



Advisory Tools



Advisory - Tools & Tips for your TEX.inc Advisory journey

Where to start as an advisor

You've embraced the role of an advisor, keen to share your extensive knowledge for the benefit of those yearning to up-skill quickly and power up their career, but knowing what you know is one thing - teaching what you know can feel a little daunting if you haven't done it before!

This ebook presents some top tips and strategies to kickstart your role as an advisor, giving you insight into the latest in andragogy (the fancy word for the art and science of adult learning), and ways you can maximise learner engagement for optimal results.

You ready to get started? This e-book is your first step in a rewarding journey. In the pages that follow, we'll introduce you to some of the grounding theory in best-practice advisory and offer up some practical strategies to get you kick started. Beyond these introductory pages, there are many avenues you can explore to enhance your skills, that will bring you up to speed with contemporary practices. Keep in mind, our Super Advisors are here to support your own professional development, so be sure to book in a session and explore the many opportunities that lie ahead

Three Tips for Effective Advisory

So, you're an expert in your field. But how do you transfer your breadth and depth of expertise across to an eager learner? Knowing is different from effective sharing, which requires an appreciation of a learner's unique needs and learning pathway preferences. While you may have been lucky to have received train the trainer teaching through your organisation, we know some of you are diving in the deep end on your own.

There are a myriad of training programs on delivery of online learning that you could immerse yourself in, and if you've never trained someone before, these might be of benefit. But we know many of you with existing knowledge and experience are itching to dive in and give advisory a go, so we've collected some of the leading lessons and advice from successful advisors that will ensure you have a smooth start.

1. Build a Solid Foundation

To facilitate rapid growth in learning, it is vital that you establish a strong knowledge foundation with your learner. Work to understand your learner's baseline, and fill in any essential gaps in their foundation so they can build on their basics quickly and efficiently. Check for understanding as you go, asking your learner to summarise back to you their take-aways along the way, and inviting them to ask questions that seek to clarify. Applaud and reward curiosity, and build confidence in your learner by reinforcing their efforts. When a learner feels confident, they tackle complex concepts with an open, optimistic mindset and are intrinsically motivated to turn their insights into action that benefit their development goals.

2. Establish a Clear Purpose

Efficient advisory establishes a clear purpose for learning at the outset. Knowing your learner's goals and objectives will assist you to weave in practical examples of where you've personally experienced successful application of the skill or concept you are exploring together. For example, a purpose of gaining a broad overview of an industry's development in the past decade that supports communication across sectors would look very different from the purpose of learning a niche market to bolster an interview application. A clear purpose will help you and your learner set timely goals and track progress

3. Establish Learning Preferences

We all learn in different ways. While some people absorb information through rote learning details, many of us benefit from hearing case studies or seeing examples that support our imagination's ability to bring new concepts and skills to life. Get curious about your learner's learning preferences, and be prepared to pivot in your advisory style. Build up your toolkit with graphs, slides, videos and case studies that support your experience exchange.

The Basic Principles of Adult Learning

The previous page used a fancy term to describe the process of teaching adults: andragogy. This term was coined by respected adult learning theorist, Malcolm Knowles, in an effort to differentiate the process of child learning (pedagogy) with adult learning. While it is definitely not necessary to get bogged down with all the theory in order to be a successful TEX.inc Advisor, understanding the basic principles of andragogy will help you to design content and style that maximises learner engagement and outcomes.

Here are the 4 basic principles of adult learning, according to Knowles' research and practice (Kearsley, 2010):

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

TEX.inc Advisory lends itself well to these principles. Learners use their skills matrix to consider and select appropriate learning according to their needs, thus are driving the planning of their learning and ensuring immediate relevance. The learner/expert model means that you are uniquely positioned to share your experiences (including failures and mistakes!) with your learners in order to model the value of experience as a basis for learning. Advisory sessions are designed to provide immediate solutions to a learner's identified skill or knowledge gap and are therefore problem-centred and highly relevant. So, the good news is, simply following the TEX.inc Way of advisory means you are already ticking the boxes for effective learning instruction. The following pages provide some more concrete strategies for amplifying your role as a TEX.inc Advisor.

The Value of Setting Clear Learning Objectives

As the andragogy principles outline, adult learners want to know that the time and effort they're investing in learning has immediate relevance to their learning goals and work context. A clear description of your Advisory session along with bullet point learning objectives assists a learner in deciding whether or not your session is relevant for their needs. Clear and accurate learning points are essential in establishing expectations and setting yourself and your learner up for an optimal learning experience.

What are 'learning objectives'?

Learning objectives are the specific and measurable skills and/or knowledge your learner should be able to demonstrate as a result of participating in your advisory session. In a 1-2 hour session, it would be expected you have between 2-5 learning objectives, dependant on the depth of content covered. At the end of the session, your learner should be able to test themselves against the objectives to identify how effective their learning has been.

How can I set effective learning objectives?

Firstly, you need to decide on the 'what' of your learning objectives: what are the essential focus points of the session? For example, an a session centred around developing leadership skills, you might be focusing in on effective communication. Your learning objective would then relate to a specific communication skill such as body language.

