

California Contract Education TAP Boot Camp

Slide 1: Unit 7 – Teaming with the Right Instructors

Unit Seven: Teaming with the Right Instructors.

Slide 2: This set of slides covers:

In this slide set we'll be talking about how to create great teacher relationships for the long run. You really want to do this. It's so much work to recruit instructors, to onboard the instructors, and to get a great relationship going. So the more you focus on long term relationships, the less of the rework and the recruitment that you have to do. In order to talk about that, we'll be talking about what's in a good instructor handbook and how to conduct an instructor interview that's fruitful for both of you. And we'll also be talking about one of the sticky wickets in contract education, which is how to prevent instructors from walking away with business that's rightfully yours. We'll talk a little bit about working with contracts and instructors, how to pay everybody, and a little bit more.

Slide 3: The Adult Learner

So first of all, let's talk a little something about the adult learner and contract education. It is very important when you're hiring instructors that they understand if they come from teaching at a college, they understand that the workplace student is different. They're not there probably as part of a degree program. They may or may not even have to attend the class. So really, they're not there developing as a young person so much as they are there to solve some sort of a business problem in the workplace, or to learn a little piece of technical knowledge that's relevant and appropriate for doing a better job right away. So they're what we'd call a problem-based learner.

They learn best through experience, which means that these people are used to being engaged in the workplace all day. And so it's very important that this class not be a dry lecture of some kind, but that it be an engaging class with exercises and hands-on things so that they can actually both stay, paying attention in class, but also have the skills and the understanding to take it back into their everyday work the very next day, and use it.

The adult learner also wants a lot of control over the learning experience. Now when we were in college, we didn't get that so much. Whatever the professor said we'd do, that's what we did. But that's not true in the workplace. They may want to take a quiz, they may not want to take a quiz. They may want to participate in an exercise, they may not want to participate in an exercise. So we're going over these things so that you understand that the instructor that we're looking for may come from a college teaching background. And if they do, they should be apprised of the differences of the student population here.

Slide 4: Teachers

The three requirements for teaching, really. One, is that the instructors love the subject. Two, is that they have a desire to share it. They're not hoarding that knowledge of the subject, or they're not saying, "I know these things, and you don't." It sounds a little silly to say that, but it's actually fairly common. There's a kind of pride in knowing some technical information. And then the third thing is they need to have a basic competence in the subject.

Now it might seem funny to say they should have a basic question competence in the subject. But what we find on evaluations is instructors are much more likely to be criticized for not being good presenters than they are being criticized for not having a very high level of competency in this subject.

So a good instructor, we also want to be kind of a team player. They're representing the college and of course, in their work year, they may... may be representing many institutions, or doing even private consulting. So we need to tell them what it is we expect them to do. And what we want them to do is take control of that learning experience from before the time the class starts, until everything associated with that class is finished. So we do want them to arrive early. And we're not going to pay extra for that. We do want them to stay during their lunch hour and after class is over to talk with clients. And these are not additional things that they can bill us for. This is part of what we expect in their performance as a contract education instructor.

Slide 5: Important Skills for a CE Instructor

So what are their important skills? When we're looking to hire somebody, we're looking for somebody who listens well, and somebody who's able to help a classroom full of learners where some of those learners are introductory level learners, some are in the middle, and some are just over the top. We can maybe even say we're not really sure why they're there, but maybe the class is required.

We also want to be sure that we get people who can teach to all modalities. So different people learn. Some people learn by listening. Some people learn by doing. Some people learn by talking about it or having exercises. So we want an instructor with... that's facile, actually, in adult education techniques.

We also want somebody who has a little bit of a sense of humor, because in a large contract education class people will enjoy that. And often the material in our contract education classes is little on the technical side, a little on the dry side. So a sense of humor is helpful. People are coming from the stress of a work day. And they'll appreciate just a little bit of appropriate humor with the instructor, some... some rapport that the instructor's a person, not just a talking textbook.

We expect them to have classroom management skills. Because as shocking as it is to have to remind people of this, adults, not unlike high school students, college students, or even children, do sometimes act out. And so you want an instructor who can handle that.

And then, I think one of the key skills that we're looking for in contract education is the ability to tolerate chaos. When you come in to teach a contract education class, you're actually working for the client. So the moment you walk in the door, the client is the boss of the training. So you're always having to balance what it is the client needs. Maybe this means that a staff meeting needs to run over 15 minutes, so you're going to start 15 minutes late, that's all fine. But those little bits of chaos--catering coming at the wrong time, or it's not the things that you ordered, or people showing up in the class that you weren't aware we're going to be there--those things should be acceptable to a contract training instructor. And what we don't want them to do is walk into the classroom, and blame your institution or your unit for what's going on. Even if it's your fault, we would like them to keep a stiff upper lip, continue through the classroom, make the best showing possible and then deal with our quality issues when they get back to us.

