



# The Keys to Better Workforce Training





# What We Learn—and How We Learn It—Matters

*"Technician Fatally Electrocuted While Testing Transformers"<sup>1</sup>*

*"Logging Worker Crushed to Death by Felled Tree"<sup>2</sup>*

*"Plastics Company Fined \$260,000"<sup>3</sup>*

*Can you guess what the incidents these headlines refer to have in common? They all occurred because of insufficient training.*

It's one of the patterns that most clearly emerges in news releases from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. As any number of recent regulatory actions reveal:

- ◆ Many workplace "accidents" are avoidable
- ◆ Injuries and illnesses can be extremely costly in terms of human life and financial impact
- ◆ Nearly every incident could have been mitigated or prevented entirely if the employers had provided better training to employees

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ehstoday.com/training-and-engagement/article/21916999/osha-lack-of-ppe-and-training-cost-electrical-technician-his-life>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/region5/06202019>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osha/osha20180420>

*It's time to meet substandard training head on. If you can't prove that your employees are well-informed and thoroughly trained to do their jobs safely and effectively, you're exposing your people to potentially deadly risks and putting your business on the line.*

Most safety professionals and decision-makers stay up to date with OSHA proceedings and are keenly aware of all this. Nonetheless, they struggle to adequately educate their workers on the essential components of their jobs. There's a multitude of reasons why. Training is rarely a priority. Courses are often dull and unengaging. Many learning management systems are mired in the past. Important information doesn't "stick," particularly during a crisis.

It's time to meet substandard training head on. If you can't prove that your employees are well-informed and thoroughly trained to do their jobs safely and effectively, you're exposing your people to potentially deadly risks and putting your business on the line.

Plus, effective training is more than a safety imperative. It's also how top-performing organizations **maximize worker morale, productivity, and retention**. Train your employees the right way and they'll reward you with their loyalty and their best work.

In this ebook, you'll find the keys to effective training—the best practices for creating and delivering engaging educational content. We'll explore...

- ◆ Ways to make training relevant to your workers
- ◆ The power of real-life examples
- ◆ How to tailor content to people in different jobs and experience levels
- ◆ Methods for reinforcing training without repeating the same thing over and over

...and more.

We've split this ebook into 4 chapters, each focused on a training best practice, followed by a checklist you can use to assess your current program. You can read the ebook in sequential order to see how to develop training from start to finish, or flip to a chapter for reference during a specific stage of your training process. Every tip can apply to both conventional and digital training initiatives, from in-person classes to eLearning programs delivered remotely at each learner's own pace.

*Ready to learn all about learning? Let's get started.*

# All Good Training Relies on the Same 4 Principles

*Workforce training is essential in virtually every organization. However, every business approaches training differently, and not everyone does it effectively.*

For some organizations, training is simply a matter of checking the box. It's about providing the minimum education necessary to avoid legal risks and fines associated with noncompliance.

For other organizations, training goes a step further. It's designed to support the needs of the business—not only mitigating risk, but also improving efficiency, nurturing workforce culture, and boosting employee engagement.

Can you guess which approach works better?

The truth is that most employers with lackluster, dull, or out-of-date training know they have a problem. It's just that the problem seems time-consuming and expensive to solve. And it's rarely the first concern on anyone's list. Given the choice between facing potential regulatory action and implementing a new learning management system from the ground up, organizations typically choose the intangible risks over the tangible costs.

This is a choice you don't have to make. **Any organization can easily and cost-effectively improve employee training.** You don't need to buy a million-dollar eLearning platform or hire a team of educational consultants.

## The 4 Principles of Good Training

Know your audience



Use real-life examples



Assess prior knowledge



Promote behavioral change through repetition





# Training Best Practice #1: Know Your Audience

*This is the core ingredient in any approach to training. Without it, content, technology, and processes don't matter. If the training isn't engaging, it doesn't work.*

All effective training is centered on the learner. Knowing your audience means understanding the individual or group taking the training.

