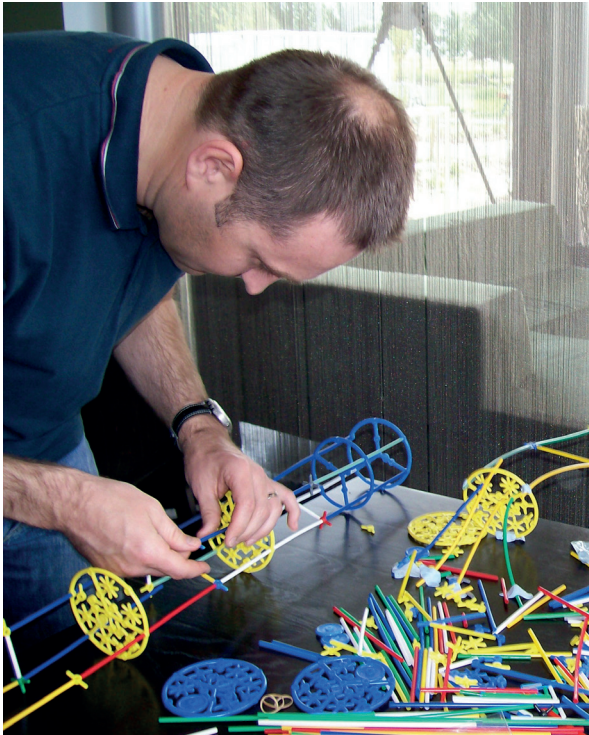


Introducing Experiential Learning

Suggestions for Using Experiential Learning in Training and Development



What is Experiential Learning?

Experiential Learning is a term that is often used, incorrectly, to describe any kind of learning that involves practical, usually team-based, activities.

“We’re going to do some experiential learning - they will be building a spaghetti tower.” It might be practical: it isn’t necessarily experiential learning.

In the USA, experiential learning is frequently used to describe the prior learning that applicants for academic programmes bring with them from previous work or life experience and for which they might, for example, receive exemption from units of the programme - the ‘accreditation of experiential learning.’

At RSVP Design we use the term to refer to a very specific form of learning, which is outlined in the work of David Kolb and best shown illustrated in the ‘Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle’ in the diagram below. It is a 4-stage process which offers the potential for learning from any experience that happens to us.

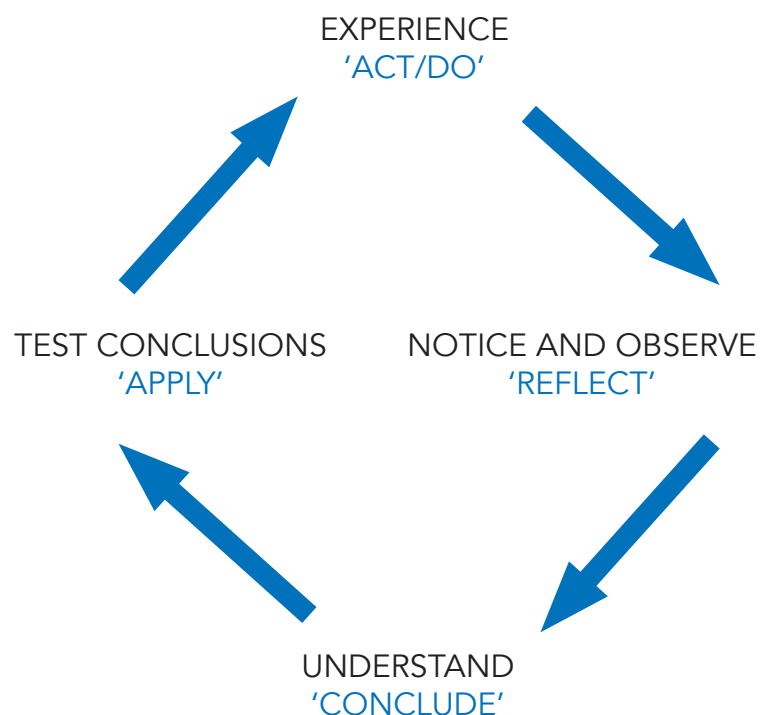
How does it work?

Learning happens, both formally and informally when:

1. We experience something: we act deliberately or something unplanned happens to us
2. We take time to explore our reactions and responses to something that we experience
3. We understand what happened and draw conclusions from this
4. We adapt or modify future decisions and behaviours as a result of the learning process.

If we fail to complete any of these stages, the likelihood is that any perceived learning is incomplete. We may have ‘jumped to conclusions’ or we may understand but fail to apply the learning in the future.

What is The KOLB CYCLE?



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Why should we use Experiential and other Learner - Centered Methods?

In our free experiential learning manual, pure 'experiential learning' is supported by ideas and activities from other well-known, participative teaching methods including accelerated learning, problem-based learning and collaborative learning. These can be used, together or alone, to create more interactive, participative and learner-centred learning.

Why do we use Experiential Learning?

- Experiential learning is fundamental to how adults learn.
- Becoming a more skilled 'experiential learner' allows learners to make learning a continuous, lifelong process
- The skills that make us successful in life and employment (personal skills such as our ability to relate to others, communicate effectively, problem-solve, innovate, play our part in teams, influence and resolve conflicts) all benefit from an experiential learning approach
- Learning that people identify for themselves is powerful, memorable and long-lasting

What are the Implications for Educators?

- This type of learning changes the role of the teacher or trainer: we move from being experts who transmit knowledge to a more facilitative role. This means there is a significant change in power in the relationship
- We focus on the skills that enable more independent learning
- We encourage a more learner-centred approach, which means that we must work more flexibly and responsively, adapting our content and process to the needs of the learners and to the things that they identify as relevant
- We focus on developing skills with broad application: metacognitive skills such as 'thinking about thinking', or 'learning about learning'.

Why Specifically, do we use Structured Activities in Experiential Learning?



To take new learning from the training and learning environment into application in the learner's 'real' world