

The Importance of Face-to-Face Email Training

By Michael Einstein, February 29, 2016



Research has shown that Email productivity training is most successful when performed “Face-to-Face”.

End-user training is an important way to help achieve the effective and successful use of computer applications.

In fact, prior studies have found the lack of solid skills and training as a key reason why many technology projects often fail to deliver on their desired productivity gains.

This is especially the case for Email training!

Despite the fact that Email is one of the most broadly and frequently used applications for business workers, most people never receive any formal training in its use.

— Michael Einstein

And when training is conducted, it often focuses only on specific features, as opposed to the broader issues surrounding communication skills and media etiquette.

In addition, research has found that even technically sophisticated users tend to only use a fraction of the features of complex Email clients, such as Microsoft Outlook.

Comprehensive Email Overload training should focus on improving skills in three critical components of Email processing:

- [Technological Skills](#)
- [Behavioral Skills](#)
- [Organizational Skills](#)

Bottom line is that business user Email training is desperately needed!

But what is the best approach for conducting Email productivity training?

That's a good question...

Technology training research has found two key approaches which tend to yield the best results; ***Behavior Modeling*** and ***Guided Mastery***.

Now, let's dive into each of these in more detail...

Behavior Modeling:

In ***Behavior Modeling***, learners are provided with demonstrations of certain techniques and behaviors. They are then given an opportunity to apply these approaches themselves.

For Email training, an example would be teaching students when to use [different types of communication methods](#) (i.e.: Email, phone-call, face-to-face).

The instructor would present a few examples and explain how the decision was made in choosing each communication method.

Next, the students are presented with their own "***scenarios***". They are then required to apply what they learned to these specific situations.

The instructor provides feedback to the class and explains and explains any questions raised.

This approach is particularly effective in training that involves inter-personal skills, communication, supervisory skills, and personal interactions.

But it has also highly effective for computer skills training.

Guided Mastery:

In ***Guided Mastery***, students are assisted by an instructor through a series of increasingly challenging exercises.

This allows the students to experience repeated successes as they learn and gain skills.

Many of the exercises will designed to build off of prior skills. So, as students gain new skills, they also reinforce prior skills they just learned.

This approach is also a successful means of learning. It is also especially good at improving a user's proficiency in a large set of complex skills.

So, which is the best approach?

The Best Approach: Combining Behavior Modeling & Guided Mastery (ie: coaching)

Research has shown that ***combining both Behavior Modeling and Guided Mastery*** is perhaps the most effective approach. This is especially true for complex training topics, such as Email processing.

In fact, this combination normally yields superior results over lecture-based, or demonstration-only based approaches.

And this approach is also much more effective than computer-aided, online, or self-study training.

Because of the interactive nature of this approach, it is best implemented in a “*face-to-face*” type of environment, such as “*classroom-based*” training.

And although classroom training is one of the most complex and resource-intensive types of training to develop and deploy, the research supports it being by far the most successful.

For computer system training, it provides students the opportunity to observe someone else performing a behavior. It then gives them the opportunity to practice these specific behaviors, receive real-time instructor feedback, and achieve success.

This is why Email Overload training is a perfect candidate for instructor-led training and why I always suggest it be performed in a classroom setting by a knowledgeable instructor whenever possible.

The interaction and “hands-on” experience that a good instructor can provide is invaluable to the delivery of Email Overload training.

— Michael Einstein

Yes, it is possible to build Email Overload training using computer-based training or virtual sessions. And these can be very useful and effective if implemented properly.

But nothing seems to beat the advantages of a “*face-to-face*” instructor led session when it comes to Email Overload training.

Yes, it is more time consuming, expensive and complex.

But as the [average business user spends several hours a day in Email](#), even a modest improvement in Email productivity can result in huge payback to a company.

And so I would argue that for most companies, it is well worth the investment!

Not to mention the benefits to the individual, in terms of reduced stress, overload, and frustration.