Make Training Count

Research has shown that training courses make little impact in classrooms if they are not a part of a bigger, coherent professional learning project. HOW2s make a significant contribution to this more effective strategy.
Getting New Ideas

Teaching continually develops. But what’s the best way to get hold of new ideas? Ask leading experts or look closer to home?

WHO KNOWS BEST?

At one time, it was assumed that only outside experts were the source of new ideas about teaching: the authors, professors and superheads. The wandering guru and his expensive courses prevailed. Then abruptly there was a reversal in thinking. Instead of outsiders knowing best, now only practising teachers were the legitimate source of ideas. As research is showing, this either/or thinking is both simplistic and ineffective.

RECYCLING IDEAS

Author Geoff Petty points out the dangers of an organisation relying solely on its own ideas. He calls it drinking dirty water. Rather less kindly, professor Michael Fullan refers to organisations re-cycling inadequate ideas.

Whichever term is used, the danger is apparent. Teachers need to access new ideas and developments. At the same time, they need to be reassured that they are evidence-based and not a mere fad.

THE HOW2 SOLUTION

HOW2s are the quickest way to learn new teaching techniques. The size and range of the HOW2 collection makes it a comprehensive bank of ideas for teachers of differing subjects, experience and capabilities.

Easy to access and simple to use, the HOW2 solution offers evidence-based ideas sourced from research and visualised, ready for local adaptation. Outside knowledge blended with local expertise.

“The involvement of external experts was more related to success than within-school initiatives.”

— HATTIE, J., 2009, VISIBLE LEARNING, ROUTLEDGE
Content That Connects

How do you get round teachers feeling they are simply put in front of uninvited, impractical and irrelevant content during training sessions?

PRECISE AND SCALEABLE

The 2007 McKinsey report on global education noted the lack of precision in communicating new teaching techniques as the major failing of training for teachers. And Dylan Wiliam considers the teacher version of Chinese whispers — new techniques getting passed along by serial verbal descriptions — as the reason why it takes so many years for teachers to develop.

For a modern profession, these are embarrassing deficiencies in communication.

ACTIONABLE AND PERSONALISED

The core principle of adult learning is that change doesn’t happen unless it directly addresses a pressing need as perceived by the practitioner. Course content should be personalised.

But that isn’t enough. It needs to be stripped of jargon and vague platitudes. What remains should reveal the essential teacher actions, clearly explained in practical sequences. It should address the technical demands of classroom practice.

THE HOW2 SOLUTION

The main purpose of the HOW2s is evident in their name. HOW2s depict classroom situations that teachers connect to immediately. They address the practicality of their classrooms. And their ease of access respects the time-pressed reality of their lives.

Trainers can use HOW2s to select their content and project them directly with no added preparation to focus dialogue on real solutions to real problems.
“Learning is not a one-off affair, but rather a process of learning and change over time.”
—TIMPERLEY, H., 2011, REALIZING THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, OUP

One-Pass Learning

The demise of the training day was down to its disconnection from everyday practice. And its poor design for learning.

COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

The single biggest barrier to learning is being overloaded with information. And compounded by a pace that you can’t control. Welcome to the traditional training day.

Short-term memory — our cognitive weakest link — is paralysed. Important topics are glossed over. Learning, if at all present, is superficial.

Add to this a diet of bullet points and you have a recipe for mere attendance and compliance rather than engagement and learning.

NO FOLLOW-THROUGH

Even training events that receive positive evaluations are poorly remembered. They may well leave a warm glow of enjoyment but that mustn’t be confused with an accurate recall of the details. The result is very little impact when teachers return to their classrooms.

What’s clearly lacking is planned follow-through. The content of the training event needs to be part of a greater and on-going learning project. It should be the stimulus for subsequent classroom-based action research.

THE HOW2 SOLUTION

During the training event, the HOW2s are projected, providing the framework for a shared understanding among the teachers. They are relaxed in studying the HOW2s, knowing that after the event they can revisit them as many times as they need, in privacy and at their convenience.

The self-same HOW2s form the basis of the teacher projects that have been planned for the months following the event. Meaningful learning and supported application.
“Professional learning requires teachers to be seriously engaged in their learning.”
—TIMPERLEY, H., 2011, REALIZING THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, OUP

Teacher Engagement

Woody Allen got it wrong: showing up is not 90% of success. Teachers need to engage in learning with intent and commitment.

