

Best Practices in Developing Training Programs to Boost Pricing Execution



by Stephan
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In this article, the author presents a roadmap and critical steps for implementing effective and impactful price education training in your organization. Stephan M. Liozu, Ph.D. (sliozu@gmail.com), is the Founder of Value Innorruption Advisors, a consulting boutique specialized in value-based pricing, industrial pricing, digital and subscription-based pricing. He is also a Research Fellow at the Case Western Research University Weatherhead School of Management. He is a Certified Pricing Professional (CPP), a Prosci® certified Change Manager, a certified Price-to-Win instructor, and a Strategyzer Business Model Innovation Coach. He has authored seven books: "The Industrial Subscription Economy" (2022), "Pricing: The New CEO Imperative" (2021), "B2G Pricing" (2020), "Monetizing Data" (2018), "Value Mindset" (2017), "Dollarizing Differentiation Value" (2016), "The Pricing Journey" (2015), and "Pricing and Human Capital" (2015). Stephan sits on the Advisory Board of the Professional Pricing Society. He is a Strategic Advisor at DecisionLink and Monetize360 and a Senior Advisor at BCG.

The development of people skills through a thorough training plan is essential to proper pricing execution. Whether we are discussing the deployment of a tool, the assimilation of a new pricing method, or a large-scale pricing execution program, pricing training is the engine of the pricing transformation. Training is how we establish a growth mindset in the organization and tap the potential of people when embracing pricing activities. It is how we impart the organization's new vision, objectives, concepts, approaches, and tools to each rank-and-file employee, each team, and each executive throughout the business. Your company deserves this investment in dedicated training.

At the same time, how do we distill and pass along best practices for pricing training when every business is different? Differences in scope, culture, and market mean that every pricing training program requires customization. Meeting that challenge is not easy, but it brings great rewards when you meet or exceed your pricing-implementation targets. You will have more dedicated, aligned, productive employees who see that you've invested in their futures.

Despite – or perhaps because of – this demand for customized training, we have developed a list of training best practices that can help you achieve the results that your team and organization expect and deserve. These lessons are based on a career of initiating pricing and value transformations, coaching people in organizations across the world, and helping them take advantage of new tools and ideas (as well as harnessing the ones they already have access to).

The goal is to train and retrain, constantly checking in with the individuals to reinforce the values of the challenging work done in the original training. Remember that the point of a pricing transformation is to better ourselves and our performance, individually and as an organization.

Step 1: Rethink How Pricing Training Works

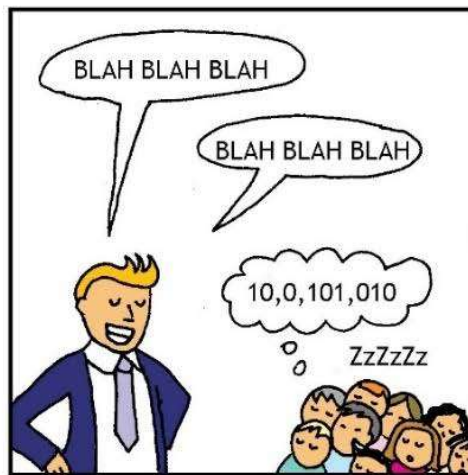
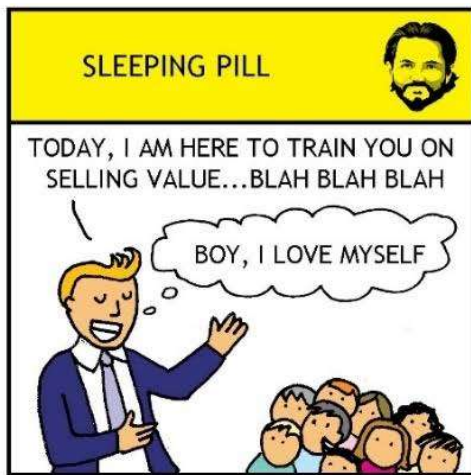
Let us be realistic about the scope here. We will be training many different people on many different things. This cannot occur overnight, nor can it occur using conventional methods. The best-practice model we will use instead is a total re-design of the traditional lecture-class approach. We must stop carpet-bomb-

ing people with information then releasing them back to their own devices to sink or swim. Feedback and follow-up are critical.

