

Talent Development 36 Technology Application

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Section 2.4 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Technology Application. Section A reads “Skill in identifying, selecting, and/or implementing learning technologies, for example, using evaluative criteria and identifying appropriate applications in an instructional environment.”

We saw the most extreme need for this skill in 2020, when the entire world of training and development was forced to shift focus from predominately live training to becoming effective in a virtual environment.

I don’t know about you, but I definitely felt the pain of having to shift gears on the fly last year. For decades, I have been doing training in person with an occasional need to work with remote technology. In the past, I used Webex, Go to Meeting, and Skype to do my remote work.

Within a couple weeks, I was required to retool to a primarily Zoom platform with some live Facebook and StreamYard technology. I have also done some of my work in Microsoft Teams. Each technology has advantages and disadvantages, and there is a learning curve associated with each technology. The good news is that when you have no choice, you can get an amazing amount accomplished in a short period of time.

I found some helpful resources who were willing to help me along among the various networking groups to which I belong. Most people were gracious with their help, and I returned the favor by mentoring others once I had mastered the technology.

Also, each platform has numerous instructional self-teach videos on YouTube for free. It just takes time to watch the videos and practice the techniques. It turned out that practice was the only way for me to master these technologies fully. I found myself going through an impending class six or seven times in order to make sure things would work out.

What I found most challenging was shifting from one type of technology to another seamlessly during a presentation. For example, if I am giving a program using

PowerPoint as the basis for content, then need to switch to a video in the middle, a lot can go wrong. On the surface, it seems like a simple matter to just “screen share” a video that has already been cued up. In practice, there are many ways to get it wrong and only one set of actions that will get the desired results.

Another challenge was to modify delivery of the content so that people operating in a remote setting can get equivalent transfer of knowledge to the live presentations. Some areas are a bit tricky.

For example, I use magic illusions when doing live training to add variety to the presentation and give participants a mental break. These illusions always relate to the content I am teaching, and they are very popular with participants. Unfortunately, many of the illusions require another person from the audience to physically interface with me. That is impossible, so many of my standard illusions will not work.

Fortunately, I have enough illusions that I can use those that work virtually to break up the sessions. In addition, I use a number of other techniques to liven up the presentation and engage the participants fully. Some examples of the methods I use in my leadership courses are given below:

1. Role play situations, where I put the leaders in tricky situations
2. Small group brainstorms on questions of how to handle certain problems
3. Polls to test which approaches would be most productive
4. Scavenger hunts to identify ways to connect with people
5. Identification of optical illusions
6. Music based interludes
7. Stretch breaks and body movement to loosen up
8. Exercises where I ask participants to annotate an existing slide
9. Feedback emojis to provide emotional reactions to certain content

The transition to a different way to do training and development is challenging, but with some creative thinking it is possible to have remote training be just as effective as in-person training events.

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