

10 Things you should know about IT Training

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In the bid to acquire skills and knowledge in today's information age, many are turning to IT Training. For many individuals and organizations, the need for training has never been greater. This hunger for IT training is driven by the rapid rate of change in all spheres of life that are now affected by information technology. Individuals and organizations are making efforts to keep pace with the "latest" technical advancements.

IT Training is required both by users and professionals. To remain relevant, you have to be equipped with knowledge and tools required by the digital age. And training is a route followed by many. From time to time, you will have to take important decisions regarding training. Training is often your opportunity to proactively move your IT career forward. How should you do your groundwork? An informed decision is the key to getting training right. You can start by taking a look at ten things you must know about IT Training.

1. IT Training focuses on both the theory and practice of IT –the acquisition of skills and knowledge. It is therefore an activity that seeks to fill skills and knowledge gaps. What is lacking? Are you at zero level? Then the training you need is one that will make you computer literate. If you are an IT professional your need might be for IT certification. Before embarking on training you must know what your training needs are. What gap needs to be filled? Is the training need for an organization or an individual? What is your desired career path and specialization? What do you need to know? Are you sure training will close the gap? Set your training objectives carefully. The purpose of your training should be well defined.

2. To acquire practical IT skills and knowledge, the best training approach is that which uses the "See it, Hear it, Do it." Concept, i.e. interactive and participative. You see it been done. You listen to concepts and ideas and then you do it yourself. "What you need to know how to do, you learn by doing." Training must combine the right blend of theory and practice.

3. The quality of training varies widely. It is critical that you choose your training provider based on substance. A training center is assessed with respect to quality of materials, competence of trainers, degree of instructor support, training skills of trainers, corporate IT focus, counseling facilities, track record, quality of facilities and other quality related issues. You should be able to gain from the real world experience of the trainers.

4. The focus of IT training should be on effective learning by students. Has the gap been filled? What can the learner do now that he or she couldn't do previously? The training outcome is key. Are the skills and knowledge acquired relevant and adequate? What is the value of training you have received? The outcome should be such that you must not only learn, but you must also be able to apply your learning for yourself.

5. Certification and awards of diplomas are important training outcomes most especially where there is a lot of emphasis on paper qualifications. But the primary focus of IT training should be the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge; the award of certificates or diplomas is secondary. Paper certification will not get you anywhere in IT. Training should give you a form of certification (diploma, certificate, etc), as well as practical skills and knowledge. Training is not only about immersing yourself in knowledge, it's also about creating opportunities for yourself.

6. If you want to build a career in IT and you have a degree or certification without practical skills, training is essential for you. You need to acquire these skills and knowledge to advance your IT career. Cramming for tests and reading text materials alone are not enough to establish your IT career.

7. Cost is a major issue in IT training. To many it is a deciding factor. But price should not be your sole determinant for choosing training or a training institution. Always do a proper cost benefit analysis before deciding if the cost will give you value. How do you value the investment? Tie this to your training needs. Think not only of your immediate costs but

also or present and future opportunities. It is reckless to choose an inferior training solution to save money. On the other hand high cost does not indicate high quality.

8. All the best instructors, world-class facilities cannot learn for you. You must be prepared to make the effort to learn. Learning involves more than routine attendance of lectures. Your primary role is to learn. With a good training setup, there is no mystery to learning. You simply have to be committed. Lack of commitment is a major problem. This often arises due to poor planning and or insufficient motivation. Each day after training, do you go over concepts you've been taught? Do you practice on your own? Or is your learning reserved for the classroom only? You paid your course fees in full two weeks before the course started, but where is your commitment if you are frequently absent or late for training sessions? Make sure you are dedicated to learning before you start.

It might seem funny or weird, but I've met students who just want to pay training fees and collect certificates. They're simply not ready to go through the "stress" of training classes or exercises! Talk about a misplacement of priorities! You either want to learn or you don't want to. Period! If you want to learn, get with the program and work on getting the most out of your training program. Let your career ambitions keep you motivated during times of self-doubt and stress.

You must be ready to the effort to learn and to apply what you have learnt. If you don't make the effort you are burning, not just throwing away, good time and money.

9. You need to consider some important factors when choosing the right learning solution. What is your skill and motivation level? Consider financial constraints and available study time. Each of these important pieces should be used in determining the right training model for you. Instructor-led IT training seems to achieve more for students than other training options, most particularly when there is a focus on in-depth hands-on exercises. Instructor-led training is regarded as the most effective means of acquiring IT skills and knowledge. You must however be prepared to learn at the pace of your training institution.

However, if you already have some practical skills and or you cannot make time to attend instructor-led training, a wide variety of learning options is available to you. These include self-study such as books, practice tests, computer based training and Web / Online learning. A blend of self-paced learning and classroom learning might be what you need.

10. Most IT Training focuses on the acquisition of IT skills and knowledge. However, if you want to build a career in IT, there are more issues at play than technical skills and knowledge alone. You also need soft skills (presentation, communications, marketing, project management, etc) to enhance your value. Your tech skills and training decisions are important, but if you can't market yourself, getting ahead will be an uphill task.

Furthermore, attitude is important in the real world. Attitude will determine your altitude. Issues like professionalism are important. Do you practice in an ethical manner? IT Training is a career advancement tool. You don't train just for the sake of training. As an IT professional you need to develop professional skills and know how training fits into your career plan.

I have looked at some issues you must consider as you embark on IT Training. In this ever-changing world fueled by Information and communications technologies, training is not optional. Taking informed decisions is the key. Learning to manage these decisions is a worthwhile and essential skill.

The time and effort commitment involved with training could be intimidating. But don't let that prevent you from achieving your goals. Investing in your education, investing in yourself is the best investment you can ever make.

Stay on track by making wise training decisions.

All the best in your IT Career!

... the best in your IT career.

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