Slide 6: Instructors Offer Support

Instructors offer support in a contract education classroom by involving adult learners in the assessment of their own learning needs. So any kind of little quiz, any kind of conversation, any way that they can frame the learning experience to say, "If this is brand new for you, maybe you do this, if you have a medium or advanced level skill, maybe you approach it this way," that'll be very helpful.

You also want them to give the students in the classroom ways of evaluating whether or not they're understanding the material and ways of understanding in the class whether or not they need the instructor to go back and remediate, which is to go through the things again and again until they do get it. Because what we want to happen is that everybody in the class understands the material by the time they walk out the door.

All of this is a process that requires mutual respect and some degree of trust. So when an instructor... when a student comes into a contract educational classroom, they may or may not feel confident in the classroom. They're actually bringing a lifetime of classroom experiences and not necessarily positive experiences in the classroom. So we don't want them to feel at risk in the training. We want the instructor to support their learning and to support a sense of being respected. And this requires a little bit of trust.

Slide 7: Instructors Offer Support - 2

It's also the instructor's responsibility to, as much as they can given the resources and the space that they have, to establish an environment that's physically and psychologically conducive to learning. Physically means in every classroom that you walk into--and it's often the case in contract education that you're walking into a place where you've never taught before--it's often the case that we need to rearrange the tables and the chairs and that sort of thing. Or close the drapes if there's distractions outside or deal with the heating and cooling and that kind of thing.

Now, the second piece of this is the psychologically conducive to learning piece. We want to be sure that people feel safe in the classroom. And especially in today's diverse workforce, we need our instructors to be apprised of what that means, what the common issues are, and how we can support students in every possible way.

Generally speaking, people like to learn in collaborative learning models. That is, it's more interesting to work with your colleagues than it is to sit and just listen to a lecture on your own. So again, I mentioned just a minute ago different teaching modalities, we want to be sure our instructors know how to do that.

Slide 8: The ABCs of Learning Objectives

If I could change anything about contract education teaching, one of the things that I would change is that each instructor would understand the importance of constructing a class based on learning objectives. What I mean by that is that the learning goals would be outcomes that were set in a conversation between the client and the instructor. So many times technical instructors are not confident about how to actually build a class. They have wonderful expertise in their area, but they haven't been trained. And that's no fault of theirs. It's actually a fault of ours, how to build a good class. And so they just sit down and they focus on the content, not the learning experience. So the way around that is to teach them how to write learning objectives. The learning objectives. I use a simple approach called ABC. So by the time we reach this point in the class, the student will be able to-- that's the student, the audience--will be able to do what-- that's the behavior--under what conditions. And conditions really mean, to what degree of proficiency, with what level of error, that kind of thing. So let's say for a one day class, maybe you would have six, seven, eight learning objectives, something like that.

Slide 9: Independent Contractor

Now, generally, in contract education we are not using faculty. Some schools do and for some areas of teaching, that's all we can use. Or maybe the school says you can only use faculty. But what we'd like to do is hire an independent contractor. And the reason that we'd like to do that is then we're not then saddled with the benefits for the contractor. Now, I know that in a large system the rules around this are all over the map. But really what we're doing is if we could hire independent contractors, that's what we'd like to do.

Slide 10: Where do You Find Your Instructors?

So people always ask, "Where do we find new instructors?" I would say, I would find them from professional organizations that train facilitators and instructors. I would say, referrals from your best instructors. Your best instructors know other people who are good teachers. Not just teachers, but good teachers. And I would ask other institutions, you know--if you're in a relationship, a professional relationship with people who work at, you know, several miles down the road, you're not really in competition with those people--How about sharing instructors?

I would ask your clients, "Who are instructors that you use in areas, not that, that we don't work with you, but you do training in house or, or with other organizations? Who do you use for trainers? Who's the cream of the crop?"

Now I'd also be looking at you...for programs that you do often, when you graduate people--let's say it's a certificate program and it takes a year to get through that program--I would watch the students in the program. Because sometimes those people are... you just can spot people who are great trainers, that are really good at helping people. They're very enthusiastic about the learning experience and about the knowledge of the content, of the knowledge itself. These people sometimes can be hired to help you out as trainers.

And then one of my all time favorite ideas for finding instructors was actually came from a client of mine, who said that what she did is she puts together a teaching skills night and she advertises it on local media and social media. And she tells people if you'd like to teach this for us, come to this teaching skills night and she has one of her best instructors then presenting a very short program, maybe half an hour on a very particular piece of teaching skills. And then she sets up interviews there and talks to prospective instructors. So they get something and she gets to see how is it that they behave and present themselves in public? And she said, it's been a real pleasure to do that, and that she's gotten a lot of good instructors out of that.

