

Gagne's nine events



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The process of learning is an on-going event that occurs in each stage of human development. Human beings acquire a great deal of their personal qualities and characteristics through a variety of different learning methods. Through the work of educational psychologist Robert Gagne, a better understanding of learning and instruction can be found. Gagne presented the idea that there are different types of learning and that different instructional methods are needed to accompany these learning types in order to achieve the desired learning outcome.

In recognizing learning as a process composed of several phases, Gagne created the Nine Events of Instruction. Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction are a series of steps to be followed during the instruction phase, often said to be necessary for learning to occur. The work Gagne produced is considered the primary research and contributor to instructional design and training.

Robert Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction can best be described as an instructional design model utilized to organize strategies within a lesson. The Nine Events of Instruction include: Gain Attention, Inform the Learner of the Objectives, Stimulate Recall of Prior Learning, Present the Stimulus Materials, Provide Learner Guidance, Elicit Performance, Give Feedback, Assess Performance, and Enhance Retention and Transfer. Gagne firmly believed that effective learning involved a series of events.

The instructor begins by gaining the learners attention and from there he/she will use "...a series of steps related to the development of learning expectations, introduction of stimuli, and recall of related ideas to move concepts from the student's short to long-term memory" (Zhu & StAmant 2010). The events are completed successfully when the learner is able to

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apply what they have learned to new situations outside of the classroom. This is often seen within workplace training, where the employee applies what they have learned in training to their job.

The Nine Events of Instruction were created to work in conjunction with the cognitive stages associated with the adult learning process (2010). Prior to the development of the Nine Events of Instructions, Gagne performed an in-depth examination of learning and its conditions. The foundation for the events model can be found in his book, *The Conditions of Learning*. To better understand the Nine Events of Instruction it is important to examine the work documented in this book. Learning, according to Gagne, is "...a change in human disposition or capability, which persists over a period of time, and which is not simply ascribable to processes of growth" (Gagne, 1977, p. 3). Learning, in its most basic form, is a change in behavior. This change may be brought upon by a change in attitude, interest or value and is often due to an increased capability for some type of performance. To be classified as change it "...must have more than momentary permanence; it must be capable of being trained over some period of time...it must be distinguishable from the kind of change that is attributable to growth, such as a change in height or the development of muscles through exercise" (p.). With a clear definition of learning, one can identify the ways in which learning is brought about. Gagne's work identifies four elements having to do with learning: learner, stimulus situation, contents of memory and response/performances. For learning to take place, there must be a learner. The learner is a human being whom possesses sense organs through which he/she receives stimulation. Learning will occur when stimulus situation and

contents of memory (information previously learned and stored) affect the learner in a way that his/her performance changes.

This change in performance ultimately indicates that learning has occurred. It is important to note, however, that it is necessary to show that there has been a change in performance, for the presence of the performance does not always result in learning (Gagne, 1977, p. 4). In understanding learning, to its very core, Gagne concluded that there are multiple levels of learning and that each level requires a different type of instruction in order to achieve the desired learning outcome. Learning takes place throughout a person's lifetime.

In all stages of development a person learns to interact with their surrounding environments. Education at a young age allows individuals to learn basic knowledge and skills such as language and symbol-usage. Once these basic skills are acquired and education continues, people are capable of learning more specialized knowledge and complex skills that will be useful in their areas of interest. Though learning becomes more specialized and focused to the individual as they progress, Gagne determined a common ground among the many instances of learning by identifying five major categories of capabilities that human beings learn.

The five categories are as followed: intellectual skills, verbal information, cognitive strategies, motor skills, and attitudes. Intellectual skills involves the interactions people often learn to engage in by using symbols. As their education becomes more advance, so does their symbol-usage. Verbal information is ultimately the ability to state information or ideas that have been previously learned and organized. Following this learned capability is

cognitive strategies, which describes the individual as managing his/her own learning, remembering and thinking.

