Blending Is Better
Three Ways to Choose the Right Training Delivery Method
By Jeff Dalto

As SE and ANSI recently updated ANSI/ASSE Z490.1, Criteria for Accepted Practices in Safety, Health and Environmental Training. This article is the second in a series that examines the standard more closely. The series is a primer for improving workforce safety training. This article focuses on the training delivery method.

What Is a Training Delivery Method?
Training delivery method refers to the type of training used. Examples of delivery methods include classroom-style instructor-led training, written materials, field-based training, on-the-job mentoring, videos and e-learning courses. Delivery methods are sometimes referred to as training media or modes.

Best Training Delivery Method: A Blend

Clark says that while in theory all delivery methods can be equally effective, in reality they do not always include the same instructional methods, therefore each delivery medium may have advantages and disadvantages in specific training situations.

The takeaway from Clark’s book is that no single training delivery method is inherently more effective than others for all training needs, but rather that different delivery methods may be better in different cases or for different reasons.

As Clark says, “Because not all media deliver all [instructional] methods, evidence suggests that blended learning environments are more effective than pure classroom or pure digital learning.” She adds, “The U.S. Department of Education found a significant learning advantage to courses using media blends compared to pure classroom-based or pure online learning.”

What Z490.1 Says About Blended Safety Training
Z490.1 also recommends blended safety training. “Multiple delivery methods may be used in a single training course or event. The training provider should consider a variety of methods . . .” (ANSI/ASSE, 2016, E4.4.1).

Freedom to Choose Means Having to Choose Wisely
The problem with being able to choose different methods of safety training delivery is that one must know how to make the right choice.

Avoid making the same default decision each time, as well as random, arbitrary decisions. Also, avoid making decisions for the wrong reasons, such as considering nothing but cost.

So, the challenge is to develop good criteria for making informed choices that lead to more effective safety training.

Three Ways to Choose the Right Delivery Method
Fortunately, Z490.1 gives three useful tips to help an OSH professional select the right training delivery method for each safety training need. Let’s look at all three, each of which is included in Section 4.4.1 of the standard.

First, check the learning objectives. Z490.1 says, “Delivery methods appropriate to stated learning objectives shall be specified.” Determine which training delivery method (or blend of methods) is best suited to 1) help employees complete the objective and 2) allow the trainer to assess employee understanding and ability after training.

Second, consider the employees. Z490.1 states that the “selection must include consideration of the target audience and learner analysis.” Consider the employees who will attend the training to identify characteristics that may make one train-
ing type more effective than another. Examples include amount of time available from employees’ work schedule, work location, ability to read, computer access and the language that is most comfortable.

Third, think about feedback and practice. The standard notes that “the delivery method(s) shall ensure adequate feedback mechanisms for training questions and concerns to ensure comprehension of content.” This requires selecting a training delivery method that will allow for giving feedback to employees who want to ask questions, or to practice and master skills with observation and guidance.

In some cases, a written document or a presentation along with a note to “see if there are questions” is enough. In other cases, instructor-led training may be needed so that employees can ask questions and perform hands-on skills while being guided by the instructor. And, in other cases, online learning that includes questions with feedback for correct and incorrect answers, or interactive skill-building simulations that display the consequences of the employee’s actions may be most appropriate.

Helpful Resources: Blend It for Safety
For more help creating the best blended learning safety training, refer to ANSI/ASSE Z490.1, Section 4.4 and Annex B. In addition, download the free Blended Learner’s Beginner’s Guide at the Convergence Training blog (http://bit.ly/2kCA1wJ). Finally, read Clark’s, Evidence-Based Training Methods: A Guide for Training Professionals.

References


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