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SHAKING UP THE CLASSROOM: EVERY TRAINER CAN INCREASE JOB SECURITY

By Donna Payne (PayneGroup) and Kisha Minor (Wiley Rein, LLP)

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As trainers, we sometimes get into the rut of saying the same things, day in and day out, over and over. This happens because we train on the same materials – sometimes for months on end. In time, the information conveyed becomes automatic, and dare we say, robotic.

While we can't change what we teach, we can change how. There are things that every trainer can do to make their job more enjoyable, while at the same time, making themselves more valuable to their organization. In the legal industry, perceived value = job security.

FLIPPING THE COURSE

One method of training that is starting to make headway is the flipped classroom. In a nutshell, participants are given prerequisites, materials such as videos or e-learning in advance that they are required to review. This isn't homework, it's a part of the designed curriculum. In a law firm, this might be learning the basics of working with tabs, ribbons

and commands in Office, saving a file into and retrieving from a document management system, or logging onto remote networks securely.

At a pre-defined time, the participants would then meet in the classroom to either validate their knowledge or work with instructors to supplement what they learned. You can call this knowledge transfer, open labs, workshop, or anything else that suits. The important thing is that professionals can learn in their own time, and to their own satisfaction, on most subjects.

The benefits to inverting or flipping the learning is that it better meets the needs of more people. Some people need to spend more time with concepts, others pick things up more quickly. Some people need to review material multiple times to have that "ah ha" moment, while others read once and retain.

Whatever the reasoning, the flipped classroom can streamline the learning process, make it more valuable to participants, and eliminate the frustration and embarrassment of learners while in the classroom.

Want to give flipped classroom a try? Pick an easy to digest topic. Create a simple 2-minute video or PowerPoint presentation that contains no more than three slides. Send the material at least one week prior to your scheduled training. Provide a timeline and set expectations for the participants. Come to the classroom and begin training with the assumption that everyone has reviewed the pre-submitted materials. If this short test works, create and send more videos, and then ask for feedback on what worked well as well as what should be



improved. Our goal should always be to make training more effective and enjoyable.

JUST LIKE TED

Have you watched a TED Talk (TED Conferences, LLC, n.d.)? Speakers deliver a presentation that is informative, well-rehearsed, and best of all, no longer than 18 minutes. Now think about the traditional law firm training model. We might spend three hours talking about the basics of using Microsoft Word in a legal environment.

The class starts with everyone eager and attentive. Then something magic happens at around the 15 minute mark. Participants start to think about work back at their desk, they check e-mail under the desk, and they stop focusing on what you are saying and retain very little. All of this happens because the average adult has an attention span of no more than 15 minutes. As much as we'd like to give our full attention for as long as it takes, for many it's just not possible.

If you want to hold your listeners attention, follow these standard Ted Talk rules:

1. Keep it short – If you need more than 10-15 minutes for any topic, consider splitting it up into multiple modules.
2. Know the material – Ted presentations work because the presenter is forced to tell a compelling story, provide data, and close within a short period of time.
3. Watch your pace – When we present, we have a tendency to slow down the speech rate, which makes it stilted and unnatural. The average English-speaking American talks at a rate of 110–150 words per minute. Yet when audio books are created, 150-160 words per minute is recommended (www.write-out-loud.com , n.d.). That's because we lose our audience when we

meander and take too long to spit out the details. At minimum, present and train at your normal speaking pace. If you're going too fast, someone will tell you.

Alternatively, check-in within the first minute or so to ensure that everyone is comfortable with your cadence.

4. Don't overdo the PowerPoint – If a person has the capacity to read every bullet point on the slide, and that's how you present, why do they need an instructor? Instead of detailed slides, choose to connect with participants, make eye contact and tell your story in order to better get across the message. The experience will be more rewarding for you and the audience.

MAKE YOUR MARK

At a technology stand-still? Why not research what other organizations are doing to make training more effective and provide better return on investment? For instance, do you have a group of new attorneys who are closet gamers? Then perhaps learning about gamification software and methodologies would be useful. Did the firm bring in a third-party training vendor who was able to wow everyone with video and marketing materials? Well if they can do it, you can do it too. Tell the firm to give you \$250 and a week to get up to speed and you can create videos like the pros. Software like Animoto (Animoto Inc, n.d.) will get you on your way, helping you deliver content that even the most hard to please secretary will appreciate.

