

How to Pick a Good Training

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Recently, I was reading an article about how professionals should go about picking a good training. This is an important topic in the time/money/value proposition. Everyone wants value, and everyone wants to save time and money. They suggest three different criteria to make this decision:

Establish your criteria
Instructor resume
Course design

Establish Your Criteria

Seems simple, but it's not. Making this decision requires you to think about what you're trying to accomplish. Is it for money? Do you just need hours? Are you trying to get a designation? Or do you really want to build your skill sets? Know your criteria first.

Attending a seminar is a "blind purchase"; you really don't know what you are getting until you are there. Marketers of seminars use a variety of methods from flyers to e-mails to word of mouth. Some students are concerned about not having a good experience. Others wonder if they can get the same experience for a lesser price. One thing everyone can (or should) be able to agree on is results. Unfortunately results aren't best measured at a seminar or right after it. Best results are measured months after the seminar, not when you walk out of the room. Suggestion: ask the seminar provider to give some references of people who took the seminar months previously. This will give you a better idea of whether the seminar "works" or not.

Instructor resume

In an earlier life I was a ski coach. When I went to national coaching school, the instructor said something I've never forgotten: the best athletes aren't always the best coaches. What he meant was that just because someone produces a great result doesn't mean that they are able to show, tell, teach others how to do the same things they can do. So what kinds of things do you look for in a good instructor? Here are three to consider:

Experience: not just in the field of training, but also as an instructor. Does the person have enough mileage standing in front of groups of people? How about a track record of teaching them how to do new things? Does he/she know how to handle the inevitable "problem" student in every room?

Academic Credentials: put simply, a good instructor has sat in your seat. He or she knows what it's like to sit where you are, to listen to someone else, and to walk away with something of value of the experience of a "waste of time". The instructor should be able to develop a style that is compelling, individual, and keeps your attention.

Availability: A great instructor makes him/herself available though some means for after course follow up. This is especially important if the topic being taught is of a technical nature. As a screening criteria, this is something you should consider when matching the course elements to your needs.

Course Design

Course design is probably one of the most important facets of a seminar. A great seminar should have "something for everyone". People consume information in different ways; auditory, visual and kinesthetic. A great seminar should address all three modalities each hour.

There are a lot of different courses and prices in any endeavor. The ones that are "learning based" should also offer some kind of after course follow up. It could be an online event, a

webinar, or a conference call. However it happens, there should be some kind of way for the student to continue the learning process.

A Final Thought

Let's go back to the first question: establishing your criteria. In today's professional training environment, many people are looking for what I call, "the MBA for \$50 in 4 hours". Unfortunately it just doesn't exist. If you are serious about becoming better at what you do, you will need to take the time to learn how to do it. Again, *the time*, to learn how to do it. If you don't believe me, consider this: what's the one thing in life you do best? Is it a sport? Maybe cooking? How about your job? Parenting perhaps? Whatever it is, there is no doubt that the one thing you are *really good* at took you more than a day to develop your competencies. You had to practice. You had to make mistakes. You had to keep at it. As the saying goes, "You can't force the harvest of the farm." To reap the harvest, you must plow, sow, water, weed and fertilize. You must let time take it's natural course. Approaching your own training in this way will help you make the best choices to become the best you can at what you do.

Become the Expert

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