

Title:

Getting Past Major Learning Barriers

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746

Summary:

There are some common barriers that get in our way of being the most productive learners in training: we are forced to be there, we don't see the learning as relevant or valuable, and we feel like we already know the material. While these barriers are real, there are things we can do to jump over or break through these barriers - to make the time invested in these situations more valuable and useful to us.

Keywords:

training and development, learning, learning barriers, continuous learning, learning experiences

Article Body:

Tom stepped into the meeting room, but from his perspective it might as well have been a jail cell. He was a prisoner in his own work day. Why? The PowerPoint slide projected on the screen said it all. "Welcome to our Refresher Training." Refresher training might be needed for some people but Tom already knew all this material . . . but the training was mandatory. Besides, he had a desk full of more important work. He told himself how stupid this mandatory training policy was; that he hated to attend training on stuff he knew.

Mary's supervisor asked her to attend the coaching skills training being provided by the company. The problem was that Mary wasn't a coach. She wasn't even a supervisor. She didn't see any value in attending this workshop. All she could think about was, "What good is this going to be for me?"

Kat was really excited about the workshop session she had registered for. It was on a topic she was interested in and wanted to learn more about. She saw how mastering these skills would help her reach her goals. She arrived early and sat close to the front. The problem became clear very early on though. The material was too basic. She already knew this stuff! She was disappointed to say the least. She put out her own money and time for something that was going to waste both of those things.

I'm guessing you can relate to at least one, and perhaps all of the scenarios

you've just read. These are just some of the common barriers that get in our way of being the most productive learners: we are forced to be there, we don't see the learning as relevant or valuable, and we feel like we already know the material.

While these barriers are real, there are things we can do to jump over or break through these barriers - to make the time invested in these situations more valuable and useful to us. Here are three specific suggestions that will help you in each of these situations and many more.

1. **Use the time to review and focus.** So you don't want to be there, or feel that you already know the material. So what? You are there. So be there (and get over yourself)! Rather than having your own little pity party, or being cynical about the material and the experience, use the time to review what you know. Use the time as an opportunity to do some thinking. Reflect on your experiences with these concepts. Think of ways you can improve on what you already know. You may become a valuable resource to other learners, or you may learn something new through your reflection. The time is there, use it wisely. Even if what you learn is different than what others learn, you will have made good use of your time, improved your mood and outlook, and taken something valuable from your time spent.

2. **Look for the nugget.** Everyone can learn something new. Maybe you do know much of the material being covered. If that is the case, be a detective. Look for and uncover at least one nugget that you had forgotten, that you have stopped applying, or one twist on something you already know well. Often one well applied nugget will "pay" for your time invested many times over. And without sleuthing, it is value you would never have received.

3. **Be a beginner.** Remember what it is like when you first learn something new? You are excited, interested and having fun. Once we think we know it all, we stop looking for any evidence to prove ourselves wrong. One of the best ways to remove all of these barriers is to come to any learning situation as a beginner, by asking yourself, "What can I learn?" The Zen saying states it well, "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the experts mind there are few." Give yourself more options. View the world from a possibility perspective. Come to the learning table as a beginner.

These three suggestions can have a major impact on the value you get from any learning experience (classroom or otherwise). Once you know and apply these strategies these common barriers to your learning will be a thing of the past. And you'll get more value out of all your future learning experiences.