Try software such as Adobe Presenter (Adobe Systems Incorporated, n.d.) to create fun, interactive e-learning presentations that are SCORM compatible and add a quiz with graded questions, survey questions, or a combination of both. And since we're talking about Adobe, the



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InDesign product offers near endless possibilities for enhancing your training program.

Take an online course on a topic that you're interested in and create your own outline and course based on what you learned. There are thousands of *massive open online courses* available for free on subjects ranging from cybersecurity to using styles to astrodynamics.

Imagine creating new courses for your firm and making them available each month. Some topics might include *Keeping Your Online Profile Secure, Security in a Legal Environment, BYOD or Bring Your Own Threat?, How Not to Get Caught in a Phishing Scam (aka, why celebrity photos leak), PowerPoint for Litigators. Mastering Styles, Just Say No to Direct Formatting.* You get the picture. The world is your oyster and there are tremendous opportunities that are yours for the taking.

GAINING ADVOCATES

Some of the best learning experiences take place outside the classroom. If you bring a room full of attorneys into a classroom and show them Microsoft Excel, the question will be, how is this applicable to the practice of law? Show an attorney how to filter a damages chart full of information and you will have a grateful advocate for the duration of your time at the firm. Try to get fifteen minutes in a practice group meeting and contemplate how you can simplify a complex problem or process through technology. Better yet, the next time the attorney retreat is bound for British Virgin Islands, volunteer to be the tech for the trip. Now that's an en

There is a perceived chasm between the IT department and attorneys and for that matter secretaries and staff as well. The more you bridge the gap between different people, and the more they find value in the service you provide, the more

chance of longevity, and dare I say job security, you will find in the organization. When speaking with one partner in charge, he said, tell the trainers to ask me to lunch. We would both benefit from having a better relationship.

FINAL THOUGHTS

All jobs get boring after a certain time period once we have mastered our craft. Fortunately, we have the power to take control of our careers and find ways to infuse new content into our practice. Learn something new every day and you will be on your way to a more enjoyable, fulfilling and happy existence at any organization.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kisha Minor is a Technical Instructor for the law firm, Wiley Rein LLP, based in Washington, DC. Kisha is also a member of the International Legal Technology Association (ILTA) User Support Peer Group & 2014 Conference Committee Member.



Donna Payne is the founder and CEO of PayneGroup. She and the company have authored 13 books on Microsoft Office, develop globally used products and offer training and professional services worldwide.



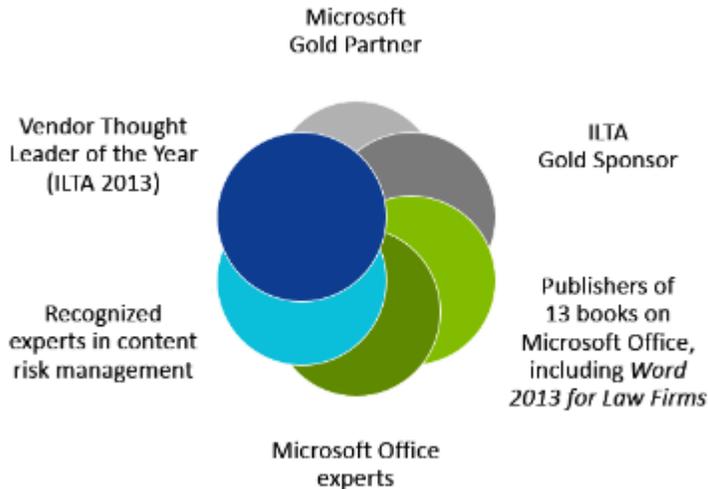
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ABOUT PAYNEGROUP

PayneGroup is a trustworthy name in computers software, training and publishing. We have been in this industry since 1994 and have earned a reputation as an honest vendor that provides quality products and services.

We work diligently to ensure that every client is satisfied — whether it's a sole practitioner who needs to rid documents of metadata, or a large international law firm that is upgrading to new products and requires project management and training. We have become the gold standard in the legal and corporate industry for providing unparalleled customer service to every size organization.



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