Slide 11: Clarify Things from the Start

Now, how do we maintain a good relationship? I think one of the first tools for this is getting clear about what expectations are. So your instructors may be faculty who are not used to the kind of relationship that you will have with them. Or maybe they teach for different places, or maybe they're brand new to teaching in general. And so getting clear on what your expectations are is super important. So I would say it's important to have an interview. And I would try to make that interview mutually beneficial. One of the tools that I would use in that interview is an instructor's handbook. I don't mean the big, complicated document that many institutions have, that's 100 pages that nobody ever actually reads the whole thing. I mean, a really slim handbook, maybe it's 10 pages, maybe it's five pages, maybe it's 15 at the very most. But it talks about who you are in contract education and who your institution is, and what kind of public presence you'd like the instructor to exhibit on your behalf.

It'll talk about really ordinary and mundane things, too, like, how do people get paid? And what about handouts? One of the things that it absolutely must talk about is whether the instructor is free to solicit personal business. And what they do with follow-on leads. It's very, very common teaching contract education, to have somebody walk up at the end of the class and say, "That was really fantastic. We would love to hire you to do this, again, for a different team or in another department". And the instructor needs to know--and they need to know because it's in your handbook and because you covered it in an interview--what they should do in that moment. Can they say, "Sure, I'll take that?" Or do they need to say, "Oh, that would be so great. Why don't you call this person? Here's her business card."

Slide 12: Clarify Things from the Start -2

All of those things that I just talked about then should be used with the handbook in front of you, in a one-on-one face-to-face interview. And in particular the piece about follow on business, I would be sure that both you and the instructor initial that with the date there so that you're positive that you went through it. And then I would actually make a photocopy of that and keep it on file. In the very rare event that an instructor walks away with your business, you now have a signed document that says you covered it with them. So if they say, "Well, I don't think we ever covered that," you can pull that out and say, "You know, actually, we did."

Slide 13: Clarify Things from the Start - 3

How do you pay instructors? And well, again, I said earlier, if you can use independent contractors that's really great. Then you're not paying benefits and other things and you have complete control over how you pay them. You want to try to keep your production costs down. This is the thing, you don't want to give more than 50% of your gross income on any class for instructor costs. So you need to tally this and make an agreement with the instructor before the class happens, before the contract is written. There's basically three ways that we pay instructors. One is an hourly rate; so you get \$30 an hour. One is a percentage of the income for the class; you get 50% of the income. And then there are flat fees. I really like the flat fee model. You will do everything required to prepare and present and follow up on this class and we'll pay you \$2,000. That's flat fee.

Then the next way to keep instructors and to keep them happy, is to maintain a long term relationship. This means that you're talking to that instructor on a regular basis, that you're giving them feedback, whether that's from the students or the client, or from yourself and your team. Sometimes you do things--give them a little

perk. Like sometimes you have a contract, it's for an hour, it's not really worth running it through the department. And so you say to the instructor, why don't you run out and you can do that yourself? Or maybe you run the contract through your department, but you handle everything and you don't take a cut of that because it's so small. And if that's a meaningful piece of income for the instructor, think about it a little bit. What other perks can you offer? A better parking space? The use of the gym? What is it that you can do in your institution to help create a fun and productive long term relationship with instructors?

Slide 14: 10 qualities of a good 'partner instructor'

So there's 10 things that I look for in a good partner instructor. One, is they should have good teaching skills. And I mentioned that before, as well as their content expertise. Second thing, if they're going to be working for you for a long time, they should have an eye for opportunity. So you want an instructor who comes back and says to you, "You know, we got this side discussion happening in the class, and people got really excited about this topic or that topic." That's what I mean by an eye for opportunity. I said before, and it bears repeating. You want an instructor who can tolerate stress and chaos and ambiguity in the classroom. You want an instructor who has an appetite for hard work. The last thing you want is somebody, you start having success, let's say in a certificate program, and they start complaining about how much work there is. You want somebody who has discipline; who can maintain a schedule, keep things on budget and on track.

Slide 15: 10 qualities of a good 'partner instructor' - 2

And you want a healthy balance between being independent, and being a team player. So your instructor will work with other instructors, they'll work with your clients, and they'll work with you and your staff. So you definitely want somebody who's also a team player. Of course, you want somebody who has self-awareness in the classroom. So if they're creating a problem in the classroom, they actually can sense that that's happening and self-adjust. And I think some of my best instructors in my career in contract education, were people who had a need to continuously improve their ability to achieve in the classroom, who are continuously studying and updating their skills in the content area that they taught.