To get to know your audience, you'll need to answer a few questions. Whether we're talking about a single employee or a 50-person department, the same considerations apply:

## **1. What is the audience's education level?**

Meet your audience where they are. Don't give people education they can't understand or, conversely, is too simplistic to offer value. At KPA, our adult learning standard is 8th-grade language. Of course, there are instances when that standard needs to be raised or lowered. In some cases, an employee population may be largely illiterate—which would necessitate a training approach that doesn't rely on text.

## **2. What is the audience's range of experience?**

Make sure the training is relevant to the audience's knowledge and expertise, or lack thereof. Sometimes, it needs to be targeted to experienced, on-the-job professionals. Other times, it should be targeted toward entry-level personnel. And then there are times when the curriculum needs to speak to people with a wide range of experiences.

### 3. What motivates your employees?

Training needs to be engaging. Carefully consider format and content. Again, think about your specific audience: What kinds of lessons and activities do they find easiest or most intuitive? What's most interesting?

### 4. Are there cultural considerations to keep in mind?

Your training should reflect your audience's perspective and experience. Diversity matters—not only in what images are presented, but the kinds of real-world examples offered to support a topic. White, English-speaking men in business suits shouldn't be the only people your audience encounters.

## Know How They Learn—the 4 Learning Styles

<b>Visual learners</b>	They absorb information best by reading text and seeing images.
<b>Auditory learners</b>	They learn better by listening and through discussions than they do by reading.
<b>Tactile learners</b>	They prefer to use their hands in ways such as sketching, putting together puzzles, or manipulating objects (e.g. building blocks, scale models).
<b>Kinesthetic learners</b>	They learn by doing—moving their bodies, climbing ladders, walking around job sites, working through simulated problems, and so on.

Not everyone learns in the same way. Training should ideally be provided with all of these styles or modalities in mind. Although most people are drawn to a single learning style, it's not uncommon for an employee to gravitate to two or more. Plus, different formats help with reinforcement and retention.

## Know What Motivates Them

Just as they have different learning styles, people also have different motivations for learning:

<b>Winning/ dominating</b>	Many people enjoy competition. They want to beat their colleagues and achieve the number one spot on a list—for example, as the salesperson with the most deals closed in a month.
<b>Socializing/ networking</b>	Instead of competing, some people would rather have conversations and collaborate on solutions together. For instance, members of this audience may prefer a panel discussion where participants exchange ideas.
<b>Achieving</b>	Some people are goal-oriented without the competitive or collaborative element. They want to accomplish things and see positive results. For these learners, training should incorporate opportunities to solve real-world challenges and demonstrate excellence.
<b>Exploring/ collecting</b>	Finally, some people enjoy the thrill of discovery above all else. They like to find things, bring new ideas to light, and chart the journey from "here" to "there." A dynamic, progress-oriented curriculum appeals to these sorts of learners.

"How" is the first question to ask of any training program, but perhaps more important is the "what." What form will training take? What will the curriculum look like? What information will be presented?

These are pivotal questions with a simple answer: It's about storytelling.



## Training Best Practice #2: Use Real-Life Examples

### *The Best Workforce Training Is Based on Real-World Examples*

Sam's career started earlier than most. At 14, he was painting cars as a hobby. At 16, he joined the auto body shop.

In those early days, Sam rarely wore a respirator. He just didn't think about it. He was young and felt more or less invincible. Besides, it seemed like a non-issue. He had seen the other guys take off their masks or forget to use them. And he did a lot of his work during the day, usually stepping outside at some point for fresh air. Sam figured he had nothing to worry about.

By his mid-twenties, things started to change. For one, Sam was busy. He was working upwards of 60 hours per week, regularly pulling double shifts at the shop. He had also developed a periodic dry cough—strange, considering the fact that he never smoked.

As the years went by, Sam continued working, and the problem grew worse. The periodic coughing turned into regular fits. The cough became painful. The fits happened more and more frequently. Sam often felt light-headed, tired, and out of breath—even when he wasn't exerting himself.

