

WORLD OF LEARNING - Finding the ideal venue for learning

In recreating at the World of Learning exhibition a little bit of our specially commended centre at High Trenhouse, we decided to invite visitors to participate in an enquiry by responding to the challenge;

Imagine the ideal venue for learning – describe what makes it work so well.

They were invited to write their responses on MagNotes and add them to the whiteboard display on the stand and to re-arrange the display as they wished. This was a simple exercise in logo visual thinking methodology (LVT). 66 ideas were posted and the final display is attached.

So what did people have to say? Here is an interpretation of the clusters and the overall model.

High quality physical space

The critical factor is the need for a 'bubble' isolated from the busy world of work - a homely haven of peace that invites people to feel comfortable, relaxed and receptive. It is a place that is authentically itself – somewhere with character yet supportive of the learning agenda.

High quality emotional space

This emphasises the emotional lightness of the place – somewhere safe to unwind and simply to be oneself. At the same time, it provides stimulus and refreshing time-out to re-connect with what matters in order to meet new challenges.

A regenerative setting

Location is important as it provides the environmental setting of those physical and emotional qualities that aid learning. Nature and beauty should be allowed to nurture people in addition to giving access to whatever activities are deemed appropriate to the learning experience.

The right kit

It needs to be a given that the right equipment is provided to support learning and that it all functions well. An important aspect is that there needs to be a good interface with the world of work, giving people confidence to focus on the task in hand.

Fruitful interaction

This is the responsibility of the facilitator – the learning leader – who needs to guide the group into an appropriate and receptive frame of mind. The venue is not neutral and needs to support this task with empathetic provision in terms of both space and service.

Food for the mind

The venue protects people from distraction and feeds their minds through its own authentic presence, providing focused stimulus through an ambience of appropriate music, art, décor and customer service – including;

Food for the body

Learning is a response to experience and what people eat or drink is an aspect of their experience that can stimulate their receptivity to new thoughts.

Genuine customer care

If people feel that they are cared for and that their needs are understood, they are more likely to be able to relax their mind-set and to learn. The venue should respond to the group's dynamics and be flexible in relation to its current and future needs, so that learning is experienced as the core value-adding purpose. A good venue is congruent with and supportive of the learning mode.

Overview

If learning is the purpose, then both the physical and emotional quality of the space provided are critical contributory factors. Location matters – not just for the convenience of participants but in providing a suitable environment for learning to take place.

Fixtures, fittings and portable equipment must all support the learning agenda. Then it is up to the learning leader to work with the service team to create an atmosphere for learning interaction. The ambient conditions – sound, sight, food and, importantly, service, are all important contributory elements.

Conclusion

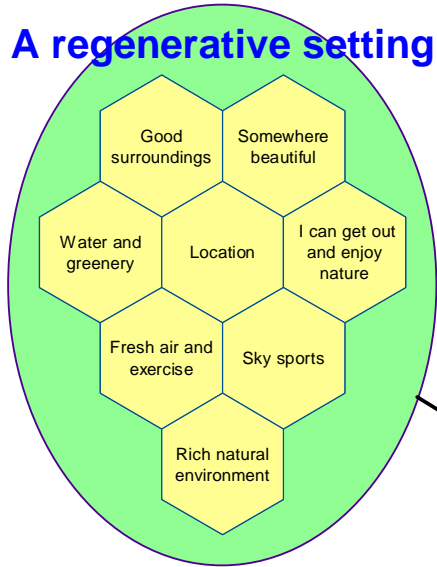
This is a tough challenge for any provider, made more difficult, perhaps, because not all trainers, let alone all participants, have such a clear agenda or are aware of what matters. Too often the choice of venue is left to chance or delegated to someone who has no real appreciation of how important it can be to have ideal conditions. People buy venues as a least risk solution, for personal convenience, to meet secondary agenda, to get rid of a problem – for all sorts of reasons but not often because the venue meets the ideal requirements for learning. Take note of the points above and check out how you are selecting your learning environments.

Let's hope that having an award scheme will raise quality standards and make all buyers more aware of what really ensures best value for money.