Learning to execute movements through a series of motor acts, such as throwing a baseball refers to the learned capability of motor skills. Lastly, mental states are learned which influence the learner's choice in personal actions which has been categorized as attitude (Gagne, 1977, p. 27 & 28). Each of these categories require different internal and external conditions. Meaning, learning distinctions are partly internal, in which they come from the memory of an individual's previous learning. They are also external, which may be arranged as an aspect of instruction (p. 48).

For example, "...for cognitive strategies to be learned, there must be a chance to practice developing new solutions to problems; to learn attitudes, the learner must be exposed to a credible role model or persuasive arguments" (Culatta, 2013). In identifying the categories of learned capabilities, Gagne was able to apply this information to the planning of instruction. It is important to understand the various ways in which people learn prior to planning instruction. In understanding what learning is and how learning is engaged will provide the instructor the necessary information he/she needs to address all levels of learning.

This is where Gagne's Nine Events come into play. Each step within this model creates opportunity for the instructor to incorporate various learning methods that cover all learning types. Gagne understood that having knowledge of the learning process as well as the analysis of human tasks would be essential to designing instruction. Understanding learning and the

ways in which people learn is crucial when designing an instruction plan because the instructor must know the various ways in which people learn.

It is recognized that there is information far beyond what has been mentioned in this paper that accompanies the development of the Nine Events of Instruction. However, this paper serves to identify the underlying meaning of learning and how knowing what learning is, in all aspects, is important to understanding the Nine Events of Instruction. Though Gagne's Nine Events have been specifically designed for creating instructional programs, its functions can easily be used elsewhere. As a graduate student in the Communications program I am exploring all areas of communication and hope to one day work within the Public Relations field.

During my examination of Gagne's Nine Events it was easy for me to connect his series of events for instruction to those conducted in Public Relations. While they differ in many aspects, it seemed that a variety of steps within the events of instruction could be used when developing and conducting a Public Relations campaign. Which brings me to why I chose to focus on this particular topic from our formal training discussions. Not only have we utilized Gagne's Nine Events, on more than one account, but I have also found great interest in its functions and similarities to what I hope to be doing in the future.

Designing a Public Relations campaign for a client or an organization involves a series of steps, which are general in nature but become more specific depending on the organization or client in which you are working with. Public Relations practitioners, from the start, need to understand their client in their entirety. This involves extensive research on the client, ranging

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from financials to previous campaigns and employee information. I would link this stage to the Stimulate Recall of Prior Learning step in Gagne's Nine Events because it involves getting the client to recall information on their business or organization.

Ultimately, they are recalling what they do and what they have done in order to determine what needs to be done, which ties into the objective. Public Relations practitioners also need to become well aware of who their clients audience is. Once they have determined this they need to come up with a way in which they will gain the audience's attention, just as Gagne proposes in his Nine Events. This is often done through the use of celebrities or community leaders. Assessing performance, too, can be linked to that of what a Public Relations practitioner does.

Though they are not testing a person on what has been learned, they are gathering results on what they have done which assesses their performance throughout the campaign and tells them whether or not the campaign was successful. To determine success, results are measured, quantitatively or qualitatively, and compared to the objectives. Lastly, the Enhance Retention and Transfer step in Gagne's Nine Events can be compared to Public Relations in that they both serve to inform the individual about how the information given to them will affect them and why it is necessary to know the information. The work Robert Gagne produced throughout his lifetime has been heavily used in instructional design and training. Best known for his book, *The Conditions of Learning*, Gagne provided an in-depth examination of learning in all aspects of its meaning. This book served as a foundation for the creation of the Nine Events of Instruction which attends to the idea that

there are many different learning levels, all of which require different instructional methods.

In identifying the categories of learning, Gagne was able to produce an instructional model that allows instructors to engage in a variety of techniques to meet the needs of all learners. Though Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction were created for instructional design and training purposes, I have found many similarities between his approach and the work a Public Relations practitioner produces. In recognizing these similarities I was interested in learning how the Nine Events of Instruction came to be. Knowing what learning is, in all aspects, is essential to creating an instruction plan.

References

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