

# Making learning sticky

**Near transfer** is about 'making learning stick'. **Far transfer** is about 'making learning sticky'. Near transfer involves applying what has already been learned. Far transfer also involves translating and transforming the original learning. Far transfer is a creative process that requires further learning. Making the original learning more available and useable – it becomes more sticky.

To maximise the chances of far transfer, the 'sticky' learning needs to connect with a suitable opportunity. So there are at least two kinds of 'stickiness' that come into play. Imagine a sticky seed blowing around in the wind looking for fertile soil in which to grow. The chances of the seed finding suitable soil are greater if both the seed and the soil are 'sticky'. In other words, to maximise transfer, the learner needs to seek out opportunities for using as well as recognising the potential value of what they have learned. Stickiness facilitates connection making. Without connection there is no transfer. Plans create connections - and so does stickiness.

## Making the seed (of learning) sticky

- 1. Recognise its value:** list 5 reasons why this learning is important for you or for others.
- 2. Consider its potential uses:** list 5 ways in which you could use this learning without adapting it.
- 3. Imagine other possibilities:** list 5 different ways in which the learning could be used – if adapted.
- 4. Identify any internal barriers to transfer:** list 5 things you could unlearn in order to help you use this learning.
- 5. Explore the boundaries:** list 5 situations in which you would be unlikely to use this learning (If your answer is 'none', that's OK!)

The point with sticky learning is not to exhaustively list all possibilities but to help people appreciate that there is a bigger world of possibilities than the more obvious ones. It is the habit of conducting 'what if' exercises (or similar) that gets people into a creative frame of mind. It helps people realise that

## Making the soil (of learning) sticky

- 1. Spread the learning.** Create understanding. List 5 people who may benefit from learning something like this and see if they want to.
- 2. Find, create and use support.** List 5 people who would readily support you in your efforts to use this learning.
- 3. Find stony ground and try to understand it.** List 5 people who will be sceptical or lukewarm until they have seen the results
- 4. Prepare the ground.** List 5 factors within your control that would make you more likely to use this learning.
- 5. Create the climate.** List 5 factors you can influence (but which are outside your direct control) that would make you more likely to use this learning

## 'What ifs' for even stickier learning

- 1. What if** you could use this learning wherever you wanted? Where would you use it and why?
- 2. What if** you discovered that this learning was unique to you? What would you do?
- 3. What if** you were given 4 weeks to focus solely on using this learning for the benefit of your team or organisation? Describe the beginning and end of this special project.
- 4. What if** you could wave a magic wand and pass your learning on to everyone else in your team or organisation? What would be the result for you and the organisation?
- 5. What if** you could run short courses to train others in what you have learned. Whom could you attract and how would you promote it? What benefits would you advertise?

flexible and creative thinking are essential for transfer – especially far transfer.

Having people thinking of themselves as creators not consumers (i.e. thinking as active learners both during and after the course) makes it more likely that transfer will happen.