

"For significant learning and transfer to occur, the following 11 principles are required:

1. Acquire a large primary knowledge base in the area in which transfer is required
2. Acquire some level of knowledge base in subjects outside the primary area.
3. Understand what transfer of learning is and how it works
4. Understand the history in the area(s) that transfer is wanted
5. Acquire motivation, or more specifically, a "spirit of transfer"
6. Develop an orientation to think and encode learning in transfer terms
7. Create cultures of transfer or support systems
8. Understand the theory underlying the area(s) in which we want to transfer
9. Engage in hours of practice and drill
10. Allow time for the learning to incubate
11. Finally, and most importantly, learners must observe and read the works of people who are exemplars of transfer thinking. This means reading systems thinkers, accounts of scientific discoveries, of invention and innovation; it means reading the great poets. Poets are masters of transfer."

The "most important" point in Haskell's general theory of transfer (Number 11) is a fascinating one: "*Poets are masters of transfer*". It has inspired me to set up debates within trainer-training events on the question of whether a poem or a plan is a better vehicle for the transfer of learning. Here are some of the ideas that have been stated during these debates:

POEMS VS. PLANS

You discard even the best plans when they are finished.

You keep the best poems - they last forever and can inspire many plans.

Poems capture the essence of the experience.

Plans capture what you can use and do with it.

A poem is a reminder of good times - it inspires.

A plan is a pathway to better times - it inspires.

Poems convert an ordinary experience into something special.

Plans convert an ordinary experience into something special.

Poems create something that was not there before.

Plans create something that was not there before.

You need imagination, creativity, rhythm and timing and a careful choice of words to be a poet.

You need imagination, creativity, rhythm and timing and a careful choice of words to make a plan.

Plans know when to stop - they have deadlines.

Poems don't - they are lifelines.

Poems can be fun, profound, entertaining.

Plans can create anything you want.

So can poems.

Tools for transfer during a training course

Here are three basic strategies for promoting transfer through reviewing.

Variety

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. A variety of reviewing methods that engage all learning styles increases the chances of each person being able to transfer something of value.

Quantity

Greenaway, R. (2002) "How Transfer Happens" Organisation Development: Topical Papers No. 5