



Smart CPD

Upskilling in a challenging climate

The current economic climate poses obvious challenges for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Budgets are tight and training may have been reduced in order to cut costs. However, in an increasingly competitive environment, both at home and abroad, well-developed and skilled employees remain a company's greatest asset.

To break new markets, to attract new clients and to foster new revenue streams, employers need to ensure Continuing Professional Development (CPD), despite resource limitations. This CPD need to be targeted, time- and cost-efficient and closely related to business needs and requirements

So how can you maintain and improve competence in the current tough climate in a smart and effective way?

Read on for a number of effective, low-cost ways to drive agility and develop fresh expertise.

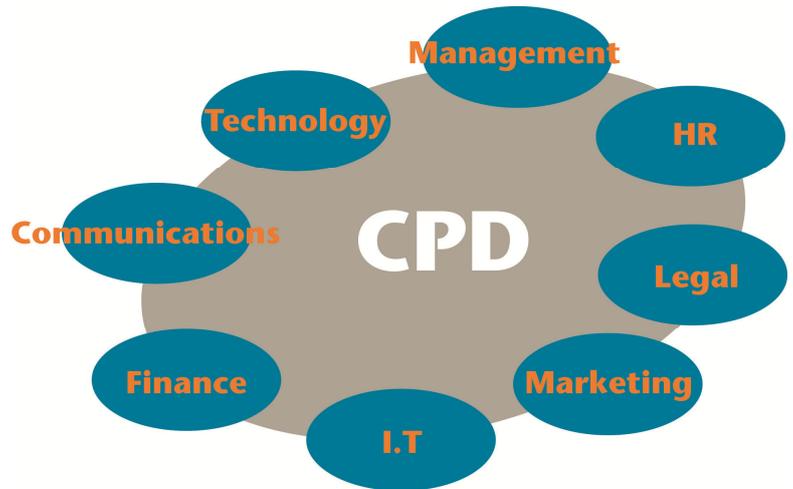
The nature of smart CPD

1. CPD IS VERY BROAD

Remember, CPD should not be solely technical focused. It should be rounded in terms of the overall development of an individual or a team.

Formal CPD should be relevant to business needs and/or career aspirations.

So, as engineers, technologists and technicians ‘wear many hats’, so too their CPD should include activities that will allow them to tackle the challenges of their role in a complete and well-equipped fashion.



2. CPD OUTCOMES FROM VERY BROAD INPUTS

The most obvious aspect of formal CPD is training but as broad as the areas of CPD are, so are the ways you can develop and learn.

Click here for the document “Types of CPD”

<http://www.engineersireland.ie/cpd/cpd-employer/what-counts/>



Note: The above is not exhaustive. What other examples of formal CPD can you think of which might not be obvious at first?

Ways to do “SMART CPD”

1. HARNESS INTERNAL EXPERTISE.

Undoubtedly the best way to think about “Smart CPD” is to think about how to spread knowledge your employees already have.

A few suggestions include:

1. Write technical reports on a research topic
2. Special Research projects (e.g. to identify new business areas or benchmark good practice)
3. Formal job shadowing / stretch assignments
4. Writing up a project paper
5. Deliver training, Master classes,
6. Mentoring for Professional Development
7. Short term cross-team projects

DON'T FORGET, THESE DON'T HAVE TO BE SOLELY TECHNICAL IN FOCUS



e.g. Have your engineers agreed formal cross-skilling sessions with staff in Finance, HR or Quality or IT?

Have a technician deliver an in-house training course on Excel time-saving tips or good CAD techniques?

Do you have someone who is expert at preparing tenders? Get them to prepare a talk and a 'How To' guide for other staff.

Involve graduates and new-joiners. They can often know more about the latest technologies and materials from their studies.

2. MAKE CPD PART OF HOW YOU OPERATE!

In terms of moving steadily up the CPD value-chain, leading CPD Accredited Employers build knowledge sharing into workflow e.g. include in your project plan, technical reports, research of good practice, presenting lessons learned etc and suddenly CPD is just part of how you do business.

3. LOOPED THINKING!

Always think in terms of maximum return on your investment in CPD

- If you use internal experts to present on a topic this means that CPD is double-edged – both the presenter and the audience gain CPD and can record credits and good CPD outcomes.
- If staff attend an external course, make it an absolute requirement that upon his/her return they deliver a short talk on the key learning points to colleagues.

4. USE YOUR PROFESSIONAL BODIES

There is a large amount of CPD available for activities with external learned bodies.

a) Free lectures with Engineers Ireland Regions, Divisions and Societies
Engineers Ireland runs an active programme of lectures and networking events through its regions, divisions and societies – all of which can generate CPD through attendance.

For more see <http://www.engineersireland.ie/community/regions/>

It is now the norm that most of these lectures are webcast so, if you can't make it in person, you can view online. And a large number are recorded so you can download and view later.

See <http://www.engineersireland.ie/services/web-tv/>



Why not view one of these recorded webcasts as a lunchtime lecture?

b) Research and submit papers to technical journals

A good way to gain valuable CPD is through planned research. It also helps with improving report writing and effective communication skills.

c) Deliver a talk to a conference or seminar



An excellent and valuable way of raising company (and personal) profile!

Could you negotiate a reduced attendance rate for a few colleagues in lieu of a fee - a good way to get very reduced training costs?

d) Get Involved!

Don't just attend – why not participate in, and help shape the activities, of Engineers Ireland. There are any number of ways to do this:

- Our committees (gain invaluable chairing and negotiation skills)
- Volunteer activities (team building skills)
- Applying for professional titles

- Working group participation (become a better negotiator)
- Present a paper at a lecture series

e) Use your industry connections

Link with other employers who have expertise you want to tap into...think what can you learn from your partners and, of course, what can they learn from you? Investigate how you could co-operate closer on CPD.



Could you arrange a site visit or arrange to share expertise through lunchtime talks or sharing lessons learned?

5. ONLINE LEARNING

Engineers Ireland has now made it even easier for members to experience excellence in CPD.

Members can complete award-winning, online CPD modules for a nominal fee, at their own pace, from anywhere with internet access - ideal for those who find it difficult to travel or those that have limited budgets.

A certificate of completion means courses can be easily recorded as verifiable CPD.

FREE TRIAL: Go to www.engineersireland.ie/cpd/elearning/ for more information and to try a free on-line CPD module “Strategic Thinking”

Some other FREE suggestions with both technical and wider content include:

- **MIT OpenCourseware** – Free lecture notes, exams and videos from MIT. No registration required. <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>
- **OpenLearn** – a free learning initiative from the Open University <http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php>

6. THE CPD CALENDAR OF EVENTS

View our entire Calendar of CPD Training events [here](#)

For more on CPD ideas please contact any member of the Engineers Ireland CPD team. Tel: 01-6651305. Email: cpdtraining@engineersireland.ie

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