

# CPD: doing things a different way

TWO years ago Colin Mitchell and I set up a company to deliver CPD – but we wanted to do it with a difference.

The company, CPD Actif, has a

formula that incorporates three key elements: active learning, personal development and, finally, what the Ministry of Defence calls “adventurous training”.

## Active learning

As adults we tend to hang on to familiar models of learning – traditional techniques of teaching and lecturing that were clearly very successful for us as students.

But what about now? Should we continue to assume these techniques are still the best for us in our subsequent lives as busy, experienced professionals?

Research would suggest not. Educationalists Bonwell and Eiser reported in 1991 that the technique known as “active learning” was “comparable to lecturing for content

mastery but superior for thinking and application skills”. And would we not agree that it is indeed application and not necessarily knowledge *per se* that is most important for the practising professional?

So what, exactly, is “active learning”?

It’s basically

a group of individuals, often pre-educated, who meet up and discuss a pre-agreed topic, share their knowledge and experience of said topic, review the established literature, debate and, ultimately, agree on an applicable summary.

This “applicable summary” is essentially the “take-home message”, the “put it into practice” manuscript that is so often needed by busy practitioners and managers. Of great importance in this process is the existence of a trained facilitator who knows how to say very little but subtly keep the group on track and, armed with sufficient research, makes sure no time is wasted “talking nonsense”!

The facilitator ensures that the delegates leave the course with a

tidied-up, peer-reviewed “optimised operational procedure” for that subject. These “OOPs” as we call them are written as highly practicable “blueprints for practice”.

## Personal development

Aristotle once defined “personal development” as “the practice of virtues that lead to human flourishing”. Rather more recently, in 2010 Bob Aubrey suggested that personal development “improves awareness and identity, develops talents and potential, builds human capital and facilitates employability, it enhances quality of life and contributes to the realisation of dreams and aspirations”.

Wow, heavy stuff but I’m sure we’d all agree that in simpler terms professionals, however well informed, need among other things to be able to express themselves with authority and this only comes from confidence – and that often needs *building* at a very personal level.

We aim to help with that so our courses include “personal development” sessions on cerebrally alternative things like cookery demonstrations, wine tasting, barista training, ICT, photography or even oil painting, creative writing, acting and TV presenting!

## Adventurous training

That third and final thing is “adventurous training”. Some people dread team-building sessions but could there not be something in it? It all depends on knowing where people’s comfort zones are and not moving them too far out of it.

The British Army talk about “engaging in challenging outdoor adventurous activities in order to develop leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage and other personal attributes and skills that are vital to the delivery of operational capability”.

OK, we aren’t the army so it may just be a walk up a mountain or a bike



Roger Scott (left) and Colin Mitchell, founders of CPD Actif, on a course in the Grand Massif.

ride but for the more intrepid it may be paragliding, white-water rafting or off-piste skiing. Don’t panic, you don’t have to do it! That said, it does remain a recommended part of our programme.

Our main training centre is in Samoens, a beautiful historic alpine town in the Giffre Valley at the foot of the Grand Massif. As the only “ski resort” in France with *monument historique* status it has a wealth of history and culture. The scenery, the architecture and the food and wine are superb.

The courses are for up to 10 delegates plus one lead facilitator – any more and we wouldn’t fit in the 12-seater Land Rover with Hairy Nick, our local guide and driver!

If you’re interested, take a look at [www.cpdactif.com](http://www.cpdactif.com). Our next set of courses are at the end of January so the adventurous training is snow sport based. So come on, get actif!