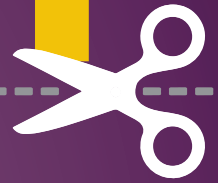


SAME TRAINING

HALF



THE TIME

Delivering  
Results for  
Busy Learners



Kimberly Devlin

# Same Training, Half the Time

Delivering Results for Busy Learners

Kimberly Devlin

TPH

Trainers Publishing House  
Johns Island, SC

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**TPH**

[www.trainerspublishinghouse.com](http://www.trainerspublishinghouse.com)

Email: [info@trainerspublishinghouse.com](mailto:info@trainerspublishinghouse.com)

**Ordering Information**

Quantity Sales: [sales@trainerspublishinghouse.com](mailto:sales@trainerspublishinghouse.com)

Individual Sales: [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [Kindle.com](http://Kindle.com)

ISBN: 978-1-93924-709-4 (print)

ISBN: 978-1-93924-710-0 (ebook)

**TPH**

Publisher: Cat Russo

Editorial Director: Jacqueline Edlund-Braun

Rights Associate and Data Manager: Nancy Silva

Marketing: Dawn Baron, Passion Profits Consulting

Cover Design: Patty Sloniger Design, Houston, TX

Interior Design and Composition: PerfecType, Nashville, TN

Cover art: Fotolia

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## INTRODUCTION

# Same Training, Half the Time

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- “Our management team wants the training time cut in half—now.”
- “My stakeholders want to shorten the class length, but expect the same content to be covered.”
- “The C-level team went to a conference. When they came back they told me I could only create micro-learning . . . and I’m not even sure what that is.”
- “We aren’t allowed to create any learning longer than *X* hours.” (*X* often equals one or two.)
- “After I put my slides and speaker notes together, I was asked to cut my talk in *half*.”

The details vary, but if you participate in the learning function in your organization, chances are good that you have said some version of these statements. They all come down to less time for training. But what hasn’t been curtailed are the expectations of what training must accomplish. That leaves you and your fellow learning professionals wishing for a magic wand to wave that will produce the unicorn requested: “same training in half the time.”

### How Did We Get Here—Under This Time Crunch?

Multiple challenges are driving increased demands on learning:

1. **Listening Versus Learning.** What technology can accomplish in regard to *content transmission* is unquestionably impressive. Today's enhanced *speed of information* and *speed of communication* leave many people believing training should happen as quickly. And the pace shows no prospects of slowing. Content transmission is *not the same thing* as learning though. Read that last sentence again—it is foundational to the challenge of this book.
2. **Sausage Making.** To leaders and managers—even among the greatest learning champions—training is too often like sausage; they enjoy eating it but don't want to know how it is made. Without understanding the process for building a valued learning event and unaware of the repercussions of “pre-existing decisions” made without your input, many project sponsors make misguided requests.
3. **The Curse of High-Quality Courses.** When a program is designed exceptionally well, it appears simple. Simple and elegant, though, can be complex to create. Some instructional designers' work is so effective, so clear and direct, that it is hard for others to recognize all that went into creating it—as well as all that had to be left out of it. And this skews expectations.
4. **Lazy Learners.** Just as watching a weight-loss-challenge reality TV show from one's couch does nothing for one's waistline, passively listening to a person who possesses a skill does little to transfer that skill. Learning is not a passive activity. It takes effort, and when the framework for that effort isn't built into the course design, lazy learners are created. Because lazy learners don't learn, managers see training time as wasted time. And that results in them affording less time for future learning events.
5. **Paid-Vacation Model of Training.** We pay a high price for bad training and short-sighted design plans. When time, effort, and money are spent to develop employees' skills, and they perform after training as they did before it, managers are right to consider training time as paid vacation. Even when skills

are acquired and employees initially shift their behaviors post-training, if no one is acknowledging, tracking, measuring, or reinforcing the behavior changes because of short-sighted designs, the employees will slip back to old patterns. The result, again, is that learning is ineffective. This reinforces managers' perceptions that training time = wasted time. So, again, they afford less time for training.

I am certain you can list additional reasons from your own experience. I invite you to share them on my blog. Check out [KimberlyDevlin.com](http://KimberlyDevlin.com).

