Supervisor Secret: Training Adults Using Participatory Learning

Want to see a higher rate of retention and return on investment in your training program? Keep these characteristics in mind when it comes to adult learning.

1. Adults are self-motivated.
2. Adults expect training to apply immediately and directly to their lives/work/job.
3. Adults learn best when are actively engaged – and not passively listening to a lecture or video.
4. Learning activities for adults work best when learners can practice and develop both technical knowledge and general skills.
5. Adults learn best when they can interact with both the instructor and their peers. This can be done in a variety of ways – even when using online learning.
6. Adult learners retain and understand concepts when personal experiences are shared.

Participatory Methods of Instruction

Let’s look deeper into the concept of engaging learners by sharing personal experiences – or participatory training. Participatory training methods draw on participants’ own experiences. They encourage teamwork and group problem solving. Participants can analyze safety and health problems in a group and work to develop solutions. There can also be valuable exchanges between workers and trainers about their lives and work.

Participatory methods work well with people who have difficulty reading and writing. They also allow the instructor to see who is having difficulty with certain concepts and to engage with them to ensure comprehension.

Participatory methods:

1. Draw on the participants’ own knowledge and experience about safety and health issues.
2. Emphasize learning through doing without relying on reading.
3. Create a comfortable learning experience for everyone.

Samples of Participatory Methods

Participatory training methods draw on the trainee’s own experiences and knowledge, as well as encourage valuable exchanges between workers and trainers. The following are examples of methods to encourage trainees to participate and be actively engaged in class:

- Ice-breakers
- Role-playing
- Games
- Small group exercises
- “Trigger” visuals
- Brainstorming
- Demonstrations and hands-on activities
- Participatory lectures