



**White Paper:
Creating Synergy – Active Participant Learning™**

Summer 2005

www.oxleyenterprises.com

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Adult Learning Theories	3
Active Participant Learning™	6
_About Oxley Enterprises, Inc.	9

Introduction

Organizations struggle to permeate new skills and knowledge throughout the organization. Employees receive training, but there is little transfer of new skills to the job and often, the work environment is not conducive to employees applying these new skills.

Traditional methods such as pedagogy where the learning is instructor-centered and the learners play a submissive role as the receipt of the information are outdated for adult learners (Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990). Adult learners who are permitted to take initiative in learning activities learn more and learn better than passive learners (Knowles, 1975). A different method of instruction in adult learning theory is necessary to promote and facilitate retention and application of information. Oxley Enterprises, Inc. recognizes the diversity in learning and cognitive abilities of individuals and employs an array of training curriculums to address the uniqueness of each participant.

Because adult learners bring a broad spectrum of personal and professional backgrounds, life experiences, and independence to a learning experience, a different method of instruction grounded in adult learning theory is necessary to promote and facilitate retention and application of information. Oxley Enterprises' Active Participant Learning (APL)™ methodology is an action-based, learner-lead, and experience relevant approach to training and development of employees –in managerial or line staff positions –where learners are able to translate learning into more effective ways of thinking and behaving. By taking into consideration the varying learning abilities within an organization, Oxley Enterprises customizes every training curriculum to organizations' requirements, goals, and staff diversity by drawing on varying adult learning theories and practices.

Adult Learning Theories

Androgogy

Androgogy is a key theory of adult learning constructed by Malcolm Knowles (1984) proposing that learning should be self-directed, applied, and focused on using adult learner experiences. Understanding that adults are independent and want to have responsibility for their actions, Knowles identified four key principles of adult learning that can be applied in designing and instructing effective learning experiences. The first key principle is that adults are autonomous and self-directed. Adults have the desire to command themselves and assume responsibility for controlling their actions. The second principle states that adults have a foundation of life experience and knowledge and need to connect learning to their knowledge and experience base for learning to be effective. Additionally, Knowles emphasizes that adults are focused on the achievement of goals and that a learning experience must demonstrate how it will help with the achievement of goals. The final assumption states that adults want to see an immediate use for a learning experience in terms of its application in current work or life situations.

As the foundation of the andragogical approach to learning, Knowles' four principles set the guiding framework for APL™ instruction and design practices. Applied correctly, the andragogical approach to learning specifies that a learning experience should provide learning activities that foster individual leadership and that instructors must consult and guide rather than direct and order (Knowles, 1984b). Instructors also must identify objectives before a learning experience begins. Furthermore, the learning goals and objectives of the workshop must be clearly related to how they will help the learner accomplish his or her goals and objectives. Finally, instructors need to draw on participant experience and knowledge that relates to the topic throughout the learning experience. Coupled with a skilled instructor, these principles can make a positive and lasting impact on the adult learner.

In addition to the theory of andragogy, other important theories, as well as emerging learning theories, support the practice of Active Participant Learning™. The theories below are some theories Oxley Enterprises employs in creating APL™ curriculums.

Multiple Intelligence Theory

Howard Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligence theory proposes that all learners have at least seven intelligences that exist in varying degrees (Figure 1). The learning principles of this theory emphasize that learning exercises should employ a diverse range of learning experiences and incorporate a variety of learning methods to appeal to different forms of intelligence.

Intelligence Name:	Intelligence Description:
Linguistic	Awareness of differences in word meanings
Musical	Awareness of sounds and rhythms
Logical-mathematical	Awareness of groupings, patterns, and sequences
Spatial	Awareness of shapes or forms and spaces
Bodily-kinesthetic	Awareness of bodily control and relationship to physical surroundings
Interpersonal	Awareness of feelings and intentions of others
Intrapersonal	Awareness of self and personal thoughts

Figure 1: The Seven Types of Intelligence

Levels of Processing Theory

The levels of processing theory also supports the proposition that learning needs to actively draw on learners' experiences to ensure knowledge retention and application (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). The framework specifies that stimulus information is processed in the human mind on multiple levels depending on the associations the learner can create with the stimulus. The greater the number of associations, the greater the necessary mental processing of information is during a learning experience. Because the more ways a learning experience draws on a learner's own experience, the more meaningful the learning is understood to be, and the more deeply it is processed. As a result, the learner is better able to retain and apply the information (Cermak & Craik, 1979). In order for the most effective adult learning to occur, the learning experience must actively integrate the past experiences of learners.

