

*Entelechy's Newsletter for Trainers, Managers, HR Professionals and Others
Responsible for the Performance of Others*

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DEVELOPING TRAINING BASED ON CONTENT TYPES – FACTS

This is the last of six installments that focus on developing effective training based on content types. The model, developed by Dr. M. David Merrill at the University of Utah, is especially effective for blended learning since it helps distinguish content that may be more effective for self-paced training (i.e., WBT, CBT, MBT) and instructor-led or mentored training.

In this instructional design model, there are five primary content types: Facts, concepts, processes, procedures, and principles. Each of these content types can be taught at two levels: at the Remember level and at the Apply Level (except for Facts which only can be taught at the Remember Level). For example, you can DESCRIBE the process for escalating a call with a belligerent customer (Remember Level) or you can DEMONSTRATE your knowledge of the call escalation process using a role-play scenario (Apply Level).

We'll focus on facts in this installment.

Definition of Facts

Facts are, ... well, facts. They're the building blocks of other content types. However, facts by themselves aren't very useful. That's why we try to teach facts when we teach processes, concepts, procedures, or principles and NOT by themselves.

Facts can be processed at the remember level only. (When you “apply” a fact, you are actually doing something else, such as performing a step in a procedure.)

Throughout high school and into college, much of our learning included memorization and recall of factual information. (What are the names of the colors in the color spectrum? What are the names of the five Great Lakes? How many electrons in a hydrogen atom?) Some of the facts you remember, most you don’t simply because you don’t use them often.

Examples of Facts

We often see facts displayed in statements, displays, lists, and charts. Open a user guide to a computer or appliance or tool and you are likely to encounter a graphic of the item with arrows pointing to different parts of the item. At the end of each arrow is the name of that component – a fact. Or you may see a list of specifications – more facts.

For the most part, these facts are important for a fleeting moment while you accomplish a specific task – setting up your computer, for example. While the facts must be clearly and accurately presented, memorizing facts is usually NOT necessary.

Facts SHOULD be memorized in only two cases:

- For speed. If speed is critical and dependent upon the recall of facts, facts should be memorized. For example, knowing the shortcut keys in Microsoft Word may be important in jobs where word processing is a primary activity.
- For accuracy. If accuracy is critical and dependent upon the recall of facts, facts should be memorized. Knowing the qualification criteria of financial aid applicants may be critical to client services agents.

However, in each of the cases above, it is likely that the facts will be used in some type of work context and are best taught within that context.

How to Teach Facts

Avoid writing objectives and assessment questions that ask students to recall factual information. Instead, have them recall factual information as part of another application objective.

Objectives that begin with: state, recall, list, define, match, describe, and other similar objectives are possible fact-recall objectives. They're easy to write and even easier to test (and because we've experienced at least 12 years of factual recall testing, we're GOOD at writing these tests!).

Teach facts when you teach another content type – process, procedure, principle, or concept. If you must spend time teaching facts, organize the facts. Try:

Mnemonics – If you correctly answered the question, “What are the names of the colors in the color spectrum?” then chances are that you're either an artist OR you know the mnemonic: Roy G. Biv. Each letter in Roy's name stands for a color in the spectrum: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet. HOMES is a mnemonic for the five Great Lakes. Mnemonics aid recall.

Provide charts – Organize functions or features on charts or graphic displays. Bring the facts to life. Make them relevant and useful.

Provide lists and tables – Organize facts into easy-to-use lists or tables. For example, instead of teaching the acronyms that seem to tag along with every business, create an acronym glossary and show learners how to use the glossary.

How to Assess Learning

Because some facts ARE important and because testing facts is a teaching strategy (i.e., use a test to teach important facts in a fun way), consider using the following testing techniques to test/teach facts: multiple choice, short answer, matching. For facts that require definitions, consider using a crossword puzzle format (crossword puzzle makers are easily sourced on the Internet).

That's it!!! We've now covered all five content types; we have looked at how to best teach each content type and evaluate the learner's grasp of the material. Use this information to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of YOUR training, whether it is classroom-based, web-based, distance, or self-paced training.

If you missed any of the previous sections on content types or simply want the complete compilation, simply email me at

mailto:ttraut@unlockit.com?subject=Five_Content_Types and I'll send you a compilation for your personal use. Please include your name, company, and job title.

