# A Great Learning Design is Only 50% of the Work
by Jeanette Romkema and Peggy da Silva

What do you do if the person designing a training is not the same person who will facilitate it? Well, tons. Here are some tips to help ensure this is a team effort and together we work to ensure learning and maximize the possibly of real change.

1. **Consider the facilitators in the design process**. Who is most likely going to facilitate your workshop? What skills, interests, knowledge or resources will these people bring to their facilitation? Consider who will be using the learning design(s) and design with them in mind. If they can't see themselves using the design, they won't.
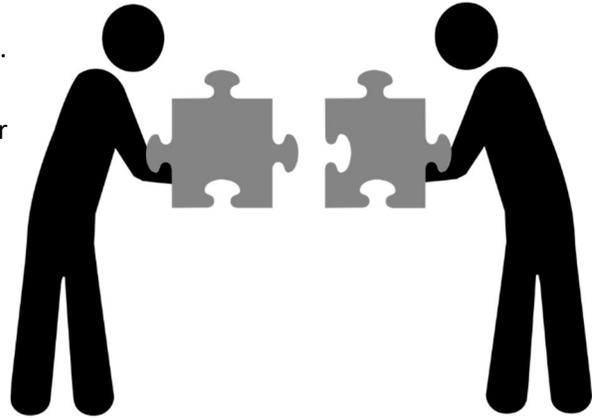
2. **Share the information learned from your learning needs and resources assessment with the facilitators**. What did you learn while developing the learning design that they need to know? What details are important for facilitators to know that you can share in Facilitator Notes or in advance of the event? Of course, each facilitator should do her own advance preparation. However, it is also helpful to learn from the background work the designer did.

3. **Meet with the facilitator who will use your design**. When possible, it is helpful to talk through the workshop design, share information about the people and situation it was designed for, and brainstorm possible changes needed to align the learning design for the new audience and their needs.

4. **Respect the expertise of the facilitators**. Whether they are content experts new at facilitating learning events or seasoned trainers, each person brings unique skills, knowledge and interests that will enhance the learning. Facilitators should be encouraged to teach from their expertise, while still using the learning design offered them.

5. **Invest in training trainers**. A strong design is only part of what helps to ensure learning; the other half is facilitation. As such, it is critical that skills are developed in both. Helping trainers to understand why a workshop is designed the way it is, will increase their understanding of how to use it and when to adapt sections to better meet the needs of each unique group of learners. Training trainers in principles and practices of a learning-centered approach will also empower them to ensure learners feel respected, safe, included, and engaged in the new content.

6. **Build in flexibility**. Clarify the learning objectives of every workshop, so facilitators can make meaningful adjustments in their facilitation to maximize learning. Facilitators should be

encouraged to adapt a workshop for each unique place, time, people, situation, need, and resources available.

7. **Develop a trainer guide.** Especially if you are offering a learning program for others to facilitate, an accompanying guide is helpful and wise. Some items to consider including are:

    a. Thorough description of the people, situation, time & timing, place & space, content and achievement-based objectives. A comprehensive description of this kind should clearly explain why the learning program looks that way it does.
    b. Sample needs assessment
    c. Notes of specific learning tasks
    d. Tips for facilitation
    e. Tips for maximizing safety and respect
    f. Tips for setting up the space for learning
    g. Tips for minimizing resistance
    h. Tips for encouraging dialogue
    i. Tips for engaging with content
    j. Template for 8 steps of planning
    k. Sample feedback forms
    l. Ideas for coaching and mentoring post-event
    m. Evaluation form (to be returned to designer).

8. **Create a feedback loop**. Find ways to collect input on the workshop design as it is used, and processes for making changes to strengthen them. This sort of feedback loop respects that facilitators are closest to the learners needing the content, and that no workshop is perfect at first conception. This is essential when field-testing your program, and a wise process to continue for ensuring a quality standard.

A strong design is only 50% of the work to maximize learning, the other 50% is the facilitation of it. When the designer and the facilitator are two different individuals, we need to find ways to work as a team. Learning depends on it!

Which of these tips have you found especially helpful?

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Jeanette Romkema *is a Global Learning Partners (GLP) co-owner and Managing Partner of Communications and Marketing, as well a Senior Consultant and Trainer with GLP.*

Peggy da Silva, MPH, is a longtime practitioner of adult education in out-of-school settings. She develops public programs and staff training systems, with the overall goal of building and supporting healthy communities. Peggy first discovered Jane Vella's philosophy and methods over twenty years ago, sharing them with California Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programs. The staff training and certification system she and her team developed has been adopted by WIC programs across the country. Peggy often

brings creative and learning-centered approaches to organizations that have not historically invested in high quality training, and sees the joy among learners – and positive results for funders – that result from careful design and evaluation. More information about Peggy's work is available on her website: www.coheco.net