Instead of relying on day-long boring and hypnotizing lectures or a PowerPoint overdose, a formal training session is only the beginning. Training should take place over a period of three to six months or even a year, during which time we will collect multiple data points and have multiple contacts with each trainee to reinforce the execution and full assimilation of concepts. Training never ends, just as the pricing transformation never ends. The roadmap needs to account for many touchpoints of reinforcement. New people will come and go in your organization, requiring frequent training blitzes.

Step 2: Plan and Create a Roadmap

Over time and on a regular schedule, the trainer must be in contact with the trainees. To ensure that you stay on schedule, first design a rough draft with a timeline for your training. Then, create a list of touchpoints based on the deployment and execution plan. Before you attempt to merge these tools into a roadmap, create



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a template or a document for this roadmap in simple spreadsheet software. List the weeks along the top and the touch points along the side.

To produce the time plan, begin by listing things like in-house obligations that can help you define available time. You will need to account for webinars, monthly meetings, weekly sales calls, email blasts, text campaigns, daily reminders, and so forth. With these in mind, you can map out when the training (and the transformation steps) can occur. This will help you set a timeline for how long the training process will take and what formats you might follow.

The touchpoints for follow-up will reinforce the initial pricing training content. The number of touchpoints is important: the more, the better. You are not trying to minimize or optimize the number of touchpoints right now. The objective is to make the content stick. Saturation and the constant backing up of this knowledge are crucial.

I recommend having **10 touchpoints with each trainee** in a space of three to six weeks after the original presentation of the material. This is much stronger reinforcement than what you achieve over the span of two hours at a conference or a national sales meeting, for example. You might ask why 10 touchpoints. Well, it is quite simple: repetition, repetition, and more repetition. Since you are dealing with super busy professionals who have been in business for quite a while, they might be distracted and forget the content of the training. In fact, after 31 days they might only retain 20% of what they learned, as shown in [Figure 1](#) on the next page. So, you repeat to retain.

The 10 touchpoints are spaced in a way that allows for memorization and assimilation into the knowledge bank, as shown below. You fight the forgetting curve and move assimilation upwards after the fourth reminder. When you get to the tenth touchpoint, you can assume the knowledge is assimilated. See [Figure 2](#) on the next page.

There is a difference between plain repetition and spaced repetition. And that difference can make or break your overall goal is transforming the mindset.

"Spaced repetition...[is] extraordinarily efficient. In a four-month period, practicing for 30 minutes a day, you can expect to learn and retain 3600 flashcards with 90 to 95 percent accuracy. These flashcards can teach you an alphabet, vocabulary, grammar, and even pronunciation. And they can do it without becoming tedious because they're always challenging enough to remain interesting and fun." ([Fluent Forever: How to Learn Any Language and Never Forget It](#), Gabriel Wyner)

To keep these 10 touchpoints from becoming a monotonous burden, you should include a mix of delivery methods in your roadmap, including virtual and in-person methods as well as hybrid forms. Watch a video in a classroom, then get out of your seats and complete an exercise based on the information presented. You may also

have multiple trainers connecting to a single platform, using their different coaching skills in a single setting. You can use something as simple as a phone call plus an accompanying video.

No matter how you perform the task, the key to absorption is to engage trainees over the space of three to six months. Use all available technologies at your disposal and be creative. Focus on the critical aspects of your pricing-execution plan. If three or four key pricing tactics need to be changed or introduced, they will be the heart of the training program and will need to be repeated multiple times.

Step 3: Get the Blend of Methods Right

Flexibility is essential to finding the right blend of methods for successful pricing-transformation training. With today's ever-increasing levels of technology and globalization, you cannot expect to have all the people you need in a room whenever you need them. In fact, apart from an initial meeting, it may be logistically impossible to get the entire group together again. You have no choice but to find alternative approaches.

We must diversify and be flexible in our delivery methods. As their pricing coach and leader, you must be in contact with them any way you can and avoid using technology or timing as an excuse. Whatever the method, proper use of time is essential to achieving the maximum number of touch-points in the amount of time provided.