You also want people with good judgment. So sometimes your instructor's out at the client, and they need to make an on the fly decision, and you want them to make the right decision. So general sense of good judgment is very helpful. And also somebody who understands that you're in this to make a certain level of profit.

So you want an instructor that not only doesn't resist that, but who helps you think of ways that that could be done.

Slide 16: Loyalty and Non-competition

In terms of loyalty and non-competition. Now, I said that you should have an interview, and I said that you should have a little instructor handbook, and I said that you should talk to them about non-competition. So that's what I meant by being clear from the beginning. But you also need to know what's reasonable. Many schools will say, "We're going to do this big project. And we would like you... we're going to develop this curriculum. And we would like you to not use this curriculum for a certain amount of time outside or if you leave our institution we'd like you not to compete with us." Now a non-compete clause... clause is actually a little difficult. You can do it and the most I've ever seen it stick for is a year. So talk to your school administration if you're going to do a non-compete clause, and be sure you understand what it is that you can say.

One of the most important things about not having the instructor compete with you, or about discouraging that, is being sure that you've told the instructor what it is that you do for them. It's really totally worth having a staff meeting and sitting down, or sitting down with yourself and a cup of coffee, and saying what is it we do for these people? We produce their handouts. We get the leads for business. We be sure that they're paid on time. Make that list as long as you can. Sometimes instructors either don't know those things, or they don't think about them. And so when they're thinking about or tempted by walking away with your business, they're forgetting what it is that they'd be giving up.

Be sure to give them your business cards. Be sure that your instructors always have those, even if you need to put them in the roster packet in the classroom. So that if somebody says, "I'd like to do a job with you in the future," they say, "Great, let me give you the right business card of a person to call." And then as I mentioned before, yes, you should have some sort of a non-compete clause in the contract and in the instructor handbook.

Slide 17: You as the Middle Man

Some of the things that you do offer is that you market and they teach. Now, as an instructor in the beginning of my career, I really didn't care to market myself. I loved the content, and I loved the teaching. And some of your instructors will be like that, too. So remind them that you'll be doing all the marketing. And furthermore, they'll be riding on the institution's credibility, and that often spans

decades in the community. And so it's not the same as being an instructor who's just coming on off the street and hoping or feeling like you'll have to take some years to establish yourself in the community as a teacher. They get to ride on your coattails. Also, you can say, "You know, we have lots of work here. If this class works out, we can probably give you another class and another class." So remind them that it's about growing this long term relationship, and this increasingly fruitful opportunities as an instructor with you.

Slide 18: Model Contract Training Evaluation

It's pretty important that we do evaluations. They don't absolutely have to be done for every class. Sometimes we have a class that needs... you know, we run a new section of it every week or every month. And we kind of know how it's going after a year or two if we're using the same instructor. So maybe not then. But the contract education evaluation that you can give your instructors tells the instructor how they're doing. And it gives them a tool with which you and they can gradually improve their performance. I think it's one of the benefits that we offer.

Slide 19: Finding curriculum resources

So another question that people have is where do we find the resources for...for curriculum? And this is a bit of a complicated question. But here are four ideas that maybe will help you continue the discussion with your own staff. One, is that you can buy that curriculum from the web. Make sure that you can get a refund if when you get this stuff, it's not exactly what you wanted.

I would also ask your best instructors. I would ask your clients, training department staff. I would ask subject matter experts. Often people who train in these areas are interested in curriculum, they research it, or they know people who create it or they've been... kind of have some sort of backburner project that they've got an idea that they would like to use to develop curriculum. So be sure you're in a conversation with your best instructors.

Now you can hire instructional designers. You want to be careful if you do this, it's quite expensive. Our rule of thumb is that we only pay for development if we can roll the development costs into a single offering of the class, if it's only going to be offered once; or that we could spread it out over a three year shelf life. That would be making more sense than if we're going to pay for the development.

I think it's important to keep the materials up-to-date. And one of the ways you can do that is have an every other year review. So I would be sure to get that scheduled. Things that aren't scheduled don't happen.

Slide 20: Summary

So, in summary, the main key to finding and retaining the best instructors is to aim for long term, mutually beneficial, friendly relationships. This has something to do with how we communicate. Are we clear from the beginning? Do we continuously clarify? And are we open to honest conversations about how to make things better? I would always tap your best instructors for new instructors, for their opinions about what to do differently, for their thoughts about how to change processes and so forth. And then be sure that you schedule regular reviews of your curriculum to make sure that it's up-to-date because an out-of-date curriculum eventually becomes a reason for clients to look for someone else to do their teaching.