

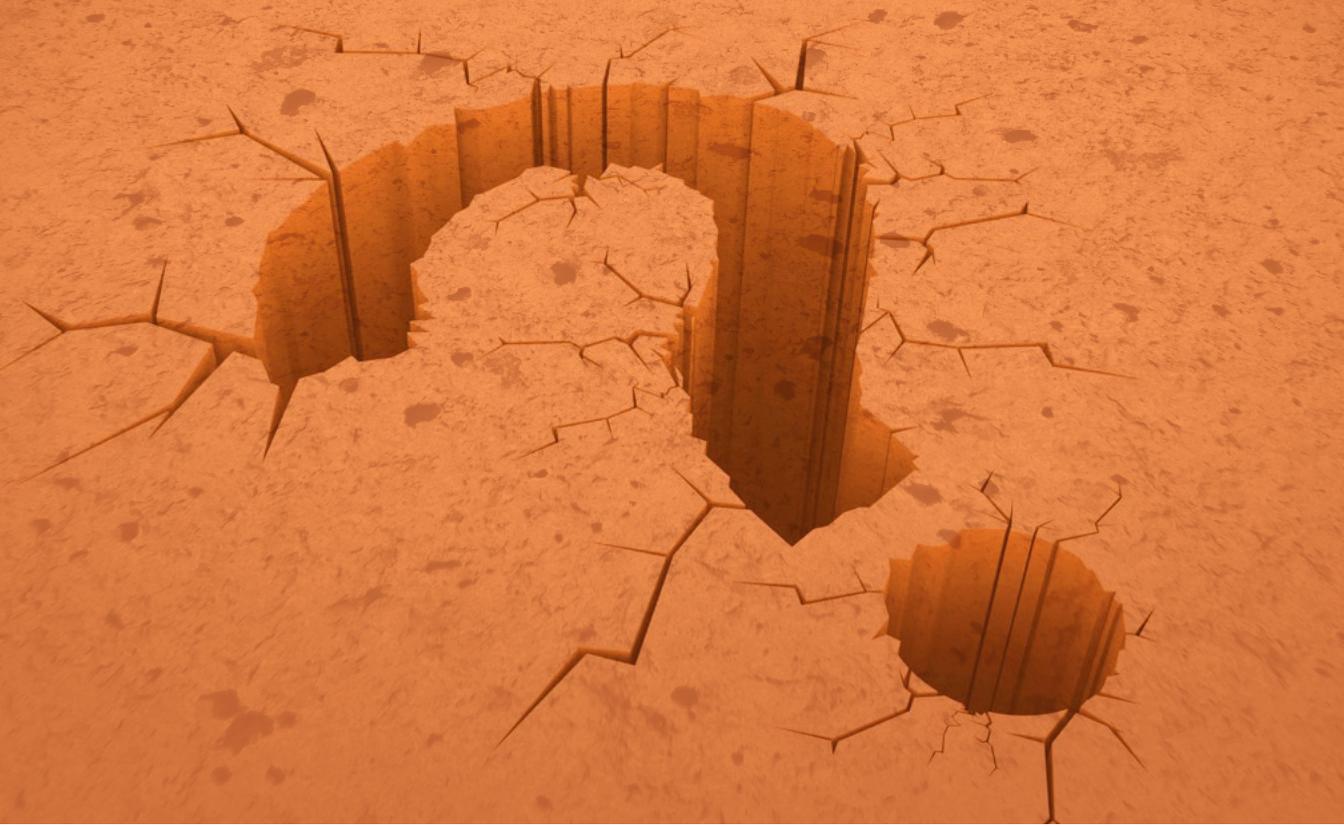
Are You a Groundbreaker in the Educational Evolution?

By Wendy M. Roach, RDMS, CHAM

As leaders, we are inundated with requests to change, modify or create new processes. We must be groundbreakers in the educational evolution, providing materials that associates will easily recall and execute, while delivering exceptional quality service. Unfortunately, we don't go to college to be Patient Access registrars. Therefore, it is the leaders' responsibility to mold the minds of associates, thus creating educated associate members. Talk about overwhelming pressure! It's no wonder that training and education keeps some of us up at night.

The very foundation of Patient Access is education. I'm sure we have all had those training moments, when associates sit there and stare or text during a session. You know they aren't hearing anything that you are telling them and later will most likely say to you, "I never knew about that." Even in these frustrating moments, we don't want to provide associates subpar information or provide information in a way that they will not remember it. So, we have to find inventive ways to clearly and consistently get the message across so that everyone has the same experience. Here are some avenues I have used for training and education that have been very successful for my team:

