How To Do CPD
– A New Model
Contents

1. How To Do CPD – A New Model

2. Planned CPD
   2.1. Its advantages
   2.2. A model for planned CPD
   2.3. Start with your challenges to identify your ‘learning needs’
   2.4. Seek advice to discover alternative solutions and ways to learn
   2.5. Make sense of your new knowledge and skills
   2.6. Try a response to try out what you have discovered
   2.7. Tell others and so reinforce your learning

3. Spontaneous CPD
   3.1. Its advantages
   3.2. What does it involve?
   3.3. Watch
   3.4. Record
   3.5. Share
   3.6. Evaluate
   3.7. The big pay-off

4. Why this suggested approach?
1 | How To Do CPD – A New Model

Many people struggle with CPD because they haven’t discovered how to do it properly. Like many activities, CPD is much harder if you don’t use the correct methods. As you adopt a helpful approach, CPD will become easier and more useful.

If you belong to a CPD scheme, it is vital that you are familiar with its requirements. You should use the advice here in a way that meets these requirements.

There are two types of CPD, and we recommend that you do both. For example, you might set aside time to plan your CPD monthly, quarterly, yearly or between work assignments (as required). At the same time you can seize opportunities for spontaneous CPD and improve your work every day.

Planned CPD: structured, systematic & done in phases

Spontaneous CPD: part of everyday life
2 | Planned CPD

2 | 1 Its advantages

- It enables you to keep up with changes in regulations or industry requirements.
- It helps you to keep abreast of good practice.
- It allows you to get outside input to improve your performance.
- It enables you to acquire capabilities necessary for your next job.
- It allows you to fulfil the requirements of your CPD scheme.

2 | 2 A model for planned CPD

Start With Your Challenges
- Identify what you need

Tell Others
- share what you’ve learned

Seek Advice
- identify possible responses

Try A Response
- test it out!

Make Sense
- of your new knowledge
Start with your challenges to identify your ‘learning needs’

Planned CPD starts with the messiness of everyday work. Feeling dissatisfied is part of the mess. You may feel dissatisfied with:

- Your performance. However good your appraisal, you know there are strengths you can build on or weaknesses you might eliminate.
- Not being up to speed with changes in regulations. You could act unprofessionally if you remain out of date. How can you keep up to speed when you have so little time?
- The range of skills you possess. They may be adequate for your present job, but not sufficient to get you the next one. You need to develop if you are to move on.
- Some of the circumstances in which you work. Perhaps you have a difficult boss, and you want to learn how to respond more calmly and without getting wound up.
- A gap in the capabilities of the team, and you wonder if you could learn how to fill it. Your medical or veterinary practice lacks skills in recruitment, for example.

Dissatisfaction can be a strong motivator to learn; it can challenge you to do something. You need this motivation. Learning takes time, it requires effort, and being made to think or do something new can feel uncomfortable. It is easy to come up with excuses not to learn.

Dissatisfaction helps you to punch through these excuses, and stops you being distracted once you have begun your CPD.

In conversation with trusted friends, colleagues or your manager, you might ask:

- What things do I do well? Which of these would I like to do better?
- What do I find difficult to do in my job? Are there areas where I am not up to date?
- What situations at work do I struggle to handle?
- What knowledge and capabilities must I acquire for my next job?
- Which of all these is a priority?
Seek advice to discover alternative solutions and ways to learn

Having identified your learning needs, seek advice from colleagues or your manager about how best to discover ways of responding. If learning is going to take a chunk of your time, it must be effective.

Another person’s experience could help you to choose the most helpful training course - or even decide whether a course is what you need. Might you learn more, for instance, by:

- Shadowing a colleague?
- Interviewing a couple of experts?
- Finding a coach?
- Reading a series of books and articles guided by someone with expertise?
- Joining a professional group?

Read the download, “57 varieties of CPD”, for further ideas.

‘Start with your challenges’ and ‘Seek advice’ may not be sequential stages. You may ebb back and forth between the two as you ponder what’s realistic.

Perhaps you have identified a challenge that will be hard to tackle in the time and with the funding available. You may have to think again. Or the conversations about how to address a challenge may spark an idea for how to tackle a different one. (Lucky the person who has just one!)

