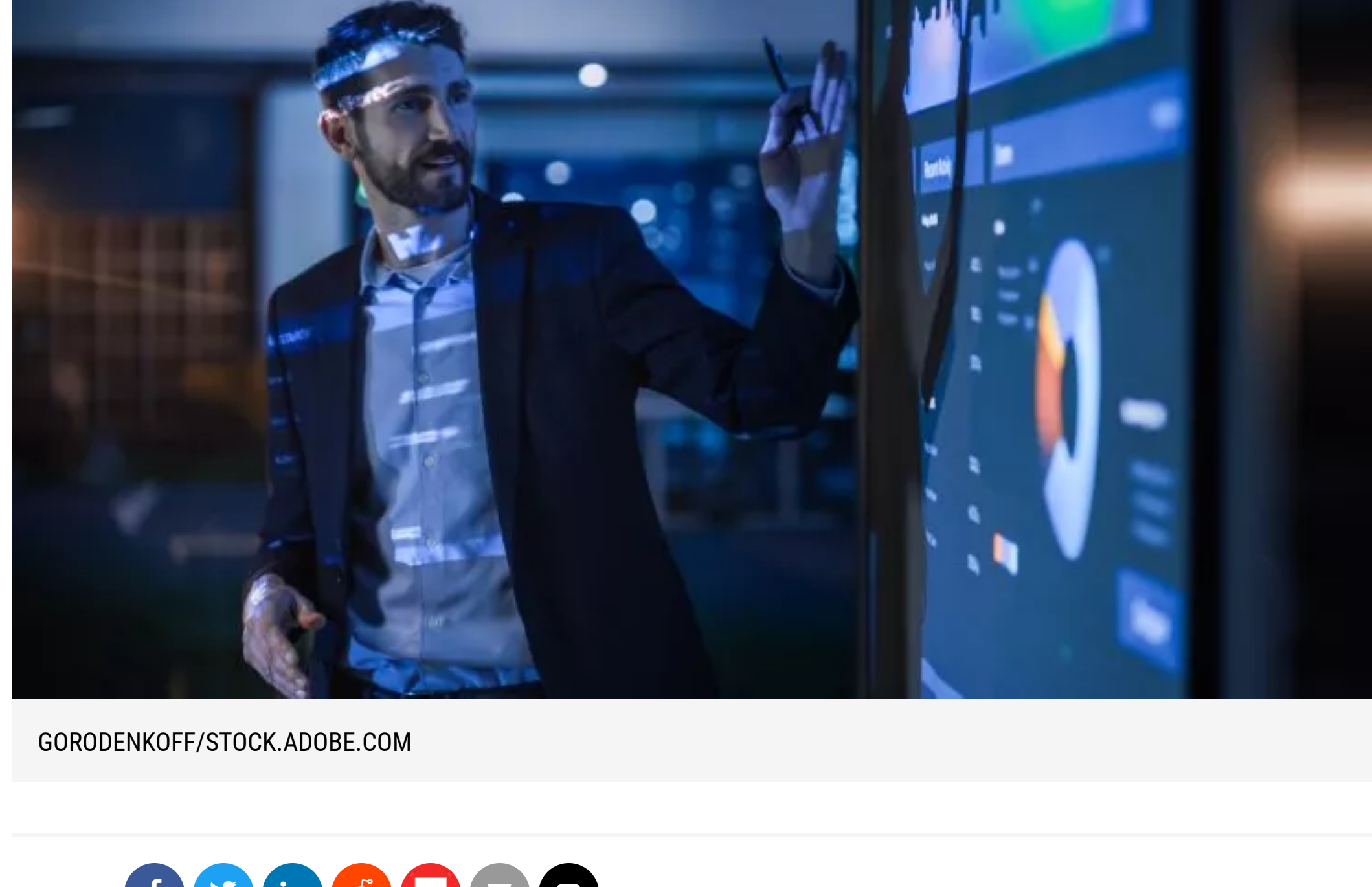
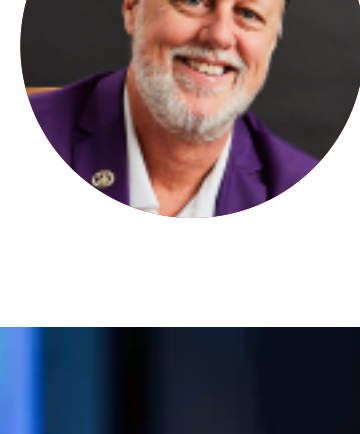


## EXPERTS

### Stale Doughnuts and Bitter Coffee: Reevaluating and Reimagining Your Training Programs

Too often, the utilization of outdated or misaligned training techniques creates a disconnect between the teacher and student.

