Ten Categories of Instructional Methods

In reading through the categories I realized that we utilize all of them in our instruction with new and current associates.

The presentation method is seen as one-way communication that sends information from a source to a receiver. It does not require immediate response from, or interaction with the receiver. In the case of orientation, we use a short video that imparts the “flavor” of the company to our new associates. The owners introduce the new hire to the mission, vision, and core values of the organization in a non-threatening manner.

In the case of the leadership track, specific career paths require assigned readings that may be specific journal articles, business writings, or books.

Demonstration is viewed as the imitation of a skill or procedure. It can be to used to illustrate how something works, or how something or someone is to perform.

As they have learned enough information to be used in context, new associates are scheduled to “shadow” experienced associates, both on the phones and in the field. Current associates who are cross training in different functions, receive scheduled on-the-job training with their “mentoring buddies”.

Discussion is described as an exchange of ideas and/or opinion in small or large groups.

Open discussion is a staple of any good training program. Associates are encouraged to share their experiences and opinions in a respectful manner. The rule here: We agree to disagree; The mantra: We rarely learn as much from someone who agrees with us.

Through discussion we as facilitators also learn. We learn new information that help us enhance the materials that we use. We learn about the skill level, expectations and reservations of the individuals in the groups. All helpful to improve the program, subsequently making the organization stronger.

Discussions continuously take place via focus groups, in training, chat sessions and educational update meetings.

Drill and Practice can be seen as information given, followed by repetition, or recitation, followed by feedback.

Because we are in the health care industry, there is a lot of dry information around billing codes and state and federal regulations. We use online flashcards and matching games to help with the building of organization and health
terminology and codes. My example of a Drill and Practice exercise could also fall into the gaming category, in that it is a playful environment and it is a motivator for learning tedious information.

Tutoring is best described as one-on-one teaching. We do this in several ways in our organization. There are short online modules that may or may not incorporate a speaker, but which can pose questions to the learner and require them to respond. Feedback is immediate as the answers have already been authored into the program.

As discussed before, associates may be assigned to “mentoring buddies”. After they have demonstrated a specific skill. The associate may be asked questions and provided feedback to allow them to move forward.

Cooperative Learning Groups – Teamwork to work tasks and/or work on projects.

“Short-term” small group exercises are currently employed in the classroom setting. We learned that as group exercises become larger in scope (and invariably take longer to complete), one or two persons in the group take on the majority of work upon themselves to ensure “getting a good grade”. This has decreased the learning objective being achieved because those who already have the skill or the knowledge are the ones continue to carry the torch. We have since been very careful to design each person’s role into the process.

Gaming is the use of games to demonstrate problem-solving skills, mastery of a specific skill or acquisition of specific knowledge.

Games are an integral part of our training programs. It allows for “edutainment”. Adults are not different than children in that they like to enjoy their learning experience. After 30 days of employment, associates attend a new hire forum. Part of this session employs play with a game called “Unicare-opoly”. The person who is able to answer the most trivia questions about the company wins a cash prize. As mentioned previously, we utilize online flashcards and matching games to teach billing, coding, and regulations. In classroom, we use “Jeopardy” and “Family Feud” type games to “test” the knowledge of the individuals and the group.

In simulations, the learner is involved in a smaller version of the task(s) they will be performing. It is a way to practice real-life situations on a smaller scale.

We utilize simulations mostly in the area of computer systems training and this is online. It is necessary to have a mock system that mirrors accounts so that associates can practice in a like environment without altering real accounts.
Role playing is another example of simulation that we utilize in the classroom. This is also a safe setting to practice situations that can and do come up in the course of their daily activities. It allows them to incorporate the concepts that they have learned into dialogue and actions associated with their work.

Discovery uses an inductive or inquiry approach to learning. Allows the student to dig deeper to find the answer. I believe that discovery overlaps with many of the aforementioned categories in that any of the others could drive the discovery process.

We use discovery in our organization, by giving research exercises in specific regulation manuals to look for information not covered in class. This may be given in an effort to supplement new material that we as facilitators have not had an opportunity to research, (we can then add to the training after validating) or for the learner to practice researching specific regulations as this is a requirement of their position.

The problem-solving method allows students to take an active role in solving a real-life problem. I think this method also overlaps with some of the others in that this can be done with the simulation, tutorial, gaming, and cooperative learning groups methods.

Role plays, case studies and scenarios are used in class and online to develop the associates’ critical thinking skills.