

On-the-job learning: how TWI Job Instruction removes barriers to learning

by Agata Pawlukojc

Over the last few years, many companies transformed their Training Departments into Learning and Development Departments. These could be seen as small details. However, it reflects something much more relevant: training is just means to an end, and what really matters is **learning**.

This approach to learning is not new, but was somehow forgotten over time. Already in 1941, the Training Within Industry Program was stating in the Job Instruction part: *"If the worker hasn't learned, the instructor hasn't taught."* Indeed, what really matters is what stays in the person's mind. The TWI Program authors already had this idea in 1941, and they transformed it into the teaching-learning pattern of the Job Instruction 4 Step Method.

It is amazing how well the 4 Steps of Job Instruction work, and how effective it is on the job learning process. The reason is that it makes the job instructor use techniques that allow the learner to learn easier and deeper. This develops not only the knowledge of the task, but also the skill of performing it. To understand how this happens, let's discuss below the barriers to human learning.

First, there is memorizing. One didn't learn if it didn't stick in our minds. Very frequently, the new task is presented to the learner in a way which makes it very hard or outright impossible to remember. There is too much information, the information is neither well-organized or

clear, and the way in which the instructor presents it is chaotic from the learner's perspective. To overcome these difficulties, the 4 Step Method for Instructing tells us that PREPARATION is needed. The instructors have to make a plan on how to teach the job. They also have to break the job down in order to present it in a clear and concise way to the learner. This preparation enables the instructor to communicate the content in a clear and precise manner, which helps the learners to focus their attention on specific points. That is the key factor for memorizing: when a learner is able to focus attention on specific clear points, memorizing is easier and more likely to happen.

The TWI Job Instruction also adds another factor, repetition. When presenting the job to the learner in Step 2, the instructor using the 4 Step Method presents the job 3 times, each time adding a bit more content.

In short, **TWI Job Instruction removes the barrier to memorizing**.

Secondly, there is physical performance, *doing something*. All the jobs require performing, doing things. We will never learn a job in depth if we do not really experience it, feel it. Only doing things with our own hands gives us a real deep understanding of a job. Very frequently, instruction consists of merely explaining the job, while the learner stays on their own without having learned or understood the job at all. In order to enable real, deep learning, the TWI Job Instruction has Step 3, *Try-out performance*, and Step 4, *Follow-Up*. Before leaving a learner on his own, the instructor needs to test the performance of the learner. This means 4 repetitions of the task by the learner. When the learner performs the task several times under the eye of the instructor, who watches over to correct errors, they can understand the job deeper.

TWI Job Instruction removes the barrier to physical performance and deeper understanding.

Third, there are individual differences between learners, each with their own learning styles. Humans can be very different: someone learns better by listening, others by observing, and other ones by doing. If this is not considered, many learners end up having serious difficulties to learn. The TWI Job Instruction 4 Steps combine different instructing techniques - telling, showing, performing - and makes it easier to learn independently for each learner according to their individual preference. Furthermore, in Step 1, the instructor has to ask for a learner's background. This knowledge enables the instructor to adjust their instruction to the person. This is a very humanistic approach, and it proves once more the trait common to all the TWI modules - Job Instruction, Job Relations, Job Methods, Job Safety - which is RESPECT FOR PEOPLE.

In short, we can say that **TWI Job Instruction removes the barrier of learning style for the individual learner.**

Fourth, there are the learner's emotions and feelings. Very frequently, the training process can look threatening to the learner. Fear is usually a steadfast barrier against learning: neuroscience has proved that when we are scared, our rational brain "shuts down" and learning becomes impossible. **It is very important to create a learning environment in which the learner does not feel threatened**, and perceives the situation as beneficial. The TWI Job Instruction 4 Steps also are helpful here. Step 1, *Prepare the worker*, and Step 4, *Follow-Up*, are both meant to create appropriate emotional conditions. Positive

emotions will help in the learning process. There is another large benefit: positive emotions lead to positive feelings, and the positive feelings provide greater motivation and engagement.

TWI Job Instruction removes the barrier that negative emotions can be to the learning process.

When an on-the-job trainer uses the 4 Steps of TWI Job Instructions to teach, they remove the barriers to learning. Learners can learn easier, in greater depth, and are able to do the work *correctly, safely and conscientiously*. The on-the-job trainers realize that they are doing a good job, which gives them a sense of accomplishment and more motivation to become a better trainer. In this way, it starts a self-feeding cycle of growth and development.

Sir Ken Robinson said, when talking about the learning revolution: "**...you cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do is, like a farmer, create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish.**"

In conclusion, TWI Job Instruction can help us create better conditions for human development in every organization.

About the author

Agata Pawlukojs is TWI Job Instruction Master Trainer and Director of Instituto TWI Iberia, Spain and Portugal. <http://www.instituto-twi.com>