Give individuals maximum choice over what they do, when and how. Encourage them to identify their own development priorities and - in discussion with trusted colleagues - their own ways of achieving them. Use our download, ‘57 Varieties of CPD’, to expand ideas of what might count for CPD. Focus first on users of CPD and what works for them, rather than the supply of activities such as training. When a ‘market’ for CPD activities exists, the supply is much easier to create and manage. Professional development must be owned if it is to be undertaken enthusiastically.
Make sense of your new knowledge and skills

At the heart of planned CPD is making sense of the knowledge and skills you are acquiring to meet your challenges at work and to frame solutions.

Your new learning will make more sense when you integrate new knowledge and skills with what you already know and do. Ideally this integration leads to an intuitive ‘aha moment’. For example, if your identified challenge is securing repeat business, you might discover a new approach that encourages you to exclaim: “That makes so much sense!”.

Making sense is so obviously at the heart of learning that it is easy to ignore. Yet approaching CPD as a process of making sense may increase its attraction. ‘I am here (at a conference or course, for example) to make better sense of my role, the influences on it and the tasks I have to perform within it.’ Your goal is to enlarge your horizons.

A vital part of this process is finding an answer to the question - ‘What will I do differently as a result of this activity?’ So during the course of the activity, you may want to keep a note of what feels relevant to your job.

At the end, review your notes. What theme stands out? How will this affect what you actually do? Doing this will enable you to reflect on your learning and make sense of it in relation to your role. The ideal is to do CPD with a colleague, so that you can discuss this together.

Try a response to test what you have discovered

Most planned CPD involves doing something differently as a result of what you learn. Sometimes this will be relatively straightforward. If the regulations have changed, you will bring your practice into line with the new requirements. If you learn a new skill, you will incorporate it into your role.

But often a bit of trial and error is needed. Perhaps you have learnt a new classroom strategy, a new clinical practice, a new engineering technique or a new way to project manage. You have to try different ways of applying your learning to discover what will work in your situation.
Learning does not stop when you have read some articles, finished a series of coaching sessions or returned from a seminar. Putting into practice what you have discovered is when the real learning begins.

If you see this as a process of experimentation, it may help you not to get discouraged. You won’t expect the new practice to work straight away. You will expect to have to try it in one way and then another, before you discover what works best for you.

2 | 7 **Tell others** and so reinforce your learning

CPD schemes expect you to record what you have learnt, as well as to provide evidence that you have undertaken the learning (e.g. a record of attendance).

Keeping a record can feel rather pointless. No one reads what you have written, except possibly your professional body - and then, only to audit what you have done.

You can prevent record keeping being a chore by making it more purposeful. Why not write an email to your boss, a colleague or a friend, explaining what you have learnt and how you are applying it? Then copy the email into your record.

Or write your record in the form of notes for a presentation to your colleagues or power point slides. Your record will become an aid to sharing your discovery with others. There will be a point to it.

If there are no formal ways in your organisation to share the fruits of your CPD, you might arrange with a couple of friends to do this informally. Each of you might share your learning over a coffee or by email, for instance.

This will be a strong encouragement to take your learning seriously: *'I'd better not miss this session if I am going to report back on it!'* Questions and feedback from others may deepen your thinking or throw new light on your learning.

If you resent the time CPD is taking, you can comfort yourself that others will benefit too. Research shows that learning is best undertaken with others. Feeding back to colleagues or friends can be an indispensable part of this collaborative dimension.

Sharing your learning is not about seeking favours or incurring debts. In effective collaboration, the benefits flow both ways.
3 | Spontaneous CPD

Spontaneous CPD occurs any time. It is part of everyday life.

3 | 1 Its advantages

- It’s relevant - it arises out of your day-to-day work and so connects to it.
- It’s time efficient - learning is part of what you already do rather than a bolt-on extra.
- It fits you - you decide what to learn, when and where. It is under your control.
- It’s affordable - you don’t have to pay for a course or a coach.
- It normally counts toward your required CPD (e.g. the discretionary element, if your scheme makes this distinction).