Then, one day, Sam sat down on a bench at work, closed his eyes, and woke up in a hospital room. He had fainted. And while he was out, the physician had performed some tests and discovered a lump. At just 38 years old, Sam was diagnosed with lung cancer. His career ended earlier—much earlier—than most.

## The Power of a Story

Sam's story is thankfully fictional. But it is based on real events, and it serves a very real purpose. It demonstrates the importance of respirators and respiratory protection.

At KPA, we like to use narratives like these throughout our training courses. Stories like Sam's serve multiple educational purposes. They not only help introduce a topic, but add character and detail throughout, acting as a framework for a particular subject matter. From broad strokes (e.g. what a respirator is, why it matters) to the finer points (e.g. respirator use checklist), learners can return to a palpable scenario and set of characters.

For these reasons and more, the use of real-life examples is one of the key principles of effective workforce training.

## Why Do Stories, Especially Real-World Examples, Matter?

There are several benefits.

The first is **higher engagement**. It's no secret that people are most engaged by content they feel is relevant to them—content that reflects their everyday experiences. Thus, real-life examples create buy-in from the first moment of learning.

Real-life examples also correlate with **improved retention**. People are able to retain information when they can relate to an experience, especially if they've had that experience before.

Third, examples give learners **the opportunity to practice**. Stories are safe ways to test ideas, make mistakes, and try again. People can apply what they've learned to a detailed practice scenario or simulation, without the risks of attempting it for the first time in their actual day-to-day work.

## What Kinds of Examples Do Learners Relate To?

At KPA, we divide real-life examples into three general categories:

### Stories

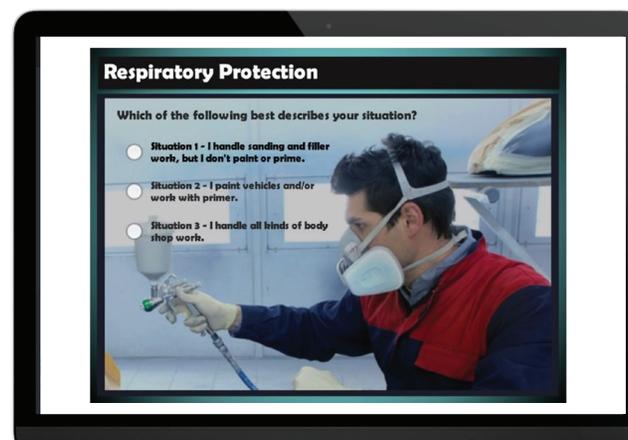
Stories are catch-all narratives with a beginning, middle, and end. They're illustrative, serving to introduce a topic. They may have more fictional elements but are nonetheless based in real-world ideas.

### Case Studies

Case studies are deeper dives into particular events. They're more factual and detail-driven than the average story, often based on a real occurrence but with names and identifying facts changed. We'll follow case studies with assessments and questions to test for comprehension.

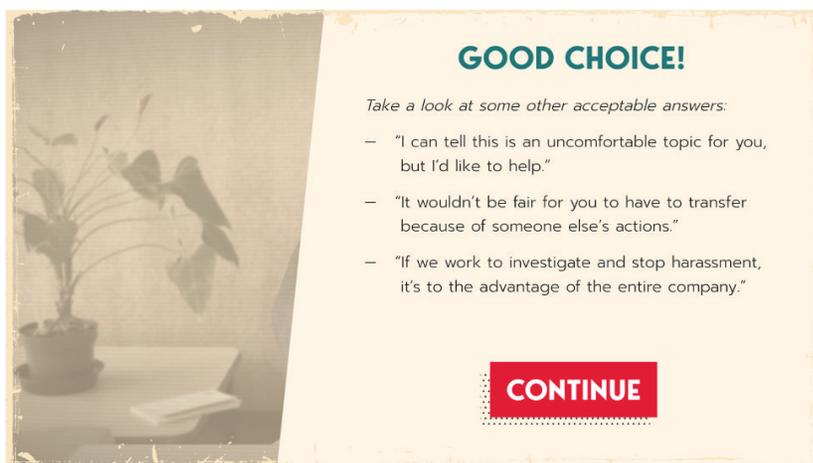
### Scenarios

Scenarios are bite-sized chunks of stories that center on a specific issue or piece of information. We might use a scenario to tee up a question about a certain regulation, for instance, or to give life to a list of step-by-step instructions.



