what you already know and use it in new ways. Your repertoire of valued knowledge, skills and abilities will keep growing and growing.

Learning Action: Don't be satisfied with minimal learning reinforcement. Use the power of 'Re'. When learning something new take time to review, recall, and repeat it at least three times. Build what you're learning into your daily activities so it becomes second nature.

Summary

When you follow the **6Cs Learning Maximizer™ Process** you realize that no matter what you're learning or what learning media you're using you can more effectively *gain, retain, recall* and *reuse* new knowledge and skills if you intentionally and consciously follow a proven learning process.

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 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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