Situational Learners

Applying slightly different categories, James and Galbraith (1985) conceptualized seven key types of situational learners (Figure 2). James and Galbraith assert that individual learners tend to favor one single, situational intelligence type as their preferred mode of learning.

Types of Learner	Description
Print	Individuals who learn well from traditional texts as well as pencil and paper exercises
Visual	Individuals who learn best when looking at films, exhibits, pictures, charts, and graphs
Aural	Individuals who value learning from lectures and audiotapes
Interactive	Individuals who learn mostly from discussions and questions
Tactile	Individuals who learn best through hands-on activities
Kinesthetic	Individuals who learn most effectively from role plays, activities, and games
Olfactory	Individuals who associate learning with tastes and smells

Figure 2: The Types of Situational Learner

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory takes levels of processing theory a step further. In addition to supporting the primary learning principles of andragogy, it states that in a learning experience the adult learner will learn best only when life experiences are actively shared in a safe environment (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). There are two key types of learning processing:

cognitive/meaningless and experiential/significant. Cognitive/meaningless learning involves lecture and memorization while experiential/significant learning involves active application of knowledge. The difference between the two types is centered on the premise that experiential learning effectively addresses the needs and the desires of the learner. Applications of the theory of experiential learning are the key method of facilitating personal change and growth in adults. It is the main responsibility of the instructor to promote learning through two key ways. The first is by creating linkages between objectives and learner life experiences, and the second is by facilitating a positive climate for learning that is safe for sharing and reflection. A positive climate for learning effectively enables learners to direct the learning experience, address key and relevant problems, and utilize self-evaluation to assess their progress (Combs, 1982). When an environment is perceived as safe, learning proceeds faster and the learner is better able to assimilate new attitudes or perspectives. When learners perceive the learning environment as threatening their self-esteem or self-concept, learning is minimized. An appropriate and safe learning environment, coupled with relevant learning content that integrates life experiences and the direct participation of the learner, results in more meaningful applications of knowledge by the adult learner (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

Active Participant Learning™

The adult learning theories of andragogy, multiple intelligence, levels of processing, situational learners, and experiential learning provide a framework for constructing effective APL™ interactions. Learning experiences should provide action-based activities that are learner directed, relate to learner goals, and draw on learner experience in a safe environment where instructors guide rather than order. The diversity of learning types demonstrates the importance of utilizing a wide range of learning practices and techniques to promote adult learning. Methods to establish the most productive APL™ experience can be identified in two ways. First, focus must be placed on the adult learning practices of learning activity structure, learning environment, and facilitation. Second, various learning enhancement techniques (small groups, visual aids, rewards, and role plays) must be clearly understood. Thus, OE's four-phased approach to achieving learning outcomes is presented below (Figure 3).

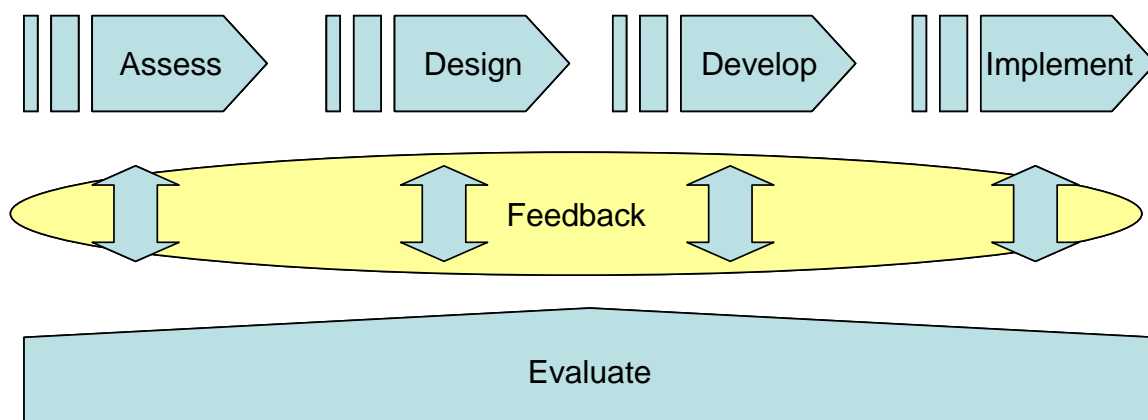


Figure 3: Active Participant Learning (APL)™

Phase 1: Assess

In the Assess Phase, the Instructional Design Team is formed and the project foundation is laid in order to ensure full integration, alignment, and overall success of the effort. An initial assessment is conducted using a specific set of criteria in order to ensure that the methodology is tailored to the clients' needs. This assessment allows for data collection and analysis in order to determine the specific needs that are to be addressed and to develop learning outcomes. This assessment also allows our designers to collect metrics to better understand the issues and quantify the time and resources required to complete the tasks.