**GREG HILL**, FOUNDER, RRS  
ON 11/8/22 AT 9:01 AM EST



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**U**gh — a dreaded email arrives in the inbox entitled "Mandatory Monthly Training Class." Visions of a boring lecture covering perceived useless material rapidly infiltrate the organization. Upper management will be satisfied that a required check next to the "Employee Training" box will be marked. Stale doughnuts and bitter coffee will be consumed as attendees feign interest while outwardly emoting enthusiastic approval of the seminar. The valuable material communicated during the event will probably be soon forgotten. Valuable production time has been wasted.

Unfortunately, this scenario is repeated daily by organizations that are not properly aligned with how their adult learners actually *receive* and *digest* information. A common misconception is by merely presenting material, the information will be comprehended and ingrained into the receiver's memory banks. Too often, the utilization of outdated or misaligned training techniques creates a disconnect between the teacher and student.

The disconnect is typically due to training design and instruction techniques based on *pedagogy* — methods employed during traditional education delivery for young, impressionable students who require exact structure. These seminars rely heavily on lecturing, memorization, and examination built on rules determined by the instructor — not the learner!



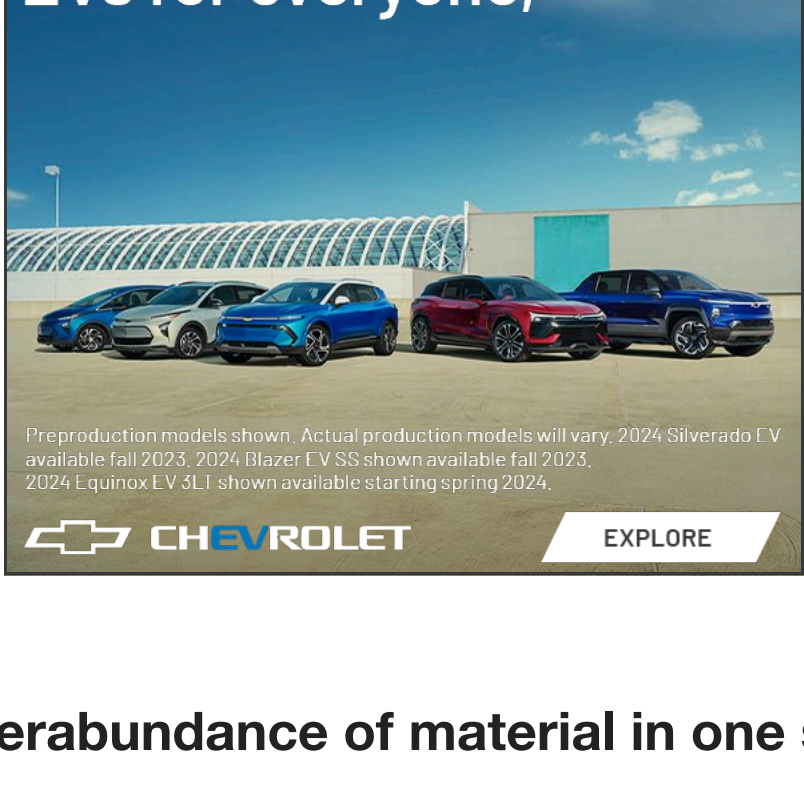
Savvy adult educators, however, employ techniques based on *andragogy* and *heutagogy* — essentially the facilitation and management of self-directed and self-managed adult learners. They impart applicable information and knowledge that adults can relate to and utilize for self-improvement and enhanced productivity.

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Adjusting training and education to be aligned with learners should be addressed in two areas: program design and program delivery.

#### Program Design

When designing an effective educational program, the developer should build with the end user in mind. How will the learner digest the information? Obviously, this advice may sound intuitive; however, the difficulty in application lies in the fact that not all students learn the same way. Personality traits, attention spans, motivations, and life experiences can dramatically vary — even in a small group! Here are a few points to bear in mind during design:



**Beware of covering an overabundance of material in one session.** Diving too deep into a given subject may cause learner shut-down due to information overload. Hermann Ebbinghaus, a pioneer of the study of memory, found in his famous study that the average adult will have forgotten an average of 50% of covered material was forgotten within one hour of it being presented and 90% of it within a week! To combat this, try to limit the covered content to three memorable points or 'chunks.'