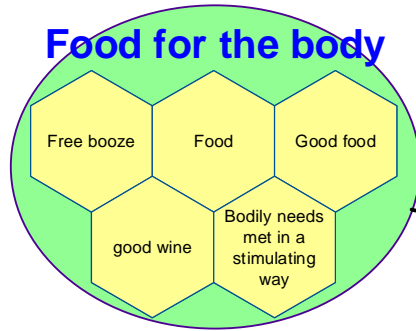
John Varney
Centre for Management Creativity
November 2004

For more information on LVT see www.logovisual.com

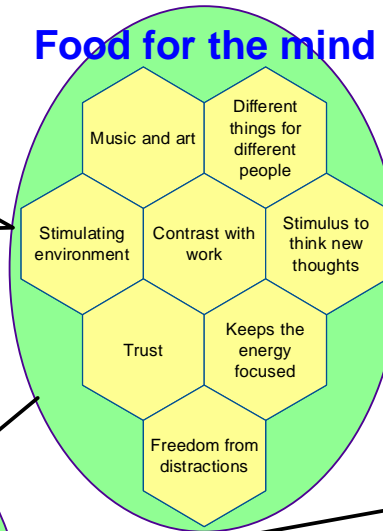
A regenerative setting



Food for the body

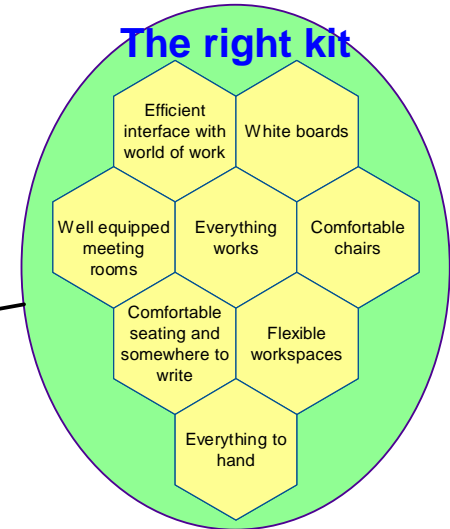


Food for the mind

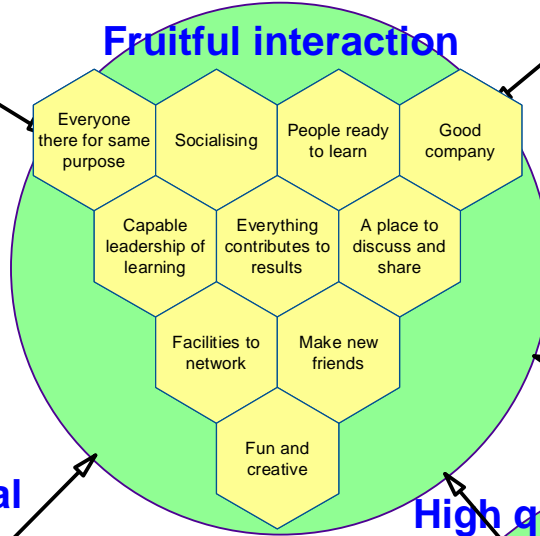


Imagine the ideal learning venue - what makes it work?

The right kit



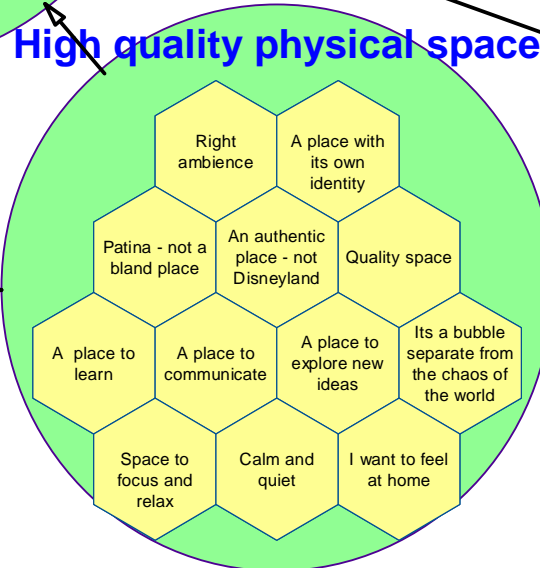
Fruitful interaction



A high quality emotional space



High quality physical space



Genuine customer care