## Examples Are “Safe Spaces”

Examples allow people undergoing training to act as if they were in a real-life situation—without the real-life consequences for screwing up.



Let's use KPA's “Investigating Harassment Claims for Managers” course as a representative case. The course walks users through the process from start to finish, at one point presenting learners with several dialogue options for convincing an employee to file an official claim.

At this point, a learner may not know the right approach. That's okay. Not every manager has had this experience, which is why having a trial ground is necessary. The training provides a safe space where the learner can make mistakes and not be penalized for them. Engaging in a real-life example also empowers the user to make their own choices and see the immediate ramifications.

Many training courses skip the experiential portion and jump from lecture to assessment. A learner reads or hears about an issue and is then asked to provide an answer, which is marked “right” or “wrong.” This approach doesn't drive engagement or retention—people are compelled to simply regurgitate the correct answers, which they often immediately forget.

By framing the course as an example, with multiple activities and steps to participate in, we're creating another layer of engagement. Rather than a simple question and answer, there are choices to make—an active learning journey.

Online content is one way to use examples in training, but it isn't the only way. You could facilitate a live group discussion—pulling up slides, offering a few options to the “class,” and asking: “Which do you think is the correct answer?” You could liven the discussion even further, by asking if there may be other acceptable answers, or having members of the group share their own stories.

From knowing your audience to using examples, optimizing the how and what of training content is essential—but it's only one half of the training equation. Let's look at the importance of ongoing assessments and how to conduct them effectively.



## Training Best Practice #3: Assess Prior Knowledge

### *To Deliver Effective Training, Test Learners' Prior Knowledge*

Everyone's an expert in something. How about you? Take a moment and think of something you have deep experience in—that subject you know really, really well. Maybe it's a skill like mountain climbing, makeup application, photography, playing guitar, or coding. Or maybe it's a topic you're intimately familiar with—something like baking, World War II, art history, or your favorite baseball team.

Now imagine you're about to teach a class about that thing. You have two students: one who knows practically as much as you do, and one who knows next to nothing about the subject.

Which student do you focus on? Which approach will provide more value to both learners: a basic course (that could bore the first student), or an advanced course (that could alienate the other student)?

Trick question. In the most effective learning systems, you don't have to choose.

### **Effective Training Accounts for Learners of All Experience Levels**

One of the biggest challenges of workforce training is designing education for people of different experience levels. A course about forklifts, for instance, needs to be engaging to a long-time forklift driver as well as someone who's never operated a vehicle. If one category of learner is left out, the organization could inadvertently create a compliance gap or injury risk.

The same is true for mandatory topics such as harassment prevention. Everyone may think they know how to identify and stop harassment, but you can't just take employees at their word.

Effective training accounts for all kinds of learners by assessing prior knowledge. It doesn't make assumptions about an individual's experience. Instead, it gives people an opportunity to demonstrate what they know (or don't know) about a topic, so they're beginning at the place that makes sense to them.