Figure 1

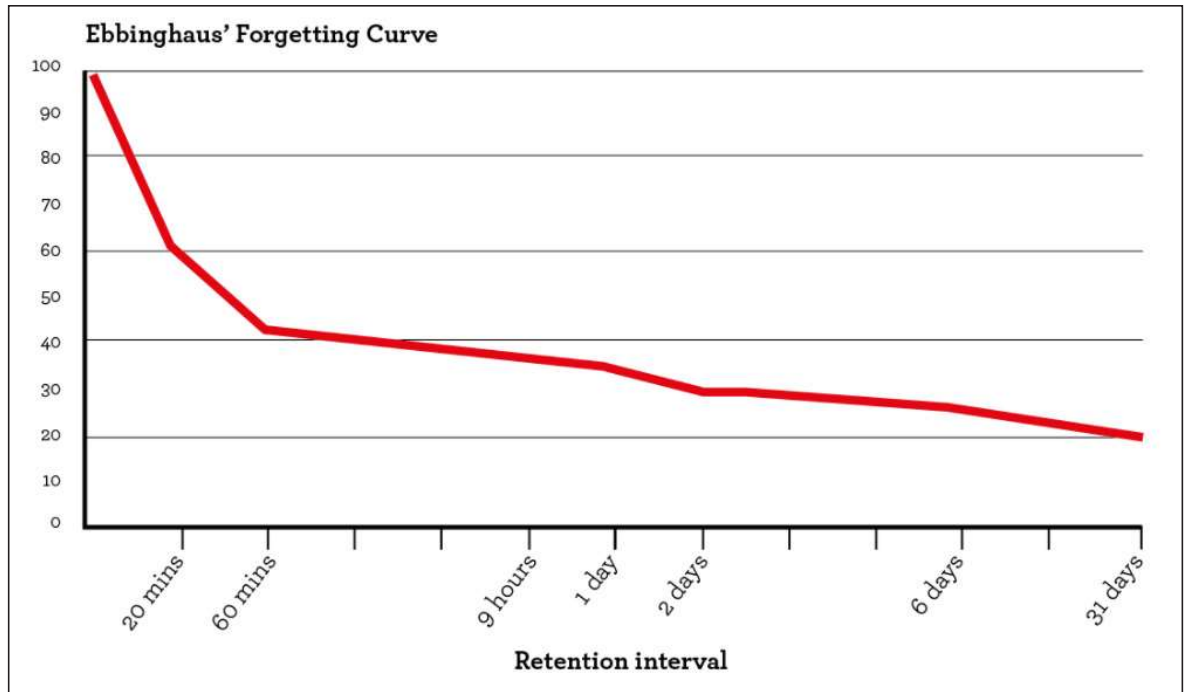
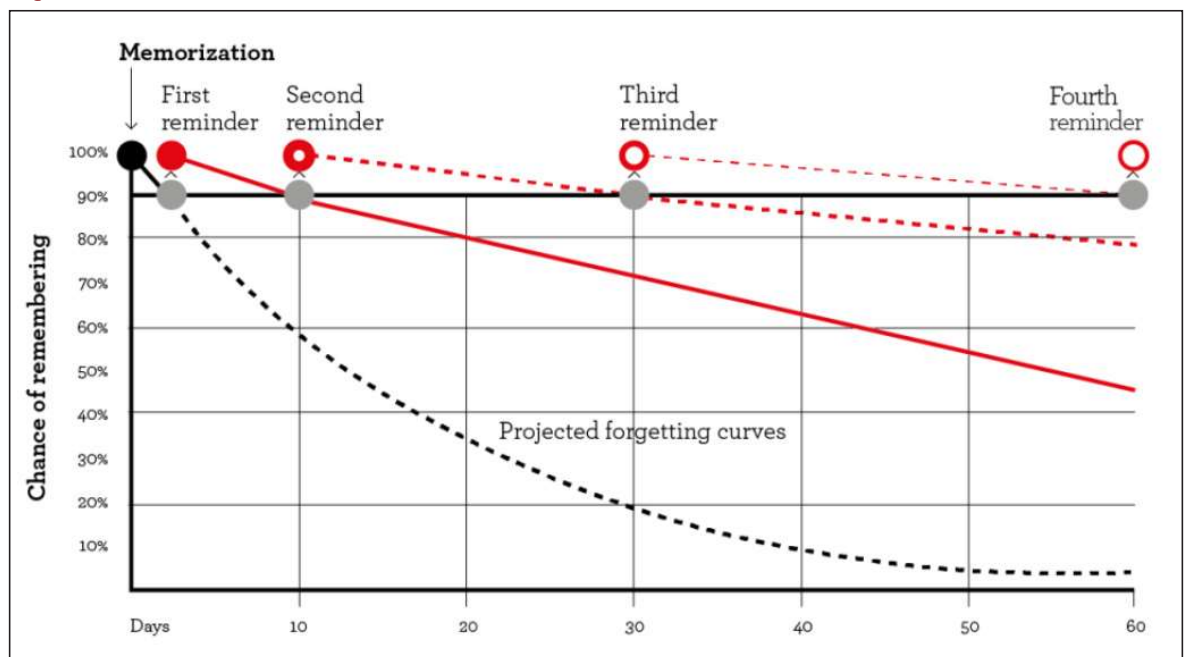


