Effective 'On the job' training

On the job training (sometimes referred to as 'sitting next to Nellie') is often understated in its importance. It is the most common form of training in most organisations, accounting for perhaps half of all activity. It is also considered to be the most popular with learners.

Its impact is totally dependent on the knowledge, expertise and ability of the trainer, not only in terms of the tasks, but also on how they are able to impart the learning.

However, it has some key benefits: -

- Immediate – people can learn, try out and feedback very quickly
- Flexible – can be used in most circumstances and environments
- Helps teambuilding by quickly integrating new people

Because of its frequency of use and the benefits it is vital to ensure it is done well. Here is a checklist for the planning and delivery of On Job Training: -

Decide who the trainer should be. This will often be a supervisor or a team member who is specifically designated and developed to deliver training. Train the trainer if required (it often will be) and ensure they are good role models of your culture.

- Assess learning needs beforehand – what is the current level of knowledge and skills
- Getting this wrong can lead to either boredom or leaving the learner behind
- Involve the learner in assessing needs and planning
- Develop clear outcomes – what should they be able to do as a result?
- Prepare fully – use standard exercises if this is appropriate and make sure the workplace is fully functional and all materials are to hand
- Pick the right time – make sure the timing is appropriate
- Ensure the environment is appropriate, i.e. not too noisy and with no distractions
- Allow for a review of the learning and for the learner to ask questions
- Ensure that learning is put into use, perhaps by observation or test and give the learner feedback on progress
- Plan any follow up and required support

Best practice in this type of training is likely to include: -

- Structured process divided into appropriate modules
- Guides, written procedures or handouts in support
- People being encouraged to make their own notes
- Use of trained trainers
- Have processes in place to observe and feedback on the way trainers carry out their role