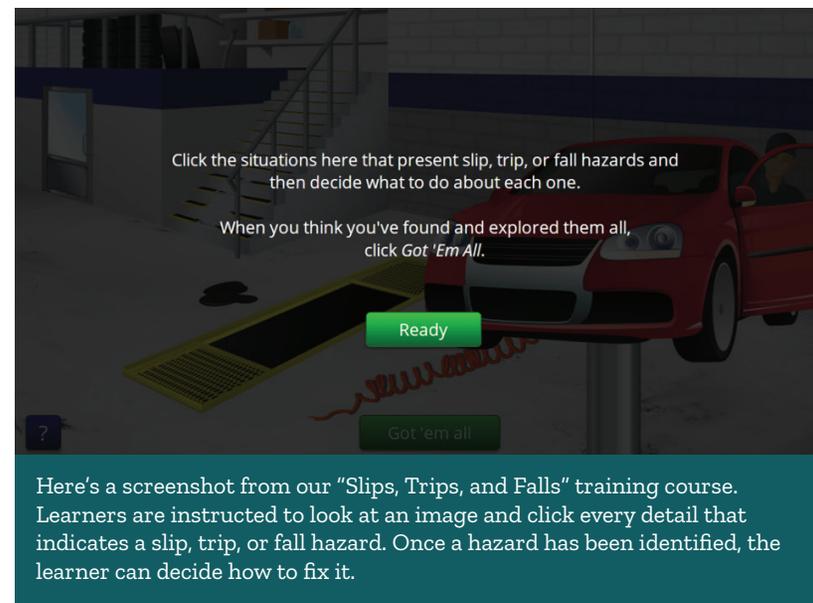
## Benefits to Assessing Prior Knowledge

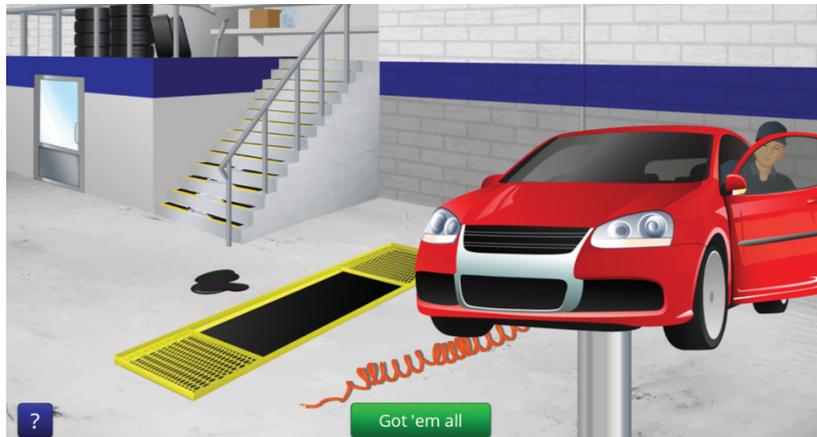
- 1. Assessing prior knowledge empowers learners.** It frames the topic in their unique perspectives, so each person can immediately start participating in the conversation. Experienced learners can show off what they know. New learners can make educated guesses and engage with the content without experiencing an hour-long lecture first.
- 2. It challenges novice learners.** Rather than subjecting your workforce to a long, dry, or overly simplified presentation, you can pique their interest and emotional investment in their own learning. When people directly come up against what they don't know, they're more inclined to figure it out.
- 3. It acknowledges prior experience.** People who know a subject well tend to tune out when they're treated like beginners. Give your experienced employees the recognition they deserve, and let them set the pace for their learning.

**4. It naturally increases engagement.** Essentially, we're talking about starting a course with a test. It isn't a graded test, of course, but it does center the individual and raise the stakes from the first moment. If someone has close to zero knowledge, they'll be interested in learning and improving. If someone has a great deal of knowledge, they'll be well-positioned to demonstrate their knowledge and become a guide for others.

## How Can You Assess Prior Knowledge?

Let's look at an example of how KPA's training solution assesses learners' prior knowledge.

