Global Training Tips – Know Before You Go

Planning your next global software rollout? Here are a few things I learned from our company having delivered training around the world:

Know Before You Go

Before conducting any training project, it's a good idea to ask a lot of questions. Here's my partial list:

- How many students are in the class?
- What is their primary (native) language?
- What is the experience level or familiarity with the software/matter being taught?
- What is the training room environment? •Will each student have their own computer?
- Is there an overhead projector? How about a whiteboard?
- Is the room set up as a classroom or is it a converted conference room?
- What language are the materials written in if they are providing them?
- Are there designated start, break and end times and other logistics details?
- Have there been any training projects in the past that weren't successful, and if so, why? Likewise, what are some of the reasons training projects have been successful?

This may seem like a lot to ask, but it's just a start in helping you be prepared to ensure the class will be a success.

Native is Best

Sometimes in the United States, corporations make the decision to deliver worldwide training in only one language – English. While this is easier for planning purposes (e.g., not having to find multilingual teachers, preparing training materials in only one language), in most cases the training will have a greater likelihood of success if the native language is accommodated. Whenever possible, hire or contract with a native language speaker for the best results. We hired Spanish, Portuguese and other skilled trainers to join our team on various projects with great success.

Something else to consider – the keyboard. If you are delivering training in a different country, make sure to familiarize yourself with the keyboard. There's a good chance it's in the native language and has a different layout.

Written Materials Required

The trend in training is to move away from handing out written materials. E-learning may be used, electronic documents – or nothing at all. However, if you are delivering global training, it is a good idea to provide some type of comprehensive hand-out. One thing we've started to do is hire translators who specialize in technical writing to transpose our standard courseware into various languages. The cost is not prohibitive and you get better knowledge transfer by doing so and increased likelihood that the materials will be used outside classroom training for reference purposes.

Take Breaks!

In some countries, students may be reticent to ask for a break. Consider setting an alarm every two hours to remind you to give students a break if you have a tendency to lose track of time while training.

Some organizations bring in lunch for the students and encourage shorter lunch breaks. Find out what the expectations are by asking a supervisor prior to project start. Will you be expected to eat lunch with the students? Sometimes, if lunch is brought in, there may just enough for the students, and therefore, lunch will be on your own. Other times, it may be considered impolite to dine elsewhere. Finally, why not pick up an inexpensive treat or trinket to give to everyone in your class? A little kindness goes a long way.

Say No to Slang and Jargon

Imagine sitting in a training class, hearing material delivered in your non-native language, and on top of that, having the instructor use unknown slang or jargon (add acronyms to this too). There is nothing like having the audience uncomfortable or confused, and one of the best ways to prevent it is to just leave out the unnecessary lingo.

Make Adjustments

You could be the best trainer in the world, but if your students aren't getting it, you'll need to make adjustments. One place to start is by adjusting your cadence. Do you speak quickly? If so, slow it down. Do you talk slowly? If so, try speaking at a faster clip. Personally, I can't keep focused when an instructor speaks too slowly. Heck, I even listen to books on tape at 1.5 or two times speed. Other things to try is walking around the room while speaking, gathering people into a circle for a discussion, or making the training experience more interactive with the students. The most important thing is to keep an eye open for problems and to address them early on – without negatively calling attention to any particular student in the classroom.

Accommodations Matter

I use to feel bad about making requests for my travel, but after 21 years, I know what works best for me and what I need to make the experience the best it can be for my students. If you're flying more than 10 hours, see if you can upgrade to business class. This helps to reduce how much you are affected by jet lag because you are able to stretch out more than in an economy seat. For hotels, there are a few non-negotiables for me personally. The hotel must be clean and safe, located nearby the client site, have WiFi and sufficient power outlets to accommodate my electronics equipment. If your hotel has a spa, try to schedule a massage for the first or second day after arrival, which will help with jet lag.

Have Fun and Enjoy the Experience

We use to have a trainer at PayneGroup that loved training, but ate all of her meals in her hotel room – even in the most beautiful cities. She complained of not wanting to eat or venture out alone. I can't stress enough that you are living a trainers dream when you are hired to deliver training in different locations. Expenses are paid, hours are regulated, and you have the world – literally – at your doorstep. Go outside, take a tour, and immerse yourself in the local culture. You'll bring back memories from the experience that will last you a lifetime, and best of all, you may even make new friends along the way.