THE BLACK BOX

Professional learning expert, Helen Timperley, notes that there is no straight line from training event to classroom practice. She identifies the human black box of teacher interpretation guilty of misunderstanding or ignoring the messages presented.

Added to this the experience of cognitive overload and relentless bullet points, and it becomes evident that training events are not designed for optimum learning.

PREPARED TO LEARN

Every teacher knows that for meaningful learning to happen with their students, connections need to be made with their prior learning. Simply turning up, unprepared and disconnected is a perfect scenario for weak engagement.

Mere attendance, compliance and participation is not enough to ensure learning takes place. Certainly not learning strong enough to carry over into everyday practice.

THE HOW2 SOLUTION

With the HOW2 tools, trainers create a Group of teachers who will attend the training session. Then she sends them a Recommendation of the very HOW2s to be covered in the training event. A quick scan ensures everybody arrives on the day prepared for learning.

Then when the teachers examine the HOW2s on the day, powerful connections are forged. And the visual clarity of the guides avoids any ambiguities which cause misunderstandings.
The HOW2 Training Process

A step-by-step guide to a generic HOW2 training process.

1. TRAINER DECIDES ON THE FOCUS

The trainer executes a needs analysis of the staff who will attend the training event. This might come from a recent external inspection, an in-house departmental analysis, or an overview of classroom observations. He might conduct this exercise on his own, on behalf of staff, or in collaboration with them. Or, indeed, allow the staff to conduct their own needs analysis.

2. TRAINER CHOOSES HOW2 OPTIONS

Arriving with a number of areas to develop, the trainer goes to the HOW2 Library to search for specific HOW2s. He can search by a number of different Collections.

More specialised still, he might search via his organisation’s own Collections of bundled HOW2s, organised previously to address in-house agendas.

Another option open to him is to search by generic digital technologies.

3. TRAINER CREATES COLLECTIONS OF HOW2S

Once the trainer has found the HOW2s to address the identified staff needs, he groups them together into a Collection. This dedicated collection of HOW2s helps him keep track of the training event agenda and to organise activities around it.

More specifically, it helps him communicate and monitor progress.
The HOW2 Training Process

TRAINER CREATES A GROUP OF TEACHERS
The trainer now collects together all the names of the teachers who will be participating in his planned training session. This allows him to communicate to them regarding the day, and to monitor progress.

TRAINER SHARES A COLLECTION
One of the first things the trainer can do with his training day group is to share the training session Collection of HOW2s. By doing so, he knows each individual teacher will have access to the very teaching techniques they will be covering on the training event.

TEACHERS RECEIVE THE COLLECTION
As soon as the trainer sends the training event Collection to the participating teachers, they receive both an email alert and an appearance on their own Home Page.
The trainer will have accompanied the Collection of HOW2s with a message about the forthcoming training session.
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TEACHERS PREVIEW THE HOW2S

Each teacher will have the opportunity to look at the HOW2s collected in the shared Collection. At their convenience, the teachers can scan each HOW2 as a preview of the training session’s focus.

This primes the teachers so that they arrive on the training event, already connected to the day’s agenda, ready for a collaborative and in-depth exploration of how these techniques can be adopted and adapted to suit their classroom contexts.

TRAINER USES THE HOW2S ON THE DAY

The trainer uses the HOW2s as the main focus of the day. He uses the projector to ensure there is a shared focus which frames the dialogue and builds a unified understanding.

Establishing such a shared understanding of exactly what the techniques are, ensures there is no ambiguity or confusion. Everyone starts to look at any possible adaptations from the same baseline.

TEACHERS TAKE NOTES OF THEIR ADAPTATIONS

After introducing the HOW2s, the trainer leads a discussion on how the context-free HOW2 models can be adapted to suit the very different classroom contexts of the teachers.

The teachers use the Notes tool in order to capture their plans. They can also choose to make their notes visible to members of their team which is a boon for collaborative learning.
The HOW2 Training Process

A step-by-step guide to a generic HOW2 training process.

TEACHERS REVISIT THE HOW2S, POST-COURSE

After the training session, teachers can revisit the HOW2s as many times as they need, and at their convenience. Of equal significance, they do so in the privacy some teachers need to consolidate their learning.

The sharing of Notes can be a powerful support for developing approaches to thinking about their teaching.

TRAINER MONITORS ACTIVITY

All activity on the HOW2 site is recorded which allows the trainer to support the planned follow-through. He is available to all members of the training day group to answer questions and suggest connections between teachers.

This pre and post-training event communication turns concepts about coherent professional learning into an everyday and workable reality.