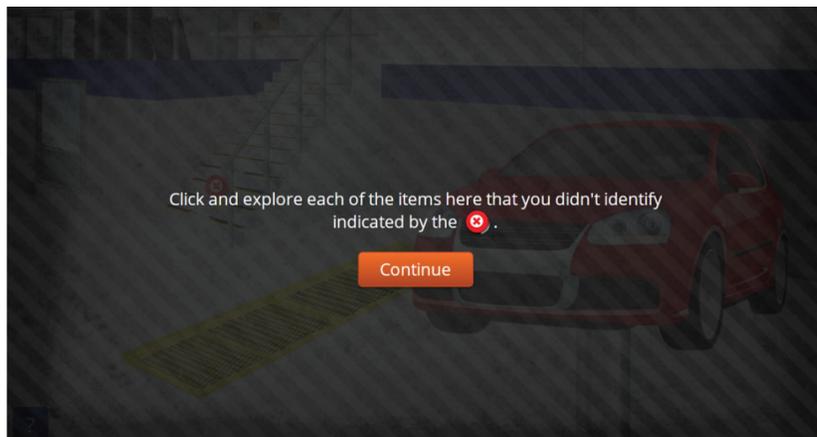




Above, you can see an illustration of an automotive service bay. Some of the hazards are obvious, even to a novice. We can see an oil spill, a coiled cord on the floor, and an open lube pit. A training course could simply point each of these hazards out. But by asking learners to do it themselves, we're allowing people to explore and show their knowledge—and maximizing engagement from the start.



In this case, the learner found every item but one: the worn-out stair treads. This is an opportunity to provide real, contextual education. We can drill down on a single thing an individual doesn't know, while not skipping over any content for others.



After they've picked out every hazard they can identify and clicked "Got 'em all," the learner sees a screen like the one above.

By the way, this approach doesn't require an online learning management system or tech platform. You can do the same thing with printouts, or even conduct an interactive discussion as people walk around a staged environment.

However you deliver training, there's one more best practice to keep in mind: repetition. Repeating information. Reinforcing learning. Communicating the same message in different ways.



## Training Best Practice #4: Promote Behavioral Change Through Repetition

### *How to Reinforce Training Through Repetition—the Right Way*

Ever cram for a test? You probably remember the flashcards, the highlighters, and the stacks of textbooks. How about the caffeine, or the tears, or the late-night panic attacks? Or that floaty, slightly nauseous mixture of relief, uncertainty, and sleep deprivation you felt when the test was finally over?

If you're like most former high school students, I bet you remember all that pretty clearly. (Or, you may still have nightmares about it.)

What you might not remember is what you were actually cramming into your brain. Sohcahtoa, the periodic table, the Peloponnesian War, King Lear, the Treaty of Versailles... Those details are long gone. In all likelihood, they exited your memory the very day you finished the test—as soon as you put down your pencil.

If you're not careful, the same thing could be happening for the employees engaging with your workforce training program.

## Repetition Is Essential for Training

Humans learn through repetition. The only way to become knowledgeable about something and get better at it is to practice it. This is basic neuroscience. As brain training company Peak explains:

*"Whenever we perform an action, for example, kicking a soccer ball, the neurons involved in that action start firing electrical signals, or action potentials, and form an active network of cells. One effect of repeatedly practicing the action may be increasing myelin around the network, leading to faster and more efficient processing of the cell signals—and better performance."*

(Don't worry—you won't be quizzed on this.)

## ...But You Can't Just Repeat the Same Thing Over and Over

Neuro-speak aside, the stuff humans tend to remember is the stuff that has meaning to us. Nothing's going to linger in that brain unless it's interesting or useful in some way.

*"Training is an important piece of a company's safety and compliance program and a well-executed training program can build a strong culture that keeps employees and businesses safe."*

Kathryn Carlson,  
Vice President of Product Management, KPA

What we learn—and how we learn it—matters.

You could spend hours drilling dates, names, and terms like "October 21st, 1919," "Archduke Franz Ferdinand," "Article 231," and "Carthaginian peace" and not remember any of it tomorrow.

On the other hand, if you learn that the Treaty of Versailles ended one of the bloodiest wars of all time but may have contributed to the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, you have context for those details—and a reason not to forget about them.

