CREATING REALS

A CHECKLIST TO CHALLENGE EACH LEARNING DESIGN

RSVP DESIGN
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

WHAT ARE REALS?

REALs are comprehensive instructional systems comprised of a number of strategies and educational technologies. The title was developed by Grabinger et al (e.g. Grabinger and Dunlap, 1995) who used the term REALs – Rich Environments for Active Learning - in their research around e-learning.

At RSVP Design we have worked with this research, to apply it to face-to-face learning experiences and to ensure that our learning design includes these 4 core methodologies:

Generative Learning, Co-operative Learning, Learner-Centered Learning and Problem-Based Learning.

In our learning design, we have distilled the principles into a simple checklist which can be used to challenge each REAL we create, whether it be a simple 'learning game' or a major simulation.

LEARNING PRINCIPAL	DESIGN QUESTIONS
1. Learning is enhanced through the process of the communication of ideas, which involves interaction and reflection. (Vygotsky, 1962)	⇢ Has the learning environment sufficient challenge, variety and complexity to encourage learners to collectively explore possible courses of action? ⇢ Has the learning environment an appropriate duration and degree of repetition? ⇢ Does the learning environment include periods of activity and times for reflection?
2. Learners need to know why they need to learn something before they undertake to learn it. (Knowles, 1990)	⇢ Is there sufficient initial context building that explores the real world need for the desired learning and culminates in a clear statement about the target learning? ⇢ Is there a progression of activities so that the consequences of particular courses of action may be learned in order to inform choices about subsequent actions?
3. Experience is valued – experience is a 'subjective' resource that can be applied to learning. (Knowles, 1990)	⇢ Does the learning environment encourage and offer opportunity for learners' prior experience to be considered and selectively utilised? ⇢ Do elements of the learning environment encourage learners, individually and collectively, to make connections with similar or parallel prior experiences?
4. Learning is oriented to the application of knowledge and problem solving that relates to the learners' real life contexts. (Dunlap and Grabbinger, 2000)	⇢ Has there been sufficient close examination of the learners' organisational or social context in order to design or select learning activities? ⇢ Has there been appropriate simplification of the concrete world context to define, isolate and emphasise the desired learning outcomes?

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5. Learning is generative – there is a need to actively organise knowledge into a structure that reveals relationships between ideas, conflicts and gaps in knowledge (Grabbinger and Dunlap 1996)	→ Does the learning experience have a sufficient degree of attractiveness, complexity and responsiveness to allow full learner immersion and holistic engagement?
6. Diversity of voices – voices of key writers, policy makers, practitioners, and students are included to ground theory in practice.	→ Does the design represent the design involvement of multiple stakeholders? Is there timely reference to the models and research that support the desired and actual learning and its application in the concrete world?
7. Assessment encourages higher order learning and reflects all REAL learning activities ' ...contextualised, complex intellectual challenges rather than fragmented, static, multiple-choice measures'. (after Wiggins, 1989)	→ How will the effectiveness of the learning be assessed? Has the assessment been designed to be an extension of the REAL methodology? Has every opportunity been taken to integrate this assessment into existing organisational or social practices (appraisals, peer observation etc.)
8. Learning requires the creation of a partnership between the learner and the teacher, negotiating goals and content in the course of knowledge delivery (Knowles et al. (1984).	→ Are the facilitators and support staff willing and able to work in the learning environment demanded by the REAL? Are the learners sufficiently well prepared for the style of learning they will experience in the REAL?
9. Intentional learning – (rather than incidental learning) "the learners' purposeful, effortful, self-regulated and active engagement" (Palincsar and Klenk 1992)	→ Will this design get the full and active engagement of the target learners for the full duration of the learning event and more?
	→ Is there enough here to make it memorable for more than just the content?