"Test trainings are bad! What can we do about it?"

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The presentation is about technical training with some special focus on test trainings. The goal is to present current (Polish) situation with use of some exaggeration and by using "light" ways of expression.

When we think about trainings, most of us distinguish between two basic types. We divide them into those for a limited group of specialists in narrow area, and those "for all". The "small group" receive technical trainings. Typically, these are highly specialized issues such as programming and/or production. Soft skills trainings go to much wider audience.

People working in both areas saw long ago that, although both types of training evolved from one concept, now those are separate species. Using comparisons of animal: the soft training are cheetahs - fast and agile, while elephants are technical training - heavy and long-lasting. Differences are visible to the naked eye at all levels of preparation, conducting and summarizing the training.

Preparation for training

An important element of the training itself is a job that a coach or organizer must perform prior to the class. It's impossible to prepare good material or good slides without knowledge of the needs of participants. Soft skills coaches have imposed timetables. They send a survey asking which elements of training should be a greater emphasis, and which should be thrown away. In case of specific expectations, participants should have been given the possibility of direct contacting the coach. The collected data are subjected of real analysis. In some cases, the entire training program can be rebuild, and all materials can be written from the beginning.

Technical trainers simply comes to training. They have their own material known very well because it was shown many times in past few years. Training needs are defined at the level of training selection. If you accept – you pay. If not - chooses a different training. Unfortunately it becomes a standard to prepare training for all, regardless of experience or training needs.

Methods

To show the subtle difference between training methods let's make use of two examples - the method used for the soft training - NLP and Bloom's taxonomy which is used to train testers in ISTQB.

NLP is an acronym translated as Neuro Linguistic Programming. It is a discipline that is based on the latest discoveries in neuro-psychology, communication, chemistry and optics. It allows the manipulation of human behavior and emotional persuasion. In simple terms, this technique helps to program people. Method is used both in training as well as in psychotherapy.

Very important for the test industry exam is prepared based on Bloom's taxonomy and was defined in ... 1950. This old standard shows learning as a process of remembering, understanding, analyzing and applying. As it was in primary education.

It looks that companies offering technical training and exams stopped in development. At the same time, soft skills trainers still growing based they methods on innovations.

However, there is one thing we can add as a plus for technical trainers . They use modern technology to reduce training costs. They have launched e-learning platform and streaming video websites. If the methods adopt it is likely that the soft skills trainers adapt those solutions to their needs.

Training materials

What is the difference between the training materials for soft training, and technical training? Such that the for technicians it is not really a training materials, those are printed slides.

Trainers haven't learned yet that it is impossible for printed slides to be a real training materials. Prepared the PowerPoint images are serving trainer to transfer his/her knowledge. The content are usually keywords without explanation and pictures without the name. Appropriate materials are written in books and electronic materials, normally provided by soft trainers. The script contains an explanation of all terms used during training and can be still used after a few years.

Training techniques

The variety of techniques and tools in the soft training amaze. We are talking not only about practical examples, but also about all sorts of games, the tasks in groups or techniques of inserting knowledge into people's heads. For the coach, when he knows the requirements for training, it is important to recognize the personality of the participants. The question is - who you are and what is your goal. Coaches capture out of the group people who were forced to participate in training and try to refer to them with communicate of usefulness of the knowledge. They can get at "too active" or "to calm" participants and offer them interesting knowledge.

It is important to draw a clear border about who is doing what during the training: I am a coach to provide expertise and help, when the need arises. You are a trainee and your goal is to learn as much as possible.

Soft skills trainers will also seek to "read" their pupils. Apply the pace changes during the training to boost attention, modulate level of voice to emphasize important things, or focus attention on himself. They are able to apply all varieties of motion just to not allow trainee to "take off". Gestures,

changes in light intensity or slide animation - everything that affects how long the trainer catches participants attention.

Methods of technical trainers are less sophisticated. At the practical training is often necessary to sit at the computer desk and showing live examples. It is therefore difficult to respond actively to the signs of fatigue. Unfortunately, there are also errors like - "I know this is boring but let's do 20 more slides" or "That's not my slides, so I do not know what the author had in mind."

Operation: closing

Are any of the technical coaches tried to do a training analysis? Let's be serious! Even if you send a survey it is only to renegotiate the salary not to collect data and improve the training.

The real test includes analysis of what went wrong and what went better than expected. With the knowledge that something is missing we can always provide additional training materials or even provide free-of-charge an additional training day. In analyzing the situation before and after we are able to assess the benefits that the company has achieved through training of their employees. Unfortunately, the technical training companies generally meets one solid value - the percentage of the people passing the exam.

Summary

Soft skills training companies prepared a special offer for their colleagues in the technical training. We find among them such titles as:

"Maybe I do have knowledge but am I able to give it to others?"

"Communication. How to communicate with people when you already know how to communicate with computers."

"How to read other people yawning, and responses to boredom."

It will be very useful for the majority of technical coach to participate. It will benefit to them and to trainees on their courses.

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