

CORPORATE TRAINING

FACT | PACK

**50 FASCINATING
FACTS BASED
ON RESEARCH
YOU OUGHT TO
KNOW!**

Ashutosh Sharma

Author of Campus to Corporate: Managing the Transition

CORPORATE TRAINING

FactPack

Fifty Fascinating Facts

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashutosh graduated in 2002 from the **Delhi College of Engineering** (Now, **Delhi Technological University**) and started his career as a Management Trainee with SRF Ltd at Chennai. It was at SRF, while trying to solve the challenge of production downtime due to machine breakdowns, that he got introduced to the field of corporate training for the first time and realized the important role that it plays in improving organizational excellence. Ashutosh has since worked with prestigious organizations like Confederation of Indian Industry and GMR Group. He is currently working with a leading Fertilisers and Petrochemicals company at Pune. He has also done his Executive Program in HR Management from **Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta**.

Ashutosh has an expansive experience in the areas of Leadership and Management Development, Talent Management, and Training. As a passionate Trainer he has delivered several programs, in last 10 years, in both technical and behavioral domains.

He has also authored the book “**Campus to Corporate: Managing the Transition**” published in 2012 by V&S Publishers. The book received a successful response from students and the employees in the first year of their career.

FACT 1

HUMAN BEINGS ARE LAZY THINKERS

It's not a very encouraging fact to begin a book on the topic of learning. But, it's pertinent. Human beings are lazy thinkers, indeed. We tend to rely on biases, stereotypes, heuristics, and habits when it comes to taking decisions. In fact, today scientists believe that most (some say, up to 95%) of our behaviors are automatic¹. They are decided and acted upon without conscious decision making. That makes changing behaviors difficult. So difficult, that people don't change even when it's a question of life and death. One telling example is of heart patients who have undergone surgery and have been advised to switch to a healthier lifestyle. According to a study², just one patient out of ten actually changes his lifestyle. Remaining nine

patients continue with the old habits even at the risk of their lives.

After painting such a depressing picture of people's ability to change behaviors, I would like to assure you that people do learn and change. Daniel Goleman says that people can change if these three things are present: will to change, concerted practice and feedback³. Trainers have a great responsibility – to ensure that the Learners never fall short of these three important things. Other facts in this book will also help the Trainers in the task.

References:

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2. Bargh, John A. (2014) "*How Unconscious Thought and Perception Affect Our Every Waking Moment*" (Accessed at: http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-unconscious-thought-and-perception-affect-our-every-waking-moment/_)
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FACT 14

CURIOSITY REQUIRES PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Knowing something new requires curiosity. One can't train or teach people who are just not curious. That's why instilling curiosity in the Learners is one of the most important tasks of the Trainer. Research proves that people are curious to know more about things that they already know something about¹. It is because when a person sees gaps in what he already knows, he feels a deprivation which motivates him to know more.

Trainers can leverage this principle to ensure that the Learner's curiosity is ignited before the program and is sustained throughout. If the Learner knows nothing about the thing being discussed, he will have little curiosity to know more about it. Learner's curiosity can be piqued and retained, if:

1. The pre-read material sent to the participants builds upon what the learners already know.
2. Learners are asked questions about what they already know about the topic.
3. A carefully crafted question opens up a gap between what the learners already know and what they ought to know².
4. In the first part of the program, there are no esoteric theories and concepts, which may be unknown to the Learner.

References:

1. Lehrer, J. (2010). "The Itch of Curiosity".
(Retrieved from: <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2010/08/the-itch-of-curiosity/>)
2. Paul, Annie M. (2013). "How to Stimulate Curiosity"..
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FACT 18

NATURAL LIGHT IMPROVES LEARNING

Natural light from sun directly affects our circadian rhythm keeping us awake and active during daytime. It helps reduce Cortisol (the stress-hormone) levels in the body and releases hormones which aid learning¹. A study on school-children conducted in 1999 by Heschon Mehone Group, a consulting group based in California, showed that children in the sunniest classrooms were 26% faster in reading and 20% faster in mathematics than those with the least daylight in their classroom¹. Because of the similarity in the biology of learning between children and adults, this study is equally applicable to adult-learning as well.

