



## Lean on Experienced Teachers for Digital Classroom Success

### Description

I was having a conversation recently about digital learning in the corporate or professional development context. We all agreed that digital is an invaluable means of delivery and recognized it's where the future of corporate learning lies. We also acknowledged how much technology has advanced since the early days of eLearning. And yet, much digital learning still fails the engagement test.

It's not down to the quality of the content, its production values, or even its relevance. Some of the materials being produced are like mini works of art, the subject matter experts who inform the content are first-rate, and every effort is made to ensure the learning relates to a workplace need.

So, why are levels of engagement still low in too many cases?

### No substitute for experience?

As I was pondering this question, something very obvious occurred to me: for the most part, the people who design digital learning had not had the experience of being in a classroom or workshop and facilitating adult learning. When I say experience, I mean day after day, week after week, month on month, for years. Many of the "thought leaders" and cheerleaders for digital learning have never spent much time in the classroom, either.

I think this matters.

Of course, at [Kaplan](#), we can draw on enormous teaching experience. In the team I work alongside, that amounts to over 100 years of experience between us. That's not counting our specialist learning consultancy team, where even the least experienced colleague has 15 years under her belt!

### Lessons from the Classroom

This made me reflect on the colleagues I have known at [Kaplan](#), and in the private and public sector,

who were, and still are in many cases, great classroom teachers, instructors, or facilitators.

More to the point, they were great in a particular set of circumstances: working with people who weren't motivated by either the subject itself or by the thought of the classroom. Teaching folks chasing a qualification or driven by their intrinsic motivation is one thing; winning over the disinterested, the distracted, and the drafted is quite another. It seems to me that whatever those heroes of the training room did, and still do, we ought to learn from them.

But before I get to what these top trainers did, here are three things they didn't do:

### **1. They didn't set out learning objectives at the start of the lesson.**

People under the age of 35 might not realize it, but there was a world before learning objectives. Yet, we all still managed to get through school and college and start careers. Our societies even managed to produce fine doctors, scientists, and engineers, all without the benefit of learning objectives. How was this even possible, you might ask?

### **2. They didn't use PowerPoint slides.**

They didn't go into a classroom with a presentation. Perhaps because they didn't see themselves as presenters; they saw themselves as teachers. They didn't deliver, they taught; they didn't present, they created dialogue and experiences.

### **3. They didn't follow a sequential logical sequence that carefully developed each point in a structured way.**

In many cases, they didn't even stick to the point. Those were often the best parts of the session.

## **How to Win over a Room**

So what did these great teachers do? Well, much of their success lay in how skillfully and authentically they engaged their learners.

### **1. They intrigued their audience.**

One colleague of mine from many years back had what he called his "bits of business." These were little vignettes or ploys he used at the start of the lesson to bring the class into the subject. He might ask them to guess what he was drawing or embark on an anecdote that seemed at first to have little to do with the subject at hand but always did.

### **2. They adapted to the room.**

The lack of PowerPoint slides and set structure gave them one great advantage—they could adapt the session as they went. They encouraged the group to make connections and see patterns. They would often use flipcharts, and although they knew what would appear on that chart most of the time, it always felt like a creation of that specific discussion in that particular room.

### **3. They were likable.**

I put this last, but it should have come first. They used their personality, or a version of it, to develop relationships. These were people you wanted to spend time with; they were both interesting and interested.

## **Giving Digital the Benefit of Some Old-School Insight**

As we assembled [Kaplan Performance Academy](#), we not only aimed to harness the best of digital learning expertise but also to make sure it is informed by Kaplan's heritage and practical experience in teaching and education.

What this means in practice:

### **1. Our learning journeys are not sequential.**

The learner can consume the learning in any way they please. They can jump from one topic to another. They can simply focus on the content that matters to them when it matters to them.

### **2. We use our platform to coordinate off-platform experiences.**

We don't see asynchronous learning as an end in itself, so we support it with on-the-job tasks, experiences, and live online or face-to-face workshops if required.

### **3. We offer learning that is on your side.**

The great teachers I referred to didn't behave as if their students were there to learn. They acted as if they were there to help the class become better engineers or accountants or whatever occupation they were pursuing.

That philosophy is translated into [KPA](#)'s personalized learning experiences that are wholly relevant to a learner's role and the challenges they face in the workplace. We also provide a personal coach to work with the learner to ensure their professional ambitions, as well as their immediate learning needs, are met.

The future of corporate learning is digital. However, while the means of delivery has changed, the essence of good teaching and instruction remains the same.

At Kaplan, we will never forget that our reputation as a world-class education company is founded on superb teachers, great teaching material, and insightful methods. The challenge was to take the

lessons this experience offers, ally them to exceptional technology, and create a learning environment fit for the digital age. Challenge accepted.

---

Ready to see how you can meet your organization's learning and development needs? [Learn more](#) about the unique digital learning environment of [Kaplan Performance Academy](#).

---

**Date Created**

August 2020

**Author**

katy-leedom

default watermark