

The Importance of Knowledge Transfer from Classroom to Workplace

Transference of knowledge from the classroom to the workplace yields greater productivity for the employee and a greater return on investment for the agency. Applying newly learned skills and behaviors to the workplace soon after classroom training greatly enhances knowledge retention. We believe that a blended approach to learning – i.e., classroom training followed by a longer term coaching program – is the best way to reinforce learning and skill development.

The Role of the Supervisor

Supervisors of employees that complete VTTC trainings should work closely with newly trained employees to ensure they apply course principles and processes to their work. Hours spent in a classroom learning a new skill can be lost without adequate follow-up at the worksite. An employee is not truly “trained” until he/she can proficiently apply the new skill to his/her work. Please note that OSHA considers confirmation of training / knowledge transfer to be an employer responsibility.

Supervisors can support employees by:

- serving as coaches; and
- encouraging continued learning through sharing with peers; and
- holding employees accountable for using course material on the job.

Below are some examples of how to effectively coach a newly trained employee to success:

- Serve as a role model for newly acquired skills and behaviors.
- Provide immediate and constructive feedback when he/she tries new skills/behaviors.
- Point out what the employee does well before providing constructive criticism.
- Use mistakes as learning opportunities and specifically describe how to perform the new skill/behavior.
- Supervisors should provide learners with ongoing guidance and feedback.

Ideally, supervisors and learners will involve other staff at the work site in the transfer of learning by discussing the training shortly after its conclusion. The discussion will create an opportunity for co-workers to ask questions about the training and discuss how it can address needs at the work site and be of value to everyone. These discussions provide the supervisor with an opportunity to voice support of the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

The Role of the Employee

Newly trained employees are encouraged to ask their supervisor to provide them with hands-on opportunities so they can put their newly acquired knowledge into practice. For example, a recent graduate of the FOS program could request time to job-shadow his/her supervisor and to be given work assignments that provide opportunities to test out newly acquired skills. Additionally, employees of the VTTC Safety and Health Branch will speak with employees during field visits to encourage application of training to work.

Employees are encouraged to contact the VTTC for contact information of employees who have taken the same class and who can serve as informal mentors and learning partners during and after classroom training.

Contact the VTTC

We hope employees and supervisors will contact the VTTC to provide feedback about which aspects of the training were most effective, and share with us any questions you may have about knowledge transfer. This allows us to tailor our trainings to best meet your needs and to have a conversation about how to transfer knowledge from the classroom to the worksite.