The value of the information needs to be clear to both sides: the learner and the instructor (that's you). Remember: you're training your workers on how to do their jobs better and more safely. You're not teaching to the test. **The information has to stick and it has to make a difference—it needs to change people's behaviors.**



## Reinforcing Training Through Repetition

Effective repetition is simple in theory, but not always obvious in execution. It starts with instruction (“here’s what you need to know about this topic”) and gets reinforced through practice (“try this interactive exercise,” “see if you can pass this true/false quiz”).

### How NOT to do it:

1. Deliver repeated content over and over.
2. Rinse and repeat. And repeat again.

### How to do it:

**1. Stick to a routine schedule.** Many training courses should happen annually, every three years, or on other regular basis. Even if it’s just a 5- or 10-minute review of a training topic, every form of reinforcement makes a difference.

**2. Create different learning activities.** After you present basic knowledge on a topic, break it down and make it specific to your organization. Imagine you’re conducting a training on sexual harassment, for instance. First, everyone learns the same core content. After that, you may decide to encourage employees to split into pairs or small groups and discuss what they learned.

**3. Deliver training in different ways.** Group discussion is just one method of reinforcing training. Consider other activities that suit your employees’ various learning types. Examples include videos, audio narratives, live performances, role-plays, and journaling. You can also look for opportunities to bring in your company’s harassment prevention policy and gather questions about your specific rules and requirements. The more learning methods you can incorporate into training, the more relevant and memorable the material becomes.

**4. Apply it to the job immediately.** Reinforce learning right away, and connect it to employees’ lived realities. The sooner you have employees apply what they’ve learned to their jobs, the better the rates of information retention you’ll see. The keyword here is relevance—make it relevant to your company, to the job, to the employee.

All of this repetition ultimately creates habits. That’s where behavioral change happens. You can’t change behaviors with a check-the-box, one-and-done training solution. To make training stick, you have to shift the mindset from mere compliance to doing the right thing. Make no mistake: this is work. It requires more effort on your and your employees’ parts. But with that extra work, you’re nurturing lasting habits—and building a true safety culture as a result.

## What Does Effective Repetition Look Like?

Let’s look at an example of how KPA’s training solution reinforces training through repetition.

## Resisting an **Electrocution**

An employee was wiring a standard **120 volt** electrical socket that was supposed to be de-energized.

He had just washed his hands and did not dry them as carefully as possible. Because his hands were wet, when he attempted to bend one of the wires onto an outlet contact, he sustained a life threatening shock.



Here's a screenshot from our "Electrical Safety—General Awareness" training course. Learners are introduced to a risk factor for electrocution (wet hands) as well as the consequence (a life threatening shock). The lesson is presented as a story.

## Resisting an **Electrocution**

What if the employee had **used PPE**, such as rubber gloves?

**Current (I) = Voltage (V) / Resistance (R)**

**0 mA (I) = No path for current available**

**0 mA** of current.



In the next screen, we present a question: "What if the employee had used personal protective equipment, such as rubber gloves?" The material here is framed as a formula, rather than through storytelling, offering another perspective and an opportunity to deepen the information for some learners.

## Your **Turn**

**Electrocuted!**

While no gloves or wet conditions can each lead to electric shock individually, when they are combined a conductive path for electric current is created.

Avoiding these types of scenarios is imperative to staying safe when working with electricity.

*Remember, none of these variables alone will always protect you from an electrocution. Be vigilant and always follow your company's Electrical Safety Policy.*

Hands:  None - Wet

Surface:  Dry



And here we have an interactive simulation. Learners can find out for themselves how different combinations of gloves/no gloves, wet/dry hands, and wet/dry conditions lead to different outcomes.

By the way, as we explained in our last chapter, this approach doesn't require an online learning management system or tech platform. You can do the same thing with printouts or conduct an interactive discussion as people walk around a staged environment.

### Remember the 4 Principles of Good Training

1. Know your audience
2. Use real-life examples
3. Assess prior knowledge
4. Promote behavioral change through repetition

## Checklist: Are You Creating and Delivering Engaging Training Content?



*Establishing a thoughtful training strategy will help your organization reduce costs, generate revenue, and mitigate risks. Use this checklist to assess the readiness of your training materials.*

### Know Your Audience

Take time to understand the individual learner—or learners—that are taking the training and adjust your content accordingly.