## **Magic Wands and Fairy Dust—On Backorder Indefinitely**

Can 10 pounds of training fit into a 5-pound bag? That is the conundrum of requests for the same training in half the time. And there isn't a quick-fix answer that fits into a Tweet. Truthfully, training condensed into less time can easily require more time to create. Mark Twain is credited with writing "I'd have written you a shorter letter, but I didn't have the time." Whether he wrote it or not, it applies to your challenge of packing training into ever-smaller packages.

Currently, in an effort to meet this goal, you and your training team may be:

- Shifting the burden to learners with a "pre-work dump."
- Cutting out application activities.
- Forgoing adequate scaffolding for and debriefing of exercises.
- Ending sessions with "we can cover the rest next time."
- Spending nights and weekends attempting to create inappropriate deliverables and meet unrealistic deadlines for programs that don't add value.

And, to what end? To overhear lunchroom conversations describing training as painful? To watch the measure of your success stop with a checkmark beside "training done"? To read evaluations in which learners describe sessions as exhausting data dumps?

## Something Has to Give

You can't have the *same* training in half the time. You can't. But you can have *better* training in half the time. In fact, here is the good news of this book:

- You can develop shorter trainings that deliver meaningful results.
- You can condense existing programs into shorter events that the business values.
- You can satisfy learners' desire for effective, on-demand learning experiences that respect their time and attention spans.
- You can achieve better results with shorter events than you currently do with longer programs.
- And—the best news of all—instead of continuing to fulfill potentially misguided training requests at a breakneck pace, with the strategies in this book, you can shift from reacting to training requests you receive to driving what training looks like in your organization!

Getting to better training in half the time will certainly include design choices, and you will find Chapters 5, 6, and 7 full of them. But better training can easily require additional upfront time to develop the solution and will unquestionably require selective choices regarding content. So, earlier chapters will help you strategize how to gain more time, tighter scopes, an improved list of deliverables, and other key approaches, as well as provide a method to distill vast quantities of program content down to the essentials. Ready?

## How Can This Book Help You Create and Deliver Meaningful Learning Events With Less Stress?

Do you want a reputation for building highly desired, sought-after programs? Would you like to develop your skills for creating programs that actually help employees perform better? Do you want business partners to say that your learning events are practical, mission-critical, and value-added? And would you like to achieve those things while managing a work/life balance and enjoying the work you do?

Start by identifying your role in training. Choose the option that most closely describes how you participate in the training function in your organization:

- I am an instructional designer and live these frustrations on a daily basis.
- I am a human resources (HR) professional caught between misguided requests from the business and our internal and external training partners working to fulfill them.
- I am a member of the management team and, yes, I do make requests to “cover it all in less time”—we just don’t have the luxury of long learning events and we need employees to be service ready out of the gate.
- I am a professional, sometimes known as a subject matter expert (SME), who has been tasked with training others, but I have no background in adult learning—I sometimes feel I am in over my head.
- I am a trainer and see participants struggle to process the volume of information being thrown at them in learning events as I struggle to cover it all.

Next, with your answer in mind, consider which navigational approach to this book will serve you best.

### ***Option 1: Start at the Beginning***

Reading and working through the chapters in sequential order (yes, there will be exercises for you to complete) may be best if:

- You are an instructional designer.
- You are an HR professional.

The consultative skills of the early chapters will help you gain—or regain—control of your work or the projects you oversee. And the newfound influence on projects’ direction and respect from your business partners you will gain by applying the techniques there will enhance your effectiveness in implementing later chapters’ design choice ideas. The result? The innovative design recommendations you propose will meet with less resistance; be more

fun to integrate and develop; and generate better outcomes for you, your partners, and the learners in your courses.

### ***Option 2: Jump Around***

With the second option, let the roadmap in the box (Figure I-1) guide how you navigate the chapters, worksheets, and resources if:

- You are in need of a quick fix for a specific project challenge, regardless of your role.
- You are a trainer, and your content-heavy deliveries are in need of an infusion of interactivity.
- You are a manager, SME, or HR professional who is on the margins of a design project and are looking for examples and inspiration to help inform how you contribute to the project in a meaningful way.
- You need a grounding in, or a touchstone moment with, the foundations of adult learning and the science of the instructional design process—regardless of your role—before getting into specific strategies.

The structure of the book assumes the majority of readers are instructional designers. The tone speaks directly to them. If you are one, great. If you are not, hold on before you move on—read the book as a conversation—as if sitting in a consultation between the instructional designer and me. You will find strategies and guidance for your projects, and you will be able to glean from the discussion ways that you can contribute to the learning process more effectively.