Phase 2: Design

Oxley Enterprises Instructional Designers design the training program and outline the lesson plans that will be needed to achieve the learning outcomes. Learning objectives are determined and communication strategies are identified.

Phase 3: Develop

The course materials, measurement instruments, and communication plans are developed during this phase. Course materials include both a facilitator guide and participant workbooks and handouts. The course is run through a series of criteria and a pilot is conducted. Instruments are needed to measure the level of learning and application to the work environment. The communication plan ensures organizational buy-in to the desired behavioral change that is needed for the attainment of the learning outcomes.

Phase 4: Implement

The course is rolled out to the target populations. The program is managed and data collected.

Evaluation

Throughout all four phases, evaluation is critical. Feedback loops are instituted in each phase to improve efforts and to maximize learning outcome achievement.

Benefits to the Active Participant Learning (APL)™ Model

The Oxley Enterprises Active Participant Learning (APL)™ Model enables the rapid development and implementation of strategic learning outcomes that support the organization's strategy and direction. Our APL™ model promotes communication among key stakeholders and taking ownership of learning outcomes for the long term benefit of the organization. Our customized communication tools and learning methodologies linked with our facilitation approach are highly regarded by our clients

because they provide them with tangible results that assist with organizational goal attainment.

More specifically, this model has several benefits that help improve the competitive position of client organizations because it:

- Positively impacts bottom line results
- Facilitates achievement of mission and goals
- Fosters a learning environment
- Encourages communication and teamwork

References

- Cermak, L., & Craik, F. (1979). *Levels of processing in human memory*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Combs, A. W. (1982). Affective education or note at all. *Educational Leadership*, 39, 494-497.
- Craik, F., & Lockhart, R. (1972). Levels of processing: A framework for memory research. *Journal of Verbal Learning & Verbal Behavior*, 11, 671-684.
- Hiemstra, R., & Sisco, B. (1990). *Individualizing instruction: Making learning personal, empowering, and successful*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning*. Chicago: Follet.
- Knowles, M. (1984a). *The adult learner: A neglected species* (3rd ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing.
- Knowles, M. (1984b). *Andragogy in action*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Rogers, C. R., & Freiberg, H. J. (1994). *Freedom to learn* (3rd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill/Macmillan.

About Oxley Enterprises, Inc.

Oxley Enterprises, Inc. is a woman-owned, service disabled veteran-owned, small business consulting firm dedicated to helping organizations improve performance, enhance productivity, and increase overall organizational effectiveness through strategic planning of organizational improvements, human capital development, transformational workshops, and information technology (IT) integration. We have helped our clients to work more efficiently, enhance productivity, excel at their missions, and achieve bottom line results. By bringing tools such as the ABPR Model to bear in the client environment, Oxley Enterprises, Inc. enables our clients to achieve better results faster and to realize their organization's full potential.

Oxley Enterprises develops dynamic, mission-aligned strategies and solutions to help organizations across the spectrum of business and government address the challenges of today and thrive tomorrow through:

- **Optimize Project Performance:**
Deliver fully integrated, results-based solutions that help organizations operate more efficiently and effectively by strategically aligning project and program activity with organizational mission and goals
- **Build Customer Relationships:**
Assist organizations in building and maintaining customer and stakeholder relationships
- **Maximize Human Capital:**
Assist organizations in increasing individual and organizational performance through the development of human capital systems using systematic, research-based organizational development methods
- **Enhance IT Service Delivery:**
Assist organizations in implementing and sustaining a high-performing infrastructure to support the development and delivery of products and services to customers
- **Optimize Organizational Performance:**
Provide all of the organization's employees with a common direction and vision by fully aligning and integrating business lines, processes, and operations
- **Deliver Best-Practice Training Solutions:**
Help customers develop and implement learning systems that support their organizational strategy and goals by building high-impact workshops that best fit the unique learning needs of the organization

**Discover Our Solutions and
Realize Your Potential!**

Call
540-752-8822

Email
solutions@oxleyenterprises.com

Visit us at
www.oxleyenterprises.com