# Using design thinking to make your training program (finally) stick.

At the heart of design thinking is a devout dedication to the user. And the same should be true for learning programs. What is a learning program but a series of designed experiences that try to change a user's behavior? Use the following design thinking techniques to improve your training programs and finally get the results you've been looking for.

1 Plan

Use journey mapping to see the big picture. Effective learning rarely happens in a vacuum. Create journey maps to understand how your training fits into your users' experiences. With this approach, you'll connect the dots, see how their world works outside of your training, and identify ways to make your training more effective.

In-person or eLearning?
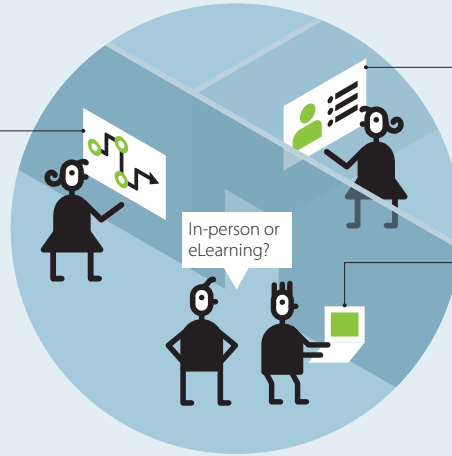
Create personas, or user profiles, to develop realistic representations of your audience segments and reference them throughout planning and development. Regularly ask yourself: would Tina from accounting engage with this?

Align the form of your training to your user goals. For example: if your goal is "to teach sales how to create custom solutions," you will need training with deep collaboration and discussions. So a one-sided eLearning won't do the trick as well as in-person session.

2 Create

Promote plain language. Your users come from a variety of background, with different cultural norms, native languages, and attention spans. That's why clear, plain language is essential. A great rule of thumb: explain concepts as if you were talking to a fourth grader. This gives users actionable information without unnecessary details or confusion.

Make sense? Clear to me.

TIP
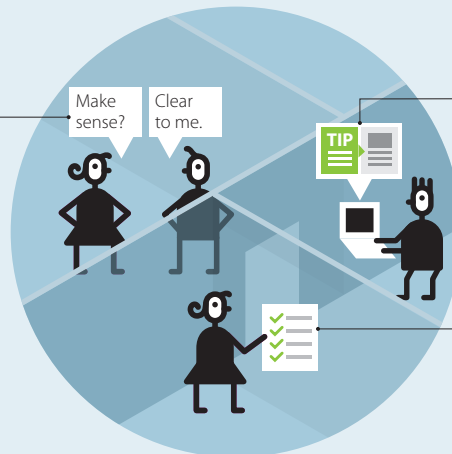
Make it real. Facts and principles are great, but if users don't understand how to apply them, they get forgotten. Include real-life scenarios in your training so users can apply the knowledge themselves while they learn.

Provide after-training prompts, like visual checklists, to act as extensions of the mind and remind people of what they learned. Prompts supplement memory, re-focus attention, and help people respond to changing situations.

3 Evaluate

Start user testing early, before you're even done building. As early in the Build process as possible, put low-fidelity prototypes in front of users for feedback and evaluation. But, don't present the concept. Find out how they would try to use it without much explanation and identify if your learning goals are truly being met.

TESTING
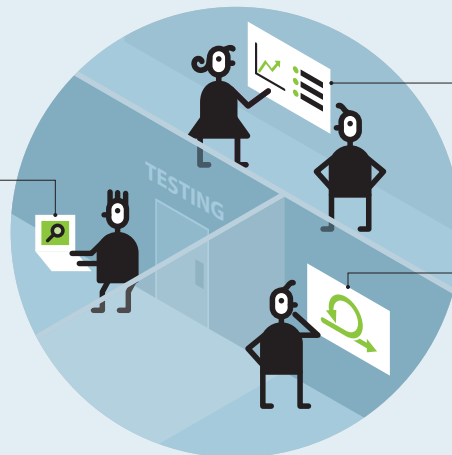
Use qualitative *and* quantitative metrics to measure success. Use quantitative metrics to measure information retention. Use qualitative metrics to measure fuzzier things like behavior change and engagement.

Be committed to iteration. Part of design thinking is knowing that the design process is never over. Don't throw feedback out after you think the training is "done." Be willing to adapt training to fit changing user needs.

If you want to learn more about how design thinking can improve your training program, get in touch at www.thoughtform.com or 412.488.8600.

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