

Getting the most out of CPD

An effective approach to CPD needn't be expensive, argue Stephen Rainbird and Francis Nicholson

➤ MANY people equate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with formal training and, therefore, cost. In fact, CPD is much broader than that. The Institute, in its members' CPD policy, *Building Self Assurance*, refers to CPD simply as "any new learning that impacts favourably on effectiveness within a professional role". This covers a range of activities across personal, ethical and technical capacities for present and future roles.

Indeed, there is no direct correlation between the cost of a learning activity and its value. So how can members ensure that they identify appropriate opportunities for CPD and gain maximum benefit, particularly when resources are under threat? Here are five ideas.

1. Focus your CPD

Everybody has to decide what kind of CPD is right for them. That is why

the Institute doesn't give members any targets for hours or credits. Instead, we give importance to a mix of considerations. These include: previous learning and training; employer expectations; career ambitions and personal aspirations; sector demands; technical requirements; and practical opportunities.

It is important to have clear aims. One approach is to consider the professional competencies involved in fulfilling the responsibilities of your role. Your employer may have a competency framework that can help with this. The Institute has an online tool that enables you to assess your strengths against the global competency framework for internal audit. Analysis will suggest target areas for your CPD.

2. Plan your CPD

The next stage for successful CPD is to plan the activities that are going to

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help you achieve your goals. This may include courses, workshops, seminars or similar. Carefully review any information provided by the organisers. Who is the course aimed at? What are the learning outcomes? What activities will be undertaken? Can you prepare for the training? If you are not sure, contact the provider. Too often participants leave a workshop disappointed that their objectives were not met.

CPD opportunities do not stop at work. Within your community there may be activities that could enhance your professional competence, including voluntary work, research, writing papers and textbooks, lecturing at the local college, and political activities, such as being a local councillor.

Discuss the options with your peers. What have they done recently?



What resources and networks can they share with you?

3. Look for support

It is vital that you get support from your line manager. Having buy-in for your planned activity should enable you to get access to the resources and information you need. By talking through your ideas you can refine your plans and ensure that your ambitions dovetail with your employer's needs.

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4. Reflect and apply

Research shows that learning is lost very quickly if it is not reviewed and applied as soon as possible. As much as 90% may be lost within weeks. Taking stock of what you learned and how well it met your objectives is very advantageous. If you can't put your training into practice straight away, then pass on what you have learned to your colleagues. Often, the best way to learn something is to teach it.

And once you have reflected on what you have learned and how you might apply it, reflect on what your next CPD targets should be, so that you always have an eye on your continued development.

5. A team approach to CPD

Finally, your CPD efforts will be

Ten no-cost CPD ideas

AN investment in your Continuing Professional Development needn't cost anything, and doesn't have to involve a formal training activity, such as a course or a seminar. Here are ten no-cost CPD activities recommended by the Office of Government Commerce, part of the Cabinet Office:

- Writing reports, speeches, board papers and making presentations
- Leading on an initiative
- Working in a multi-disciplinary team
- Coaching, tutoring and mentoring others
- Secondment, observation and work shadowing
- Supervising new staff as part of their induction
- Involvement in working groups, focus groups, forums and panels
- Recruitment and appraising others
- Deputising and providing cover for someone more senior
- Professional committee work

more effective if you take a team approach. You can work more closely together with your colleagues by: planning CPD as a team; pooling your resources (such as course materials and contacts); utilising expertise within the team, the organisation and other peers; and sharing good practice, via networks and discussion forums, for example. ●

Francis Nicholson is the Institute's Education Director. Stephen Rainbird is Qualifications and Professional Development Manager. For more information about CPD, look at the Qualifications section of the Institute's website, www.iaa.org.uk. You can also read online case studies setting out how other members have improved their approach to CPD.