

From “Training” to “Learning Facilitation”



By Dan Tobin, Ph.D.

Traditionally, trainers did training – delivering in a classroom a workshop, course, or seminar that he or she or another member of the training staff developed. Once the learning event was over, the trainer’s responsibility ended. There may have been a “smile sheet” evaluation at the end of the program which asked if the trainer was knowledgeable in the subject matter, he or she responded well to participants’ questions, or whether the training was worthwhile.

Today, being this type of trainer is not enough. We need to redefine the role of the trainer (and re-train the trainer) to become more of a “learning facilitator.” The section below, adapted from [The AMA Guide To Management Development](#) by Dan Tobin and Margaret Pettingell (AMACOM, 2008), presents some of the major differences between a trainer and a learning facilitator.



Trainers versus Learning Facilitators

A trainer:	A learning facilitator
Determines what others need to learn develops a training program to transmit the required knowledge and skills and provides the training	Helps employees identify their personal learning needs and assists them in finding ways to satisfy those learning needs
Develops training programs	Provides a variety of learning methods to help the employee meet personal and organizational goals
Presents the training he or she has developed (or which has been obtained from an internal or external training developer)	Enables individual and organizational learning from a wide variety of sources (not limited to the offerings of the training group)
Creates generic training programs for large audiences	Tailors learning solutions to meet individual and organizational learning needs

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Is focused on the acquisition of individual knowledge and skills	Is focused on the application of knowledge and skills to the job
Is focused on the goals of the training program	Is focused on the goals of the organization and the organization
Responsibility ends when the employee leaves the classroom or when he or she makes available an e-learning or other self-study program	Responsibility ends when the employee has completed a learning activity AND has successfully applied that learning to his or her job
Measures success by how satisfied the employee is with the training experience	Measures success by how effectively learning is transferred to the job to make a positive difference in individual and organizational business results

Dan Tobin can help your training group move from their traditional roles as trainers to become learning facilitators through a one-day workshop for your training staff.

Dan Tobin is a consultant on corporate learning strategies and leadership development programs.

His newest book is [*Feeding Your Leadership Pipeline: How to Develop the Next Generation of Leaders in Small to Mid-Sized Companies*](#), co-published by ASTD and Berrett-Koehler.

He is also the author and facilitator of the program, [On-Target Learning](#) Dan can be reached at (914) 939-4737 or at daniel@att.net.