More Interactive Learning, Less Lecturing

Adult Learning Principles in Action

How do adults learn best? Researching this question prompted Esri Training to change the course design and delivery style of its instructor-led courses so students could more easily apply the skills and concepts they learned.

However, the change wasn't driven by negative student feedback. "Our former course design had served us well, but we think we have something better," Page said. The seeds of this change were planted when Esri instructors became certified through the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA). A nonprofit trade association, CompTIA sets standards for information technology (IT) companies and professionals such as instructors. All Esri instructors are now Certified Technical Trainers.

"Adults need to be motivated—they want to know, what's in it for me?" Page said. Students wonder what they will get out of a course and how it will apply to their jobs. That's why course materials now include a supplemental workbook revamped with more real-world scenarios that teach concepts and skills.

In the new course format, the instructors outline course goals when class begins, go over the learning objectives for each lesson, and test students to make sure they've understood the material taught in that lesson. Tests are usually a short series of questions that also appear in the supplemental student workbooks where students can jot down answers.

Page said the scenarios and the clear, step-by-step exercises in the new workbook make the courses more interesting and useful. "When I take a training class, I want to be able to go back to my job and take what I have learned and start using it right away," she said, adding that she thinks that will now happen more often with the GIS courses. "You're motivated. You understand why you are learn-ing this. You start to see these real examples of how this plays into the world and how to bring it into your organization. You get excited. You're learning from your peers and the instructor. And after you get back to work, you are kind of ready to go. You've learned some valuable skills that you can put into practice right away."

About the Author

Carla Wheeler is Esri's defense and intelligence staff writer and the editor of *ArcWatch,* a free monthly e-magazine that covers GIS news and trends; provides information on new products, training, and books; and offers technical tips. She joined Esri in 2006 after spending more than 20 years working as a newspaper reporter and editor in California and Minnesota. Follow her on Twitter @gis-journo.

Upgrade Your
GIS Skills ▪ Strategies to find time for training

Finding time for GIS training can be a challenge. Esri has resources that can help you reach your training goal—whether it is staying current with the industry, upgrading your skills, or investigating a new career path—no matter how much or how little time you can spare. Even if you don't have days to devote to training, you can accumulate GIS training by devoting a few minutes or hours per week.

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