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**Properly use support material.** Simply reading lines from a projected presentation or having participants follow along in a guide typically leads to a lack of retention. Your presentation should visually enhance your points. Think of yourself as a narrator of a documentary and your presentation as the visual element that reinforces the message — not a crutch to rely on!

**Motivate learners to engage by weaving content applicability throughout the session.** Participants must see the value of absorbing the presented material and how it can positively impact their lives.

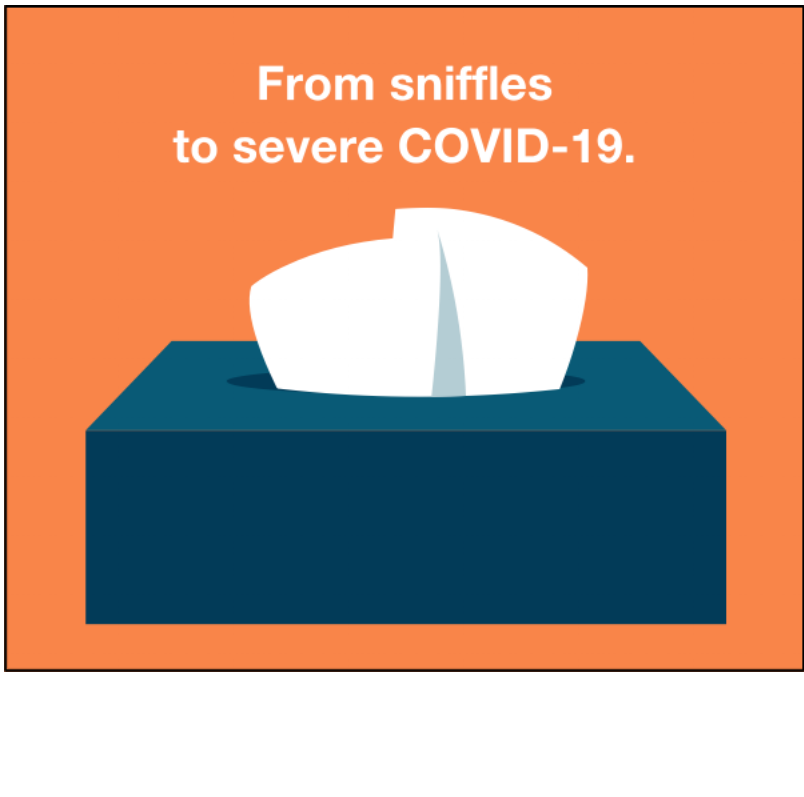
#### Program Delivery

A common pitfall that many educators employ is the need to over-establish credibility by displaying mind-numbing expertise of the course material. The goal is *not* to display the brilliance of the instructor, but to communicate retainable information to the student. The most successful educators are facilitators of discovery who simply guide audiences along a journey based on ingrained experiences. Successful facilitators pay special attention to these areas:

**Take participants' individual personality traits and generations into account when presenting.** By nature, speakers tend to communicate based on their own personality inclinations, however, forget the information receiver's preferences. For example, an extremely extroverted instructor may not realize the introverted or data-driven learner is not comprehending the information. Additionally, the younger learner may be bored with the seemingly unrelatable, long-winded stories exuberantly spun by an elderly instructor.

**Providing a safe learning environment will allow learners to become receptive to information.** Vice versa — openly challenging learners in front of peers — may result in participant embarrassment, ultimately creating a shutdown of receptivity.

Noted andragogy expert Malcolm Knowles is credited with saying, "The learner should be actively involved in the learning process." In his book, he notes "The learners perceive the goals of the learning experience to be their goals." A common best practice is to divide participants into small groups to solve issues pertaining to the material and present findings to the whole class. The facilitator can provide additional solutions that may have been missed in a positive manner. Additionally, the facilitator may choose to employ individual students to paraphrase or "teach back" previously provided information to other participants.



Learning as if you must teach provides extra engagement and material retention incentives!

Finally, make it fun and inclusive by providing opportunities to display participant creativity. The more ownership a learner has in their personal information discovery process, the more engaged they will become and receptive to ideas, concepts, and knowledge attainment.

Participants in training sessions can easily be grouped into two categories: Those who are forced to attend and those that attend and learn. Facilitation of these valuable educational sessions, based on proven adult learning concepts, can ultimately pay great dividends for an organization through participant engagement, retention, and application of the material. Who knows? They might actually be excited when they receive the next training announcement email, too!

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