

My name is Robert Gagné, and I am an American educational psychologist with over 50 years of experience and contributions to my field (Richey, 2000; Gibbons, 2017). I am an Instructivist who identified five types of learning based on the Behavioral and Cognitivist assumptions (Smith & Ragan, 1996; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The assumptions include: knowledge is objective, absolute, and organized; the mind processes information like a computer building upon prior knowledge and creating mental structures; learning is the acquisition of knowledge and expertise and relates new knowledge to prior knowledge; and instruction should seek to transfer knowledge to learners in the most efficient, effective manner possible (Larson & Lockee, 2014).

I developed nine events of instruction, a set of internal and external conditions to foster learning (Gagné, 1977; Gagné 1984; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). In evaluating the Food Safety Transport Training, I focused on the design's support or enhancement of the internal learning processes with the external events of instruction (see Smith & Ragan, 1996). The designers clearly considered my nine events of instruction but not all events are necessary for all occasions (Smith & Ragan, 1996). The first event is gaining attention which prompts the internal condition of reception (Gagné, 1977, Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The design was highly effective in gaining attention with an initial

video which reminded the learner of the mission of the charity. The training gained and retained the learner interest at every step of the training by focusing on authentic scenarios to frame the training. By contrast, the second event of instruction, activating expectancy by informing the learners of the outcomes (Gagné, 1977; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014) could have been better emphasized. The video clip only showed a few seconds of a volunteer performing the tasks. The training contained a wordy slide which vaguely stated the course objective and purpose of the training. The learners would have been better served with a detailed video of the process or an easily digestible slide of the desired outcome and an outline of the training.

The third event, retrieval by stimulating recall of prior knowledge (Gagné, 1977) was largely overlooked. However, the nature of the training was such that the design did not rely on significant prior knowledge, and the assumption was that all volunteers were beginners. However, I do have some suggestions for the fourth event, the internal condition of selective perception through presenting the stimulus (Gagné, 1977). The design could have assisted the learner in the “stage-like progression from sensory registration to long-term storage and learner performance” (Gagné, 1984) by organizing the information presented in a more straightforward, chunked fashion by emphasizing the basic points before

presenting the scenarios. For example, the first scenario involves the volunteer being told that they need a container. However, through later steps in the training, the learner is informed that they actually need a container, a thermometer, ice packs, and possibly a clean sheet. Presenting this list initially would have prompted the learner to take note of the needed items for future use and to watch for the reasons for the items as the training progressed.

For semantic encoding, the fifth event is to provide guidance (Gagné, 1977; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The skills should be demonstrated or the knowledge applied. The training seemed to do more of this than actually presenting the stimulus. The training would have been stronger with a few basic additions and organizational changes involving presenting the stimulus, and the training as it was designed could be used very effectively for this fifth event. Viewed in this light, the fifth event would be exceptionally strong. Another strength was the sixth event, responding or retrieval, through eliciting performance (Gagné, 1977; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The learner was actively engaged in making constant choices through authentic scenarios.

The seventh event is establishing reinforcement by providing feedback (Gagné, 1977; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The constraints of this asynchronous, self-paced online learning module allowed for feedback only in the

form of indicating correct or incorrect responses. When indicating a response was correct, the design was highly effective by stating that it was correct and then reminding the learner why the answer was correct. However, the incorrect answers could have been met with more positive reinforcement and encouragement to enhance the effectiveness.

I had some questions about activating retrieval, or assessing the performance of learners, the eighth event (Gagné 1977; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The new knowledge was tested by a series of questions. It is possible that the volunteer agency reviews the results to vet the volunteers. If not, given the high stakes of the food transport process, the assessment procedures could be refined to require more questions, a certain score for continuing, or an additional proctored assessment by the charity itself.

The training is a stellar example of the ninth event of instruction, fostering generalizations or enhancing retention and transfer of new skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Gagné, 1977; Driscoll, 2018; Larson & Lockee, 2014). The training provided job aids which were easy to reference throughout the training and were printable. In addition, the training provided job aids in the field through use of a smartphone.

Overall, the training was engaging and designed to keep the learner's attention rather than to prompt encoding of the information for retrieval. With my suggested changes, the Food Safety Transport Training could be a textbook example of Instructivist design.

References

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