



Accelerated Learning

In today's world we want to do everything as quickly as possible so is Accelerated Learning simply a way of responding to that? Is it a product of a disposable culture where we want something that will help us immediately and doesn't need any long-term sustainability?

Some of you may have studied the subject, others may have experienced it and many of you may feel that you have little knowledge.

I would like to share with you my thoughts on Accelerated Learning and to show you that this is not a new area but one that builds on many learning methods that we are already familiar with. To introduce you to the underlying principles and some of the components, how they can be integrated with current learning methods to enhance recall and application and how we as HR professionals or managers of people can embrace Accelerated Learning in all that we do.

I would like to show you that at the heart of Accelerated Learning is the desire to create learning solutions that enable sustainability of knowledge, techniques and behaviour change.

What is Accelerated Learning?

Accelerated Learning is an approach to learning that brings together many of the principles that we are familiar with and also challenges the conventional approach to learning that 'one size fits all'.

It is designed to appeal to the whole personality, to the conscious and sub-conscious mind and can use all, or a combination of methods, which will work for many different students.

Dr. Roger Sperry, Dr. Roger Ornstein, Dr. Georgi Lozanov and Professor Donald Schuster are among the leading psychological researchers whose findings have formed the basis of Accelerated Learning. There is nothing here, therefore, that is completely new.

Some of the methods will also be very familiar to those of you who use Transactional Analysis and NLP.

What results can we expect?

One of the researchers, Professor Donald Schuster of Iowa State University estimates that by applying Accelerated Learning we can achieve at least a 300% improvement in the speed and effectiveness of learning.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating" as they say and so it is for Accelerated Learning and certainly the majority of people who have been involved in Accelerated Learning would vouch for the results that they have achieved.

Of course many people may not be aware that they have had this experience because one of the driving forces is that it should be natural and effortless.

We remember:	
20%	of what we READ
30%	of what we HEAR
40%	of what we SEE
50%	of what we SAY
60%	of what we DO
And	90% of what we SEE, SAY, HEAR and DO

The underlying principles

Accelerated Learning is based on the foundation that we learn more with less conscious effort when we are in a relaxed yet receptive state of mind.

How often have you forced yourself to learn something or to come up with an answer to something within a very tight timescale and have found it a struggle? When do you get most of your ideas? Perhaps it is in the shower, whilst at the gym (for those of you who are fit) or perhaps when you are enjoying a few glasses of wine with friends. It is usually when we are relaxed.

Here are some of the principles and techniques that I have picked up:

- Create a relaxed environment
- The first task of any learning programme is to get the learners aroused, open and ready to learn
- Toys, sweets and games that create fun and memories of our childhood will recreate the period when we experienced rapid learning
- Involve all the senses – sight, sound, feelings, touch, taste and smell
- Appeal to the multiple intelligences (see next section)
- Toys such as koosh balls and stress toys stimulate the nerve endings in the fingers that increases the flow of blood around the brain
- Change pace every 20 minutes
- Primacy and recency – we remember beginnings and endings so break down the learning into smaller chunks and have lots of introductions and conclusions
- Energisers are used to both raise and lower energy levels to create a state that is conducive for learning
- The facilitator's role is to initiate the learning process and then get out of the way

Multiple Intelligences

Like our senses we all have preferences in terms of the intelligences that we use. By tapping into the individual learner's preferences the impact of the learning will increased immensely. When working with groups we need to apply to all intelligences for the greatest results.

Originally we were working with seven recognized intelligences and these have now been increased to ten:

1. Numerical
2. Spatial
3. Verbal
4. Physical - active
5. Sensual – using the senses
6. Creative - imagination
7. Personal – reflection and self-awareness
8. Spiritual – self-worth, values, ethics
9. Social – networking and interacting
10. Sexual - rapport

As facilitator's of learning we need to be aware of our own preferences as these will influence our design of learning activities and ensure that we appeal to the other intelligences.

A word of warning

Accelerated Learning could seriously change your effectiveness and results.

As a note of caution, however, I have experienced some of the methods being misused with some dire consequences because they have been used in the wrong hands by people who do not understand the subject.

Some simple examples are:

- The icebreaker that is used without context, that is labeled as an icebreaker and all delegates think “here we go again” or “that was a waste of time”.
- The fun games which are great at the time but the delegates think “what was the point of that?”
- A trainer uses toys and games and all the delegates remember afterwards are the toys and games rather than the messages and learning points.

A comment that I heard from a client recently was that he had met some training consultants and: “All they seemed to be interested in was throwing some balls around rather than key messages and practical learning”.

Before applying any of these methods ensure that you understand the theory behind them and that it is clear to the learner why these particular techniques or approaches are being used.

Accelerated learning and behaviour change

On the surface it may appear that Accelerated learning is all about learning, memory and recall and not about behaviour change. If we delve deeper we can see that it is based on experienced-based learning and this will enable a change in behaviour.

What we must remember, however, that this does not replace the fundamentals of the learning cycle. It has to work with it and I see it as an approach to overlay it. Rather like the icing on the cake. The cake by itself tastes good and the icing makes the cake more tempting, delicious, and memorable and makes us want to go back for more.

Putting the icing on the cake

Here I have only been able to give you a flavour of this incredibly powerful approach. I hope that many of you will be encouraged to explore further and I would recommend that you read Colin Rose’s book – Accelerated Learning. The Training Shop also provides some excellent resource material and ideas.

If you are a training consultant, review your approach and see how you can enhance the longer term effect of the learning.

If you are an HR professional, how is your learning and development programme tailored to individuals? Are you forcing learners to learn in very short sessions without creating a relaxed learning environment?

As a manager or leader of people consider the working environment. By creating a relaxed environment perhaps you will increase the performance of your people. Think about work-based learning, how could you apply Accelerated Learning to this?

The way forward

If this is so powerful why are we not using it in our schools as well as in adult learning? One can only hope that in the same way as we are gradually introducing it into adult learning that it is also being introduced into teacher training programmes and the ongoing development of our teachers.

This approach most certainly has the potential for long-term sustainability. In a world where time is precious and where we want more from less in terms of our investment in our people and learning and development, Accelerated Learning is the way forward.

By reading this paper you will remember approximately 20%, go and experience it and you will see, feel and hear the difference.