3 | 2 What does it involve?
Watch involves keeping alert to potential learning. For example:

- Has someone said something that makes you see things differently?
- Have you read something - in a professional or trade journal, for instance - that throws new light on to your role?
- Have you come across something on the Internet that gives you a fresh perspective on your work?

Significant observations and events in your job become opportunities to learn. Keep an eye out in particular for:

- Good examples to follow (or bad ones to avoid).
- New information that could help you.
- ‘Critical incidents' like an argument or a meeting that went badly. What might you learn - about the others involved, the organisation or yourself - by reflecting on the dynamics involved?

Record

Having identified an example, information or incident to learn from, write a brief note of what you have heard, read or seen.

Add a couple of quick sentences about how this has changed your thinking, and what difference - if any - it will make to your practice. (You may need to think about this for a day or two.)

Use this record as a basis for sharing what you have learnt (see below). For example, write it in the form of an email, or as notes to draw on when you share your observation in a meeting or conversation.

Don’t avoid writing something down! It will add to your CPD record, clarify your thinking and make it easier to share what you have learnt.
3 | 5 Share

Tell at least one colleague what you have discovered. Send an email, for instance, mention it in a conversation or bring it up at a meeting.

Sharing (done sensitively!) will make you a more valuable colleague: you will be a source of fresh thinking. You may spark ideas that bring improvements to your workplace. You may gain a reputation for being creative and helpful.

Sharing gives more purpose to your learning. Record-keeping won’t be just to please your professional body (who may not even look at it). It will help you to benefit your colleagues. This will transform your experience of CPD.

3 | 6 Evaluate

After a while, ask: ‘What difference has it made - to me and to my colleagues?’ Has it led to any changes in attitude or behaviour? How significant are these changes on a scale of 1-5 (1 is small)?

Don’t under-value small changes. A small observation (e.g. about seating arrangements in meetings) may combine with someone else’s comment (‘How effective are our meetings?’) to produce a significant change (‘Let’s think about how we conduct our meetings more carefully’).

Keep a brief record of your evaluations. They may help you in your next appraisal to show how you have made a difference. Sometimes you may want to share them with one or more colleagues, as you repeat the cycle.

3 | 7 The big pay-off

The big win from spontaneous CPD is that it helps you become more adaptable. It makes you alert to opportunities to learn. Learning keeps your mind flexible, helps you to adjust to changing circumstances and enables you to do your job better.

We live in a fast-pace world. You can’t afford to stand still. Spontaneous CPD helps you to keep up - and get ahead!
4 | Why this suggested approach?

The more familiar approaches to CPD are variants on the following:

- Plan Your Learning
- Act On Your Plan
- Evaluate "How Does My Learning Apply To My Role?"
- Reflect "What Are The Implications For My Future Learning?"


Schemes often adapt this cycle. So - if you belong to a scheme - yours may be slightly different. If you find your scheme’s approach helpful, we recommend you to follow it. However, you may find the approach we’ve described more energising. In which case, we suggest that you use it to meet your scheme’s requirements.
Our approach differs to the usual ones in that it is:

- **Pragmatic** - It starts with the messiness of working life.
- **Relational** - ‘Seek advice’, ‘Tell others’.
- **Intuitive** - ‘Making sense’ is what people do every day.
- **Experimental** - Trial and error is the stuff of life.
- **Purposeful** - Sharing your learning gives it an extra value.
- **Flexible** - The arrows in our model go both ways. You may go back and forth between each ‘stage’. Indeed, some ‘stages’ may occur simultaneously. You may ‘try a response’, for instance, while attending a series of lectures that help you to ‘make sense’ of your new knowledge. You are not stuck in a mechanical one-stage-must-follow-the-next.

We believe that these features make our approach a more natural fit to the workplace than conventional ones.

Instead of being an artificial imposition on individuals (something that feels alien to their daily jobs), our approach arises more naturally from the experience of work and from what professionals do in their roles.

CPD can be more easily incorporated into the rhythms of your day-to-day occupation.

---

**About the CPD Futures Project**

Led by Dr Michael Moynagh, CPD Futures is a research-based project that is helping to make CPD more fulfilling for professionals and more effective for organisations and the people they serve.

**Details can be found at:** [www.cpdfutures.com](http://www.cpdfutures.com)