Characteristics of Adult Learning

1. **Self-direction**

Adults feel the need to take responsibility for their lives and decisions and this is why it's important for them to have control over their learning. Therefore, self-assessment, a peer relationship with the instructor, multiple options and initial, yet subtle support are all imperative.

2. **Practical and results-oriented**

Adult learners are usually practical, resent theory, need information that can be immediately applicable to their professional needs, and generally prefer practical knowledge that will improve their skills, facilitate their work and boost their confidence. This is why it's important to create a course that will cover their individual needs and have a more utilitarian content.

3. **Less open-minded**

And therefore more resistant to change. Maturity and profound life experiences usually lead to rigidity, which is the enemy of learning. Thus, instructional designers need to provide the "why" behind the change, new concepts that can be linked to already established ones, and promote the need to explore.

4. **Slower learning, yet more integrative knowledge**

Aging does affect learning. Adults tend to learn less rapidly with age. However, the depth of learning tends to increase over time, navigating knowledge and skills to unprecedented personal levels.

5. **Use personal experience as a resource**

Adults have lived longer, seen and done more, have the tendency to link their past experiences to anything new and validate new concepts based on prior learning. This is why it's crucial to form a class with adults that have similar life experience levels, encourage discussion and sharing, and generally create a learning community consisting of people who can profoundly interact.

6. **Motivation**

Learning in adulthood is usually voluntary. Thus, it's a personal choice to attend school, in order to improve job skills and achieve professional growth. This motivation is the driving force behind learning and this is why it's crucial to tap into a learner's intrinsic impetus with the right thought-provoking material that will question conventional wisdom and stimulate his mind.

7. **Multi-level responsibilities**

Adult learners have a lot to juggle; family, friends, work, and the need for personal quality time. This is why it's more difficult for an adult to make room for learning, while it's absolutely crucial to prioritize. If his life is already demanding, then the learning outcome will be compromised. Taking that under consideration, an instructional designer needs to create a flexible program, accommodate busy schedules, and accept the fact that personal obligations might obstruct the learning process.

8. **High expectations**

Adult learners have high expectations. They want to be taught about things that will be useful to their work, expect to have immediate results, seek for a course that will worth their while and not be a waste of their time or money. This is why it's important to create a course that will maximize their advantages, meet their individual needs and address all the learning challenges.

*Pappas, Chris. "8 Important Characteristics Of Adult Learners." 8 Important Characteristics Of Adult Learners. Concepts Magazine, May-June 2013. Web. 02 Oct. 2013.*

What implications does this knowledge of adult learning charactersitics have on our work?

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