This information comes from *High Impact Training*, a module in Entelechy's *High Performance Training* program. Much of the general information is provided free of charge at <http://unlockit.com/improve.htm>. If you want more detailed information on this skill and others from our *High Performance Training* program, please visit our website at www.unlockit.com or contact me directly at <mailto:ttraut@unlockit.com>.

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APPLICATION VERBS FOR BETTER TRAINING

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Now that we've covered the five content types, I'd like to suggest that effective training should include as much application as possible. Sometimes we start our training design on the wrong foot – we focus on the remember-level content even in our objectives. To ensure that your training and assessments focus on the application level, you need to start with objectives that are written at the application level.

Here are application-level verbs that you can use within your objectives and assessments to keep your training focused on stuff that's meaningful to participants:

ADMINISTER: To manage or direct the execution, application, or conduct of a plan in a stable environment.

ANALYZE: To study the factors of a situation or problem in detail in order to determine the solution or outcome.

APPLY: To put to use, especially for some practical purpose.

ASSEMBLE: To fit together the parts.

COMPUTE: To determine by mathematics; to ascertain an amount or number by calculation.

CLASSIFY: To arrange into classes according to common attributes.

COMPILE: To compose out of materials from other documents; to put together from various sources.

CONFIGURE: To select and arrange the components of a computer system in accordance with established principles and procedures which are appropriate for standard situations.

CREATE: To cause to exist; to originate.

DEMONSTRATE: To display or model a behavior; to operate a product.

DETECT: To discover or discern the existence, presence, or fact of something.

- DIAGNOSE:** To identify a problem and solution by examination or analysis.
- DIAGRAM:** To represent or illustrate by using an outline, drawing, or plan intended to represent an object or area or to show the relationship among parts or places.
- DIFFERENTIATE:** To discriminate.
- DISTINGUISH:** To make or discern the differences among or between people, objects, ideas, or situations.
- DOCUMENT:** To provide with factual or substantial support for statements made or a hypothesis proposed.
- FIND:** To secure information through provided resources.
- GIVE FEEDBACK:** To return information to the source about that source for the purpose of adjustment and correction of behavior.
- IMPLEMENT:** To carry out; to perform acts essential to the execution of a plan or program; to put into effect.
- OPERATE:** To bring about the proper or intended effect by controlling the working of an object.
- PERFORM:** To carry out or execute some action; to carry out to the finish.
- PLAN:** To devise a method of course of action.
- PREPARE:** To set up according to an established procedure.
- PROCESS:** To handle in accordance with a prescribed procedure.
- PRODUCE:** To create or bring forth; to bring about in an original way; to give rise to something.
- QUOTE:** To find and state the cost.
- SHOW:** To demonstrate.
- SOLVE:** To find the answer to a problem by following established procedures.
- TRANSFER:** To carry, or cause to pass, from one person or place to another.
- VALIDATE:** To substantiate; to verify.
- WRITE:** To compose letters, reports, documents, contracts, etc.

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I TURN 45 – A BIRTHDAY JOKE

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Yesterday was my 45th birthday. I can't believe that I'm halfway through this journey called life. Don't worry, I'm not going to get morbid or philosophical on you. Nope. I'm going to share with you a joke (okay, it's an age-related joke, but I'll show you how it relates to my birthday at the end):

Two elderly pensioners are flying along in their Lincoln Continental down one of the boulevards in one of America's southern retirement cities.

The passenger, Millie, glances up just in time to see Ethel zoom right through a red light. Questioning what she saw, Millie thinks to herself, "Certainly Ethel didn't run that light. I must be seeing things; old age. I'll pay closer attention at the next light."

Sure enough, at the next red light, Ethel cruises right through the red light again not even slowing down. Millie thinks, "Maybe my eyesight's going. Maybe the light was really green and because I'm old, I saw red. I'll pay special attention at the next light."

Of course, Ethel bombs right through the next red light, eyes fixed straight ahead. Millie, now convinced that old age ISN'T the culprit here and realizing the mortal danger Ethel's put them in now three times, yells at Ethel, "Ethel, what in heck are you doing? You've run three red lights in a row! Are you trying to kill us?"

Ethel, her face turning ashen, looks over at Millie and screams, "Ohmigosh!!!! I thought YOU were driving!"

At 45, I'm beginning to realize that I'm Ethel and I'm driving. Hang on!

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MAILING AND PRIVACY INFORMATION

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