Figure 2



Source: [The Spacing Effect: How to Improve Learning and Maximize Retention - Farnam Street](#)

Think beyond traditional methods and look for openings in people's schedules. Take advantage of something as simple as a lay-over between flights for a quick trainer call. Or you can record podcasts for trainees to listen to while commuting. Take advantage of local team meetings or gatherings to hold peer discussions on value. There are many options to weigh and leverage without having to wait for a conventional

two-hour meeting when they are in town or trying to wedge a full-day workshop into people's busy lives.

You also need to vary the style and voice of your follow-ups. This is another reason we need to have several people involved as leaders, coaches, and trainers. You cannot have the same person giving the entire training over a period of months. People

need variety to maintain focus and absorb information. Here you can look at internal options first. There is no reason every level cannot participate, from the CEO down to the trainees' peers.

We are using the available time of all these opinion leaders to ensure that we deliver the messages consistently. You can use an external coach or trainer to deliver the initial message or concept, but the best follow-up is constant reinforcement from within the organization. Include managers, some coaches, executives, value experts, direct supervisors, and peers. Peers should not be just any peers; they should be value leaders themselves, well versed in your value message, and will have ideally performed a similar task in a previous job. These individuals are perfect for delivering messages and training.

You might be surprised by the number of people in your organization who are already pricing and value experts and who are willing to function as an energizing force to support your execution efforts! In any organization, there are always several people who have received recognition for "best in class" training at some point in their lives. These individuals are everywhere, and their value experience can offer you a massive boost in training other employees. Even better, they are often eager to assist and spread their positive attitude. This is highly valuable when motivating others to commit to a plan and targets. Identifying these individuals early in the planning process is important. Often you only need to ask a few simple direct questions to discover whether a candidate has any such experience.

One unbeatable advantage these peers can have is their ability to tell a story about their previous pricing successes. They can share the pragmatic pains and gains of their own journey. Storytelling is in vogue as a training approach, and it should be an important form of training in any extensive, broad-based program. The stories these individuals can share about their individual transformation will add an individualized touch to the journey. It gives their peers something to identify with and commit to. It gives them hope that it can be done. Hope, in turn, brings confidence to act. If you have all of these value man-

agers eager to share their stories, why not use them to your advantage?

Storytelling and training approaches do not always need to come from within, though. To supplement your own pricing and value leaders, you can get creative here as well. Retired executives, professional athletes, coaches, military veterans, and even your own customers and suppliers can add invaluable insights to the content you want to convey and do so in a way that no classroom teacher ever could.

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You can also use online resources and platforms to supplement your own approaches and stories. Online cloud platforms can encourage ad-hoc interaction, which can be valuable far beyond your planned training. They offer file and slide sharing so that colleagues can interact and offer each other advice and feedback. These platforms can also connect them with their trainers and coaches. We cannot capture these touchpoints in our roadmap in advance because they are spontaneous and help new internal networks grow organically.

You can also tap into websites with reinforcement training. One such site is Khan Academy, a non-profit educational organization created in 2006 by educator Salman Khan with the goal of creating an accessible place for people to learn. The organization produces short lectures on a broad range of topics in the form of YouTube videos. The website also includes supplementary practice exercises and tools for educators. This is just one example of a tool that could be set up internally to add extra touchpoints.

Step 4: Work to Help Each Individual Absorb the Material

Think about how you might help your kids when they are doing their homework, or

how teachers are trained to differentiate between students of varying abilities. They must deliver the same subject, and the same topic, but must work harder with some students to make sure they absorb the material. They figure out a blend of techniques over time with concepts that resonate best with each individual student. They must make the material relevant and interesting.

Why should the business world be any different?

