

# Discovery Learning

By Nanette Miner, EdD

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**D**iscovery learning is a technique that allows trainees to “teach themselves” given the right tools and guidance. For example, a recent training session for recruiters in how to write effective recruitment ads that stood out from the competition as well as recruiting qualified candidates, started by assigning each trainee to go to several on-line job boards to search for jobs in their specialty areas (for example, nurses, sales managers, chemists, etc.).

Once the participants had 3-5 ads in one professional area, they were instructed to compare and contrast the ads identifying those elements that were attractive and compelling and those elements that were distracting or left the reader with more questions than answers. Additionally, they were asked to list information that they felt was missing from the ads overall. After each individual analysis was conducted, the participants were broken into groups of 3-4

and were instructed to discuss what they liked and disliked about the various ads that they had gathered. This small group discussion was then opened to include the entire training group, in general, in a discussion of what was attractive about an ad, or what types of things served as detractors.

A master list was then created, with input from the entire group. The entire exercise took about an hour. True, within 5 minutes, an instructor could have given participants a list of do’s and don’ts in advertising and talked about each one briefly. But the discovery method of learning guides the learner to discover the information on his own. This method ensures that the new information is internalized and will be long remembered because the trainee can reflect on, “What did I learn?” rather than, “What did she say?”

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