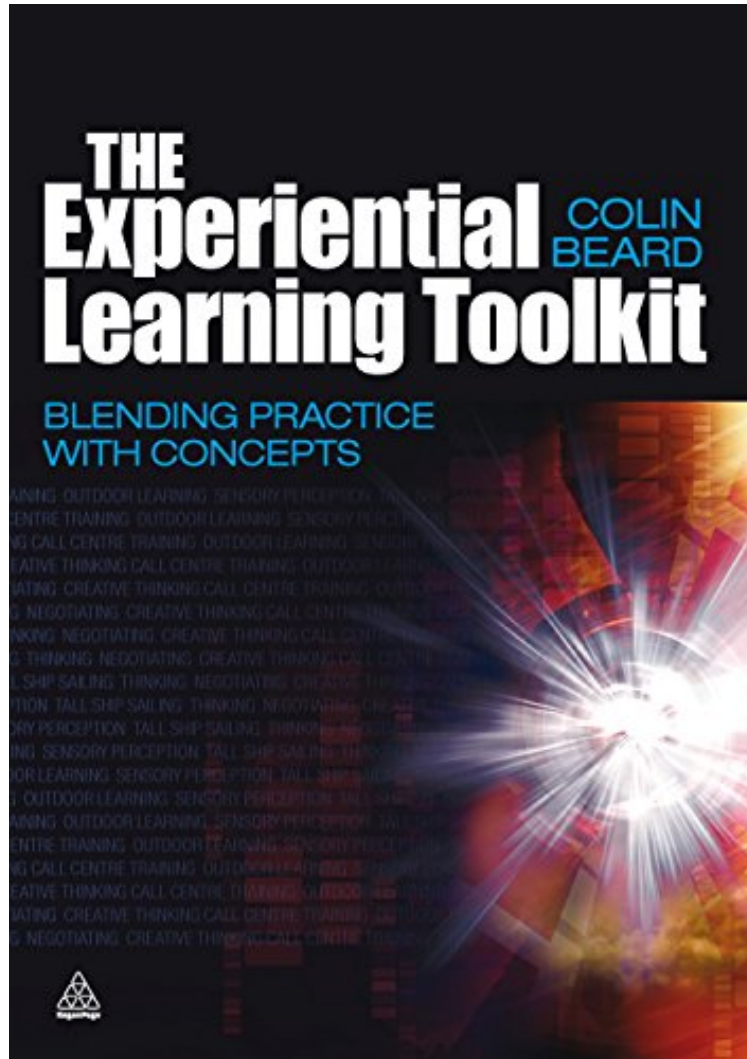


(Download) The Experiential Learning Toolkit: Blending Practice with Concepts

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Colin Beard

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Colin Beard : The Experiential Learning Toolkit: Blending Practice with Concepts before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Experiential Learning Toolkit: Blending Practice with Concepts:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. a wide variety of tools for making learning more real and engagingBy GREENAWAYThere are not enough books like The Experiential Learning Toolkit: books that seek to balance theory and practice in an integrated and useful way. The core structure of this toolkit is The Learning Combination Lock presented in earlier handbooks (2002 The Power of Experiential Learning: A Handbook for Trainers and Educators and 2006 Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers). This lock is modestly introduced as 'one approach' for 'attending to the whole person'. Each ring of the lock represents one of Beard's six dimensions of experiential learning (belonging, doing, sensing, feeling, knowing, and being) and each

dimension contains 5 illustrative tools. And then the surprises begin! The 'tool' or 'experience' can be anything from question cards to a tall ship, from an exercise in classifying nuts and bolts to service learning in the community. Some of the tools are for reflecting on experiences that have already happened ('Ace of Spades', 'String Lines' and 'Comic Strips'), some (like 'Listening to Silence', 'Blindfold' and 'Antiques Roadshow') are for generating present experiences, some are for skills development ('Altering Reality' for negotiation skills, 'Hearing Voices' for telephone skills', 'The Marketplace' for creative thinking skills) and others (such as 'How to get to...' and 'Unmasking') are for exploring future possibilities. This variety of what constitutes a 'tool' appears to be deliberately mind-expanding: whatever you thought experiential learning was at the outset, you will end up with a much bigger picture of the possibilities. The author is a National Teaching Fellow and a Professor of Experiential Learning, so it should be no surprise that many of the tools are suitable for teachers and lecturers wanting to make their lessons more experiential. The author's background in environmental work is clear and is the inspiration for many tools. And there are examples from the author's work in corporate training throughout all dimensions. Despite this broad range of contexts there are few tools that cannot be tweaked to be of value beyond the context in which they are described. A significant strength of this book is that most tools are original. Many of the tools have been developed and tested by the author in a variety of contexts. I am also impressed by the range of tools that use space and spatial relationships. Some involve moving labels and objects ('Different Ways to Know', 'Nuts and Bolts', 'How to get to ...'). Others involve giant models or maps on which participants move ('Just Four Steps', 'Ace of Spades' and 'Walk the Talk'). Seeing, touching, moving and making are fully integrated into most of these tools. Some tools really challenge the boundaries of 'experiential learning'. The concept becomes so broad that it seems that 'experience' (and consequently 'experiential learning') can be just about anything you want it to be ('Experience' can apparently be a session plan, an activity within the session, what the trainer 'delivers', what the learner feels ...). The regular appearance of the words 'experiential' and 'experientially' made me increasingly unsure about the differences between 'experiential activity' and 'activity'; between 'experientially exploring' and 'exploring'; between 'experientially engaging' and 'engaging'; and ultimately between 'experiential learning' and 'learning'. 'Experiential learning' is a famously slippery concept that continues to evade precise definition. But the term 'experiential' does signal a commitment to working with the whole person. And how can anyone be troubled by this intention? According to the author, the book is about "creating learning that is more engaging, more effective and more embedded". If this book were entitled 'The Engaging-Effective-Embedded Learning Toolkit' it might be more accurate, but 'Experiential Learning' remains the best label we have for this significant area of practice even if it is a little frayed around the theoretical edges. There is no concluding chapter but the second last tool reads very much like the author's final message. The full title of this tool is: 'Service Learning: Social and Environmental Responsibility'. Beard writes: "Many organisations are now substituting environmental activities or community-based activities in place of recreational pursuits such as raft building, climbing or abseiling." The author argues that service learning doubles the value of experiential learning because there is a wider benefit to the community. In addition he writes, "real projects seem to have a positive motivational impact on client learning, affecting the way in which participants engage in learning from experience". I am persuaded by the author's commitment to making learning more real - a thread that is common to all the tools in this wide-ranging toolkit.

The Experiential Learning Toolkit presents a diverse range of practical exercises, which are based on the theory of experiential learning. Experiential learning is concerned with learning through direct experience, which aims to create more effective, engaging and embedded learning. Each activity presented includes a description of the underlying principles, practical information on delivering the exercise as well as tips and further reading. The exercises cover a range of training needs including; effective customer service, telephone skills, applying strategic thinking, and developing creativity. Trainers will find this an invaluable resource, with fresh approaches which engage and inspire learners.

"...Beard...presents 30 learning "experiences" (i.e. activities) that educational and training practitioners can put to use to promote learning on a wide range of topics, including service learning, corporate social responsibility, customer service skills, company product knowledge retention, strategic thinking and negotiating, financial skills, time management, and the development of innovation and creativity." -- Book News Inc. About the Author Colin Beard is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is a National Teaching Fellow at Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University. He is also a learning and development consultant, working internationally with many clients in corporate organizations, higher and further education and adult education.