Getting an organization of diverse indi-

viduals to absorb the same ideas is challenging, but possible. Everyone learns differently, and each may be captivated by different things. They may even have different capacities to process information, sometimes referred to in academia as "absorptive capacity." We want to transform peoples' mindsets and get them into "transformational change" mode. Begin simply and increase complexity over time. You do not want to overwhelm them with too much work initially. We want to ensure that the knowledge they are getting sticks, and there are proven and universal best practices on which we can capitalize. Here is a basic approach to concepts and application:

- **Begin with a 50/50 mix:** In the first wave, present 50 percent exercises and 50 percent concepts. The concepts should be delivered like emails, tips, small items to read, training, and ideas.
- **Aim later for an 80/20 mix:** As you progress in the pricing execution, 80 percent will be exercises and 20 percent will be concepts. This depends on the project, of course!
- **Continue with 100 percent coaching for reinforcement over time, especially focusing on those who are**

a bit behind.

- **Keep it relevant:** Deliver concepts that are relevant to people's daily work and not theoretical. This is one of the most important filters you have. Focus on your key goals and objectives.
- **Experiment:** One effective exercise is speed roleplaying, where you give the audience a little exercise and within five minutes, they must roleplay it.
- **Play and test:** Have the trainees roleplay using the pricing tools. These skills will be directly transferrable and critical to reinforce.
- **Help people feel comfortable:** During roleplay exercises, no supervisors should be in the room with subordinates. The idea is to create a comfort zone.
- **Have fun:** You cannot be serious or intense all the time.

The point of these exercises is to create confidence in the processes, in the new pricing tools, and between colleagues. We even had a stomach-bump competition in one program. We set up a jury and awarded prizes to the winners. This event had nothing to do with value, but it allowed the participants to bond and relax. You cannot expect to keep the trainees serious and under pressure. You want them to want to be there!

Even with this approach, you can still lose your trainees if your priority is to stick to an agenda. You must be agile and flexible. When leading pricing training and finding that something works well, I adjust the tempo and agenda to encompass more of this successful aspect. If something is not working, I change the agenda, delay some points, or even cancel a section if necessary. The priority should be group flow and

collective confidence instead of sticking to the agenda and trainer's ratings.

At the end of the day, collaboration and cooperation keep interest alive and speed absorption. This applies to the team as well as to the coach with the group. Having that intimacy and that bond is much more important than religiously following an agenda. You are building lasting confidence and a sense of trust. Your agility in setting up these training programs and in modifying them reinforces that you are focused on the trainees and their welfare and progress, not on your agenda. Remember that executing pricing programs requires collective confidence and collective action. Do not leave anyone behind!

Summarizing the Training Best Practices for Pricing Execution

Let us review the best practices for training to superior pricing execution:

- **Plan on at least 10 touchpoints:** Conventional classroom instruction is not sufficient, and face-to-face follow-up is often impractical in our global world. You must stay connected, and the more frequent the connection, the better.
- **Mix delivery methods:** Transmit your methods virtually, physically, or as a hybrid.
- **Mix up your training environment:** Training can occur in a classroom, in the field, at home, or even in the car.
- **Use your pricing and business leaders:** The person reinforcing the message can be a manager, coach, team leader, or peer. Each may have a success story to tell.
- **Account for different absorption levels:** Some learn best from seeing; others from reading, doing, listening, or taking actions.

- **Trainers and coaches must energize the troops. Energy and positive levels must be significant and genuine. They should feel exhausted at the end of each day.**

With that said, it is time for our own finishing touchpoint for this chapter. The key point from this section is that training is now about delivering knowledge: a vigorous, never-ending exchange among multiple trainees and trainers. Because your goal is to get things done and execute well, your priority is to increase your team's absorptive capacity. The faster you can get to this point, the greater your pricing execution level will be. So, it is not about conventional lectures and workshops. Training is a continual commitment, and there is no longer time for excuses.

You will get out of the pricing execution plan what you put into it. We are doing a lot of rewiring, not only creating new connections for these individuals but rewiring their brains to make sure they have the confidence and the will to execute what we want them to do. We are systematically altering belief systems and instilling a mindset based on growth. We are building their confidence and giving them a platform for success. Success stories are essential, from peers, from people who have done it, and from the organization's application of their new knowledge, tools, and techniques.

We must all increase the openness of everyone in the organization, urge them to commit, pique their interest, get things done and sustain the transformation. Getting 100 percent success in pricing execution requires all the things we have touched on in this article. It is not business as usual. You will need to collaborate with your leadership development team and your learning organization and add your own touch to make it a differentiated learning plan. ❖