Classrooms must have ample daylight to ensure that Learners are in the right state for learning.

1. Avoid darkness in the classroom
2. Allow enough day-light in the classroom.
3. Conduct some exercises in the open space where there is enough day-light.
4. Use blue light emitting LED lighting in the classrooms. It's been shown to reduce sleepiness, improve alertness and improve cognitive performance².

References:

1. Kenneth J. Kooper. (1999). "*Study Says Natural Light Boosts Learning*". Washington Post. (Retrieved from: http://architecture.mit.edu/house_n/web/resources/articles/education/Boston%20Globe%20Online%20-%20Nation%20%20World%20-%20Study%20says%20natural%20light%20boosts%20learning.htm)
2. S. Lehl, K. Gerstmeyer, J. H. Jacob, H. Frieling, A. W. Henkel, R. Meyrer, J. Wiltfang, J. Kornhuber, S. Bleich (2007). Blue Light Improves Cognitive Performance. *Journal of Neural Transmission*. (Accessed at: <http://www.pso.com/pdf/blue-light-improves-cognitive-performance.pdf>)

FACT 33

ALLOWING TRAINEES TO COMMIT ERRORS CAN IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING

For a long time, it was held that trainees should not be allowed to make errors during the training process. However, recent research proves that allowing the trainees to make errors in a safe environment, while also providing them with instructions on error management, can be a highly effective training technique. The technique is now called “*Error Training*”

In a study¹, a group of undergraduate students, with no previous experience of using a particular Software, were guided into and out of common errors in using the Software during training. The researchers found that this group performed superiorly over other control

groups, underscoring the effectiveness of introducing guided errors in training.

“Error Training” encourages greater effort to learn, promotes deeper understanding of tasks, and provides both strategies and emotional management tactics for handling on-the-job errors². Trainers must try this out.

References:

1. Lorenzet S. J., Salas E., Tannenbaum S. I. (2005). To err is human: The impact of guided errors on learning, performance, and self-efficacy. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 16, 301–322.
2. Eduardo Salas et al. (2012). *The Science of Training and Development in Organizations - What Matters in Practice*. (Retrieved from: <http://psi.sagepub.com/content/13/2/74.full?ijkey=g8tvuLmoeZfN2&keytype=ref&siteid=sppsi>)

FACT 36

ZEIGARNIK EFFECT: LEAVING A TOPIC UNFINISHED HELPS LEARNER REMEMBER IT BETTER

Brain works in ways that sometimes defy common sense. Quite counter-intuitively, when the trainers leave topics unfinished, Learners tend to retain them for longer durations. However, on second thought, this effect helps when you are simultaneously handling several tasks needing completion. Remembering which tasks are yet to be finished helps the brain remember any unfinished tasks that need closure. This effect is known as *Zeigernik Effect*¹ after the name of the psychologist Bluma Zeigernik, who first studied it.

Here are some ways in which you may apply *Zeigernik Effect* in your training programs:

1. At the end of each session ask a truly interesting question to the Learners and tell them to ponder over it. Provide answers at the end of the day. The effect will work only if the question is interesting.
2. If a Learner asks an insightful question which is likely to spark a debate, divert it to all the participants. Facilitate a debate. Record contrasting views on a flip-chart. Do not conclude the discussion. Discuss and arrive at the final conclusion later during the day.
3. It is a common practice among trainers to capture the expectations of the participants from the program before they start the day. It helps if the trainer takes the participants back to this list several times during the day to see which expectations are yet to be met (unfinished tasks).