- Determine your employee's education and reading levels
- Gauge how much experience your employees have on the training topic
- Consider what motivates your employees. Are they driven by winning/dominating, socialization/networking, achieving, or exploring/collecting?
- Take into account cultural considerations including whether you should offer the training in multiple languages
- Offer a wide variety of content that addresses the different learning modalities including audio, visual, and kinesthetic methods

*In 2019, KPA customers completed more than 2 million online course across its product lines.*

## Use Real-World Examples

Incorporate real-world examples into your training materials to improve retention, drive engagement, and provide opportunities for employees to practice scenarios.

- Determine your employee's education and reading levels
- Gauge how much experience your employees have on the training topic

## Assess Prior Knowledge

Ask questions throughout your training to empower learners, drive engagement, challenge novice learners, and acknowledge prior experience.

- Incorporate a variety of questions and scenarios into your content that range in difficulty from beginner to advanced
- Ask questions that relate to your audience's different learning motivators of winning/dominating, socialization/networking, achieving, or exploring/collecting
- Frame questions through audio, visual, and kinesthetic based formats

## Use Repetition to Promote Behavior Changes

Create diverse learning experiences to reinforce key takeaways in slightly different ways—while leveraging the same content and/or topics.

- Establish a routine and schedule to continue to review and reinforce training topics
- Be aware of training and/or certification expiration dates and be sure to educate employees during the period between renewals
- Create different learning activities and deliver trainings in unique ways
- Have discussions about trainings to reinforce key takeaways

# Ensure Safety and Improve Productivity with Award-Winning Training By KPA

*KPA offers award-winning training courses designed to help employees improve their performance on the job. Scenario-based learning modules educate learners on the laws and regulations that apply to their jobs. Our courses feature high-level interactivity and video-based content designed to hold learners' interest and keep them engaged.*

KPA's training team has developed an extensive library of EHS, HR, and F&I training courses to meet your needs. Here is just a small sample of the courses we offer:

- ◆ Personal Protective Equipment
- ◆ Anti-Harassment Training
- ◆ Back Injury Prevention
- ◆ Customer Information Security
- ◆ DOT Hazardous Materials Training
- ◆ Emergency Response
- ◆ Privacy Notices
- ◆ Ethics in the Workplace
- ◆ Federal Hazardous Waste Management
- ◆ Hazard Communication
- ◆ AC 609: Working with MVAC Systems
- ◆ Heat Illness Prevention
- ◆ IRS Section 8300: Cash Transaction Reporting
- ◆ Safe Driving
- ◆ Reputation Management and Complaint Resolution
- ◆ Slip, Trip, and Fall Prevention
- ◆ Red Flags Rule
- ◆ Abusive Workplace Conduct Prevention
- ◆ Workplace Violence Prevention (including active shooter response)

*"Training completion rates are usually in the high 90s. We have several stores that are regularly 100%. The general managers all see how their team is in compliance with the training. They're very competitive by nature, so this has been a great tool for me to share."*

Christopher Foy  
Chief Financial Officer  
Dick Hannah Dealerships



### ***Get Started with KPA***

*Give us a call: **866-356-1735***

*Send us an email: **info@kpa.io***

*Get a demo: **kpa.io***



### **KPA training is...**

- ◆ Available online and on-site
- ◆ Led by our safety Risk Management Consultants
- ◆ Designed to help employees improve their performance on the job and improve compliance
- ◆ Based on real-world stories and examples

### **Spanish Content**

Many of our HR and Safety courses are available in Spanish, making it easy for you to keep your Spanish-speaking workforce trained and up-to-date, and maximize compliance throughout your organization.

### **On-Demand Course Availability**

Course development supports best practices in the field, using the ADDIE model of instructional design—the standard guideline for building effective online training.