You will also want to complete the assessment and start your action planning using the tools in Chapter 10.

## **You Can Do It—This Book Can Help**

No matter your role or level of expertise in helping people learn and perform better in their jobs, you are in the role for a reason. It may be your educational credentials, skills you demonstrate in a different function, a natural talent recognized by another, or something else. And, up until now, you have

## FIGURE I-1. ROADMAP TO FINDING WHAT YOU NEED

- **Table of Contents:** Gain insight on what each chapter can do for you, and the questions that frame each chapter may direct you to an in-the-moment challenge you need to resolve.
- **Chapters 1-3:** Get ahead of challenging training requests with these chapters that focus on managing expectations by developing your consultative skills for project management and project design.
- **Chapter 4:** Learn a simple—but not simplistic—process for isolating the essential content from all the potentially valuable content that could be considered for inclusion in a course.
- **Chapters 5-7:** Leverage your design choices: specifically, how to extend where a learning event begins and ends, position learners for success before they arrive, design for successes during the event, and sustain the momentum of those successes after the event. These chapters will help you to achieve the goal of all workplace learning—behavior change—and turn your time-squeezed learning events into highly desired, results-driven learning experiences.
- **Chapter 8:** Part One will serve as a touchstone for experienced learning and development (L&D) professionals and will provide a succinct grounding in instructional design theory and process for managers, SMEs, or trainers with limited instructional design experience. Part Two is dedicated to looking at this topic through the non-instructional designer lens. For example, how can you, as a manager who is collaborating with a designer, best support him and remove roadblocks that impede getting to the desired outcome? As a trainer, what are you to do when you're told training time will be cut, but there is no instructional designer involved to tighten the course length and decide what to keep and leave out? Begin here if you have limited instructional design experience.
- **Chapter 9:** Receive a reminder that better training in half the time is within your reach—in fact, it is within your control!
- **Chapter 10:** Get the tools. This chapter is a repository of worksheets, assessments, and job aids that will help you create better training in half the time.

likely been working hard to meet expectations. Now you can start working smarter and *exceed expectations*. And you can even have more fun.

The time crunch has always been an instructional design problem to be solved, but it is also a fantastic opportunity to innovate, explore creative alternatives, and find new ways to achieve improved results. There is no one right way to achieve better training in half the time, but one thing is for sure: Bad training hurts everyone. Use the strategies, ideas, and resources of this book to cultivate a seat at the decision-making table of your organization, develop new partnerships and better relationships with your learning sponsors, and deliver effective training that is enjoyed by learners. *Same Training, Half the Time* will up your game whether you face a time crunch or not.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Kimberly Devlin** is both president of Poetic License, Inc., a business communication consulting firm, and managing director of EdTrek, Inc., a training and development consulting firm. She specializes in helping client organizations realize business objectives through strategic planning, organization-wide training implementations, service standard creation, train-the-trainer certifications, and other initiatives.

With a MA in journalism and BA in English literature from the University of Miami and her Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) credential, Kimberly leverages her communication skills and training and development qualifications to create highly effective, sought-out learning events. Among her most professionally rewarding projects are developing the skills of other industry professionals through online and face-to-face facilitations as well as authoring. Her other titles include *Facilitation Skills Training* (ATD 2017) and *Customer Service Training* (ATD 2015), both in the bestselling ATD Workshop Series.

As a writer, instructional designer, facilitator, speaker, and consultant with more than 20 years' industry experience, she has provided technical assistance nationally and internationally, has presented at international and industry-specific conferences, and has been featured in ATD's *TD* magazine for her status as a CPLP pilot pioneer.

Kimberly lives in south Florida and receives regular reminders from her dog that there is more to life than professional accomplishments alone.

## ABOUT TPH

We believe that learning and training are key drivers in achieving the results you want in your life and in your business. We also believe that you shouldn't have to do that all on your own. To that end, we specialize in bringing you compelling ideas from innovative authors who have the expertise to coach you to success. We publish world-class business and talent development content from established experts in the field who share not only their experience and best practices but also the practical tools and resources you—and your organization—need to achieve excellence.

You want to be your best. We want to help.

Visit our website: [www.trainerspublishinghouse.com](http://www.trainerspublishinghouse.com).

The logo consists of the letters 'TPH' in a classic, black serif typeface. The 'T' is the largest and features a decorative horizontal bar with a slight curve. The 'P' and 'H' are smaller and positioned to the right of the 'T'.