- **Standard Work:** On paper, outline a process that is broken down to its most elementary level. If someone picked up the paper and followed the step-by-step instructions, he or she would be successful in completing the task.
- **Skills Blitz:** This is something taken from the clinical arena and is essentially like a job fair, in which associates rotate through stations. It includes demonstrations, posters and lectures. Having a relaxed environment for learning allows associates to learn without even realizing that's what they are doing. In addition, this allows for associates to find out what their peers know, thus giving them another resource. Have each member of your leadership team come up with a topic and create a display board for that topic. Make it eye-popping, interactive and colorful. Then, when it comes time for the event, the person that designed the board is there to talk about it and field questions.
- **KWL:** This is a one-page document that is used by the teaching industry as an educational model. Divide your paper in to three columns. In the first column, you will label it as "**K**nowledge" and write bullet points on a known topic. The second column will contain "**W**hat" more we want/need to learn about the topic. Make sure that you identify where you are going and/or a high level of what you are accomplishing. The third column will be for your "**L**earned" information.
- **Action Plan:** Create a story board your problem on one sheet of paper. Include what the reason for action is, what research you have done and any risks/issues that you may have or might encounter. Also, include a timeline that identifies what has been done in the last week and what is going to happen in the next seven to 14 days.
- **Newsletters:** Have a monthly newsletter packed full of fun, informative content. Include a bulleted section with all the updates, things you reviewed or information that you have emailed out during the previous month. Get some associates or leadership team members onboard to each write one article.
- **Advertisement:** "Sell" your education by developing a marketing campaign or advertisement.
- **Boot Camp:** This is a comprehensive review of processes, generally about five



to eight hours long. Start by sending out an email blast to all associates to get some ideas for topics that they would like to learn more about. Associates will often give leaders topics for conversation if they understand the “why” behind what is being done. If you are still looking to enhance your training program, try gathering information from industry websites.

Extensive research has been done to determine the benefits and disadvantages of pre- and post-testing. Generally, testing is a great way to determine if your training is on the right track or if you need to change your training content or methods. You might want to consider using the same format (multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.) when completing pre- and post-testing. While pre-testing will assist in determining what materials need to be discussed/reviewed, it is post-testing that I find more valuable. When completing post-testing, make sure that you allow a little time in between the

training and the test. You don’t want the post-test to be just a dumping ground of everything that you reviewed. You want to know that the students actually learned the things that you taught them. I would recommend waiting one to two weeks. If associates are not going to recall or remember information, it will generally be gone within two to three days.

Leveraging Creative Communication Techniques

We live in a technologically savvy society where patients are demanding more; there are kiosks for airport check-in, self-service check-outs at the grocery store, smartphones...the list goes on. With all of the different avenues for convenience and technology, we are being pushed to take a look at the evolution of communication and education with associates. We must be more creative, more interactive, more inspiring to keep the associates’ attention and have them focus on what we are trying to communicate. One advantage

to using more technology in your training and education is being able to capture more associates who may be decentralized or have variability in hours. It’s time for leaders to step out of the past and boldly step into being a technology leader.

- Host a podcast.
- Use social bookmarking websites that allow you to store sites in a themed stack for easy sharing with associates. Remember, it’s no longer just Facebook!
- Share your presentations with online slide share training materials.
- Hold webinars and on-demand trainings.
- Create a video.
- Use social networking sites.
- Send out a recorded message.
- Add a page—or collection of webpages—that enable anyone who accesses them to contribute or modify content. This is a great option if you are looking for associate feedback. Make sure

that you check postings daily to ensure associates are on the right path and that content is appropriate. Using this option also gives you real-time rounding with your associates.

When putting your education and training program together, remember to honor differences in learning styles and cater to your associates. Our teams are composed of associates with different skills and backgrounds, so it is imperative that we approach training and education in a manner that reaches all areas of our audience. Take into account which method of education is most effective with the associates (paper, classroom, interactive, internet, etc.) A lot of the younger generation will desire more internet learning, while your seasoned members will like traditional classroom learning.

Doing “recaps” will help provide a break to the audience while clearly separating topics. In addition, it gets the associates that have “tuned out” to “tune back in.”

- Keep your format as plain as possible. Colors and pictures should only be used to emphasize a point and not to spice up your program.
- Share a story to make an impact.
- Reduce clutter on any materials or slides. This will help you to handle limitations of short-term memory and will not distract the associate.
- Make it short and snappy. When creating PowerPoints, remember to only place five to seven items on a slide. Associates will be reading the screen while you are speaking.

Most importantly, use your creativity and think outside of the box. If you maintain a “can-do” attitude and have a commitment to ongoing training, your associates will too. Make their learning interesting, engaging, exciting and effective.

Throughout my journey in life, I have often been asked, “What is one of my proudest moments?” Every time I get asked that question, I go back to when I was a high school senior and had the opportunity to teach a little girl how to write her name in a childhood development class. I still remember her name to this day and know that something so insignificant at the time has become one of my proudest moments. The gift of giving someone something that they will use every day of their life or something that has enhanced their skill set is indeed a valuable gift. Education and training may seem exhausting and overwhelming at times. However, once you see the dynamic change in your associates, it might become one of your proudest moments and you can step back and say, “I taught them that.” ●

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When completing your education and training program, you should have the following training format:

- Start with goals/objectives for specific actions that associates will be able to perform if they have mastered the content of the materials. By letting the associates know what is expected of them ahead of time, they are more likely to be engaged and to meet expectations.
- When you change a topic, make sure that you summarize what you have just talked about and how it relates to the next topic.
- Make it fun and use active learning exercises that get associates up and moving or verbally provide responses back to you.
- Take risks.
- Be an expert in what you’re teaching.
- Have confidence – it’s hard sometimes but make sure that you have confidence in what you do because people will pick up on when you don’t have it.
- Create a non-threatening environment for your education and training.



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