

Creating REALS

Developing your skills in designing and delivering Rich Environments for Active Learning

Workshop Overview

'REAL' stands for Rich Environments for Active Learning. It is a model we use to bring together best practice in providing active and engaging learning for adult learners and is based upon designing and facilitating learning events using four proven learning methodologies. The workshop is practical, client-centred and flexible enough to follow up areas of particular interest or relevance to the learning group involved. Whilst the focus is on learning workshops, many of the methods and skills involved apply equally to working with meetings, focus groups, problem-solving and decision-making groups.



Workshop Objectives

- **To understand the role of the process facilitator in guiding learning groups to achieve their own desired outcomes**
- **To identify and practise the key skills of facilitation: diagnosis, analysis and movement to action (with a specific focus on questioning and listening skills)**
- **To learn techniques that help groups to achieve goals through effective problem-solving and decision-making**
- **To develop process review skills in order to help individuals and groups to learn from experience and make appropriate behavioural and structural changes**

Workshop Style

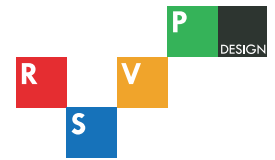
The style of this workshop is highly inter-active and is based on small group practical work, reflection and discussion. The specific interests of the group, and the small size of this group, may require the facilitator to apply some flexibility to the programme, therefore the workshop notes here offer suggested timings and review processes.

This workshop uses the principles which it aims to teach: client-centred, generative, co-operative and problem-based learning, which involves the learners and centres on their needs. Its success is in proportion to the willingness of the learners to share their experiences, challenge each other's ideas and offer input and suggestions.

The workshop uses RSVP Design learning activities as examples. However, every effort is made to suggest ways in which participants can work with their own existing materials or design new ones as alternatives.

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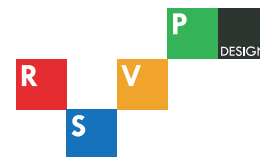


Workshop Timetable

0900 - 0910	Welcome and Introductions An introduction to the facilitator and group, domestic arrangements and objectives and style of the workshop. Modelling the start of a good learning programme.
0910 - 0930	How do you feel about your role as a facilitator of learning? Using our 'Images of Organisations' cards to introduce participants to the facilitator and to begin to explore their experience of designing and delivering learning programmes. What experiences do the images suggest? What do the participants want from the day?
0930 - 0940	The importance of clarity in setting learning objectives Creating a successful and relevant learning environment is almost impossible unless the learning objectives and outcomes are clear. How can we identify and frame good learning objectives?
0940 - 1000	An example of a learning activity designed to meet a specific learning objective Using the example of the 'Challenging Assumptions' Puzzle to demonstrate how to select or design an activity to meet a very specific learning outcome.
1000 - 1015	What are the characteristics of adult learners? Using a simple real-life example to explore the needs of adult learners: small group work. What are the specific needs of adult learners and how do we meet these in our design?
1015 - 1030	Pattern-Making and Pattern-Breaking: two different focuses for learning Understanding the principles of REALS and how they can apply in both An introduction to the methodologies that support 'Rich Environments for Active Learning': learner-centred, generative, co-operative and problem-based learning activities.
1030 - 1115	Chairing and group management skills Before moving into complex facilitation, it is important to be confident in managing groups, discussions and meetings. Using a practical RSVP Design activity, 'Workstations', we identify and practise chairing skills, to build competence in managing and directing the progress of a group towards an agreed conclusion
1115 - 1130	Break
1130 - 1245	Specific communication skills for facilitators Using the RSVP Design 'Colourblind' learning tool we explore: i) What we really mean by communication, how and why it breaks down and the principles we need to apply to ensure that we achieve 'common meaning' ii) How the 4 REALS principles are used in the design of the exercise iii) How to review an activity to focus on the key learning it offers
1245 - 1330	Lunch Break
1330 - 1400	Choosing and using great questions The use of effective questions is such a powerful tool in the facilitator's toolkit that it deserves a session to itself! We explore the way in which different types of questions elicit significantly different responses and how we can train ourselves to ask questions that promote different thinking.

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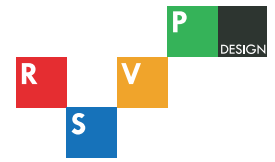


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1400 - 1445	Learning review and learning application Helping groups to review their experience and to evaluate their own performance is a vital part of the facilitator's role. This session explores a variety of engaging ways of encouraging learners to look back, draw out learning and then consider how to apply this learning in new situations. It will include some specific work on observation, listening and feedback skills in order to practise key facilitation skills that 'hold up a mirror' to group process
1445 - 1500	Break
1500 - 1545	Using challenge and confrontation Following on from how facilitators use questions, we explore the sensitive area of challenge and confrontation. This is a particularly important skill in addressing conflict, tension and difficult working relationships and can be vital in getting individuals or groups to face up to the reality of a situation they find themselves in. We will explore how to confront in non-threatening ways, in order to help learners to acknowledge difficulties that they may be avoiding or denying, so that they can work through them with a positive mindset.
1545 - 1630	Movement to action: development planning Learners will be offered two examples of different types of action plan and will choose one to work with to map out their own development as facilitators. They will then have a personal action plan, plus a methodology they can adapt and use with others as they move to application and action.
1630 - 1700	Learning Summary and Closure A summary of the key points from the day, Q+A and statements of individual learning.

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Session Notes

Rich Environments for Active Learning are based on constructivist ideas. Participants in rich active learning environments continuously shape and reshape the knowledge they construct through their learning experiences. In practical terms, learners work together (co-operative learning) to solve real or simulated problems (problem-based learning) that are important to them (learner-centred) and that ask them to use past and current experience to achieve new results (generative learning).

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning brings together individuals to work in small groups to analyse, synthesise, collaborate, and agree on a solution to the issue they are resolving. Participants work together to build and refine knowledge with their peers. These workgroups develop self-regulation through the management, monitoring, and evaluation of the learning experience. Cooperative learning demands that people learning together accept responsibility for their own learning.

Generative Learning

Generative learning is the type of learning where students become investigators and teachers become facilitators of knowledge. Generative activities are facilitated through workgroups where participants discuss their insights into, and opinions about, the subject matter. Generative learning involves students in higher-level thinking processes and helps learners to integrate new knowledge within the structure of old knowledge. Generative learning pays respect to prior knowledge and experience, encouraging learners draw on the skills and experience they bring into a learning event.

Learner Centred Learning

Learner centred learning environments focus on the development of critical thinking and life-long learning skills such as: questioning, metacognition, and reflection.

Questioning - when learners generate their own questions in response to a particular topic they are using a higher level of active participation in the learning process. They are generating the direction of their learning experience, giving them more ownership of the learning and making the learning more personally relevant.

Metacognition - this is the process where the student takes conscious control of the learning. The learner thinks about how they are thinking in a cognitive sense. For example, learners are using metacognition if they realise that the teamwork problem that they thought they had is in fact a problem of imprecise communication.

Reflection - this is where the learner observes, interprets, and reflects upon their learning experience. This reflection would include the 'who, what, where and why' of the learning experience.

Problem Based Learning

Problem based learning is the type of inquisitive and investigative education for which there is no clear answer or procedural rule. It is an environment where knowledge is constructed and not received. Problem based learning involves students in real problems (often work-based), where they must analyse, synthesise, and hypothesize information to determine possible solutions to a situation, topic, or problem.