References:

1. Jeremy Dean. (2011). "*The Zeigarnik Effect*" (Retrieved from: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2011/02/the-zeigarnik-effect.php>)

FACT 40

GUESSING BEFORE KNOWING HELPS UNDERSTANDING

Lisa Anne Kasmer from Grand Valley State University, and Ok Kyeong Kim of Western Michigan University, conducted an interesting study¹, relatively recently. In the study, a group of teachers was instructed to begin their classes by asking students to guess the answers to questions related to the lesson plans for the day. The students had to write down their guesses along with relevant explanations. They were also asked to discuss the guesses along with explanation with their peers. The teachers then carried on with the lesson and after that the students revisited their guesses to find out if they were right.

The researchers found that this technique opened up learning opportunities for the students where they connected their previous knowledge with the current

problem, refreshed what they already knew and what they needed to learn, and came up with hypotheses ready to be tested - all the necessary ingredients for improved learning and understanding.

Adopting this technique in training programs can certainly help the Trainers in improving effectiveness of their programs.

References:

1. Lisa Anne Kasmer, Ok-Kyeong Kim. (2012). The nature of student predictions and learning opportunities in middle school algebra, *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 2012, Volume 79, Number 2, Page 175,

FACT 42

GOOD SMELLS IMPROVE WORKING MEMORY, FOCUS, AND LEARNING ABILITY

Smells play an important role in biology. It provides one of the most effective communication and memory mechanism to animals. Animals identify specific smells as indicators of danger (in form of predator or a poisonous prey) or reward (in form of food or a fertile mate of opposite sex). In human life, also, smells play an important role. They affect our choices of food, clothes, friends, partners, and almost every other thing that could possibly have an odor. Smells have been found to affect our moods and behaviors. For example, scientists have found that presence of citrus scent in the air reduces littering behavior of people¹.

Smells are also known for their potential to invoke intense memories from the past². It is because in our brains the area processing smells is just next door to the area processing memories; making the connection rather robust. Possibly because of this reason, in learning, too, smells play an important role.

Trainers can manipulate how the learning environment smells in order to affect the mood, behaviors, learning ability and the performance of the Learners. Following tips can be useful.

1. Aroma of coffee can ward-off sleepiness and keep the Learners attentive and focused³.
2. Rosemary scent improves cognitive performance – both speed and accuracy⁴. It, however, has no impact on alertness or attentiveness.
3. Rosemary fragrance also improves prospective memory – remembering to do things in future⁵.
4. Lavender scent helps relieve stress makes people feel relaxed⁶.

5. Peppermint smell makes people alert, improves concentration and attention to detail⁷.

References:

1. Christian Jarret.(2012). "*Passengers litter less on carriages that smell of cleaning product*" (Retrieved from: <http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.in/2012/03/passengers-litter-less-on-carriages.html>)
2. "*Do scents affect people's moods or weak performance?*" Scientific American, 2002 (Retrieved from: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-scents-affect-peoples/>)
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7. <http://toolkit.goodpractice.com/mdt/resources/development-cycle/training-cycle-delivery/creating-a-learning-environment/using-aromas-to-support-learning>

FACT 50

ASKING THESE FOUR QUESTIONS CAN ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING & LEARNING

Critical thinking is supposed to be one of the main factors that enhance learning. Research¹ has proved that critical thinking is enhanced by instructional strategies that promote active learning, i.e. learning by doing.

Beth Dietz-Uhler, from Miami University, and Jason R. Lanter from Kutztown University, have developed a set of four questions that comes out to be one of the best active learning instructional strategies to foster critical thinking in the Learners. In an experiment² conducted by them, they administered the *four questions* to a group of students after they had gone through a web based interactive activity and before they responded to a quiz. They found that the group who had responded

to the *four questions* before the quiz performed better than the group which had not responded to the questions.

The *four questions* are - Analyzing (*What was learned?*), Reflection (*Why is it important?*), Relating (*How the material learned relates to personal lives?*), and Generating (*What questions you now have about the material?*)

The *four questions*, or modifications of them, can be used at the end of each day by the trainer to help Learners improve the retention of the material learnt during the program.

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2. Dietz-Uhler, B. & Lanter, J.R. (2009). Using the four-questions technique to enhance learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36, 38-41

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