The next step is to decide on the depth of learning you wish your learner to achieve. For this, it can be useful to draw on the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy, which is a hierarchy of learning depth across 6 levels. Below is an outline of the 6 levels and some verbs you can use to incorporate into your learning objective so that it can be measured:

- Knowledge/Remembering: list, recognise, define
- Comprehension/Understanding: sort, describe, explain, locate
- Application/Applying: demonstrate, implement, perform
- Analysis/Analysing: analyse, categorise, compare, differentiate
- Evaluation/Evaluating: assess, evaluate, rate, rank
- Synthesis/Creating: develop, construct, design, organise

Now, let's put them together to form a learning objective!

The final step is to combine the 'what' (your content) with the 'how' it will be measured. Here is an example, with Bloom's taxonomy noted in brackets (you wouldn't include these in your actual objectives, this is simply here for your reference):

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- List the 4 main types of body language in communication (knowledge)
- Sort a list of body language examples into the different types (Comprehension)
- Demonstrate effective body language for optimal communication (Application)

Check for Understanding

It's one thing for a teacher to teach, it's another thing for a learner to learn. Checking for understanding throughout your session is an integral aspect of session success. If you don't know where your learner is at, it is difficult to ensure they'll achieve the learning objectives set out. Here are some tips on how to check for understanding as you work with your learner to achieve desired outcomes.

Switch yes/no questions to open ended questions

The question, 'does that make sense?' is a common but highly ineffective question when it comes to checking for learner understanding. It is possible the learner genuinely does understand, but it is also possible they have misinterpreted or they don't understand but are feeling awkward or embarrassed to admit it. Switching to an active question, or an open-ended question allows you and the learner to effectively assess the level of understanding. An example of an effective check-in question may be:

"So that I can check we're on the same page, talk me through your interpretation of the concept we've just reviewed"

Once the learner has provided their response, you can then evaluate whether they are on track, and make any necessary adjustments. Remember to consider appropriate feedback responses here. Avoid ridiculing a learner if they're off track, and consider a positive approach to reviewing the content or concept.

The old-fashioned 'pop quiz'

While it may seem a little child-like and outdated, if your session is content heavy and you're wanting to see how much your learner has absorbed, a brief pop-quiz can be an effective measurement tool if delivered in the right way. If it suits your style, introduce it in a light-hearted way, explaining that it's not a formal test, simply a fun way to check for understanding. You can simply ask the questions and have them respond, or use one of the many online quiz makers available. Remember, the purpose is to check learning, not to judge it.

Ensure opportunities to turn insights into action

Incorporating activities into your sessions provides valuable feedback on learning without the learner feeling they're being tested. After explaining a key concept or content piece, insert an activity that has your learner practising their new knowledge or skills. Have them demonstrate to you, hold their work to the screen or email it to you so that you can consider what they've mastered and what can be further developed.

Variety is the Spice of Life

While some learners may be able to sit and maintain concentration while being talked-at, research shows that learning is usually more effective when content is broken into smaller chunks and a variety of activities break up direct instruction (your talking bits). Here are some activities / strategies you may like to use to keep your learner engaged.

Use visual aids to support your direct instruction

Use visual aids such as slides and infographics to support your direct instruction. When creating slides, ensure you don't simply write down everything you plan to say as a learner will either feel overwhelmed, or switch off listening to you as they read the slides. Focus on the visual element - an interesting and relevant image that compliments what you are saying, and perhaps 1-2 key words or phrases that synthesise your ideas. If you need to present a lot of words on a slide (relevant facts or statistics a learner should record accurately, for example), then ensure you provide time for your learner to capture and digest this information before you continue to talk.

Incorporate videos to break up your talking sections

Videos are a fantastic learning tool, provided they are selected well. Consider your audience and your context, and select a short video that encapsulates your learning point well. If you're feeling creative, you can even create your own video content. There are some great, simple-to-use animator makers these days, or considering outsourcing to the likes of Upwork or Fiverr for a cost effective option (unless you happen to be an animator yourself, in which case you've got this bit covered!). You can also use humorous or light-hearted videos (think funny cats or human fails here!) as a brief brain-break in between content heavy segments. Just be sure to check copyright and licensing rules prior to using someone else's video/footage.

Create cheat sheets/worksheets or a workbook

There are some fantastic high-tech options available these days that allow you to generate interactive activities for learners, but many can be costly and time consuming. While we encourage you to develop your Advisory toolkit with engaging content and activities, going back to the basics with a simple worksheet or booklet is a tried and tested method. Just be sure to remember the andragogical principles mentioned earlier - all material should be highly relevant and don't overload your learner with laborious written activities that won't push the needle on their learning goals. We also love to end all our workshops and sessions with an "ah-ha moments" worksheet, allowing the learner to reflect on and capture their key insights from the session, assess their learning against the learning objectives and set a revised or new learning goal to motivate them to continue in their TEX.inc learning journey. Feel free to use the template that follows.

A Final Thought

Remember, this e-book provides just a simple template to get you started, and it's important to take into consideration your context, field of study, audience and experience when structuring your advisory sessions. Finding your personal presentation and teaching style takes time and practice. If you're serious about growing as a preferred TEX.inc Advisor, spend time doing your research into effective andragogy, seek opportunities to learn from professional teachers, tutors and advisors, practise on friends and family, and maintain a growth mindset, always seeking opportunities to learn and develop.

Along the way, it's expected you'll hit some roadblocks. We're here to support your commitment to TEX.inc and help you with your own growth goals. Dip into our online resource library, and reach out to us if you wish to contribute to its growth. We're excited to see TEX.inc organically grow as we share our lessons as a community. Foster your own professional development by booking in a super coach session today.