

Reflections on Becoming A First Aid Trainer With ITC First Aid Ltd

By

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Back in December 2008 I decided to train with ITC to become a first aid training provider. Now it is 6 months later and, having recently reached the stage of delivering courses myself, I thought it might be useful to write something about the experience for those who are thinking of joining the ITC network.

Were my first impressions of ITC borne out by experience? Did I receive the support I had been promised? Do I think that I took the right decision and joined the right organisation? Read on if you'd like to know the answers...

First Steps...

Before my training with ITC, I spoke to many different organisations offering the same opportunities. As well as talking to Ian Moore at the ITC office, I was able to talk to various trainers who had already worked with ITC (found on the internet and not simply recommended by Ian) and I was impressed by their enthusiasm and eagerness to help newcomers join the organisation. In the end, I chose ITC as it appeared to have the most comprehensive and well thought out training programme.

As well as feeling that ITC offered the best opportunity to become a first aid trainer, I was also impressed by other support available to newcomers. I am not strong on business skills and so when the time came for me to start looking for my own clients I would need all the ideas I could get.

Training the Trainer

My first real encounter with ITC came in February 2009 when I spent 4 days¹ at a venue in the North of England learning a lot about training but not so much about first aid! This may sound a bit odd and it certainly did seem odd to me until the penny dropped and I realised that what I had been told was exactly what I was getting. The 'Train the Trainer Course' as it is known, is not about first aid; it's about how to train people. That is so important that it is worth saying again - the course is about how to train others and not about the skills and techniques of applied first aid.

Anyone who has been a teacher or coach knows that training somebody to do something is very different to doing it yourself. ITC's first aid courses employ training techniques that are quite sophisticated and varied and quite unlike the 'death by PowerPoint' course typical of so many other organisations in this and other fields.

The strength of the training, therefore, lies in its focus on the ITC 'style' rather than specific first aid techniques. There was some first aid in the programme but only in so far as it was used as a medium through which the logic of the systems and various techniques employed could be demonstrated. Writing as someone who has delivered to groups over many years, I learnt a load of new skills that have really helped me become a better trainer.

In short, the train the trainer course, while only a beginning for trainees, was an excellent experience, practical, informative and focussed precisely on where many of us feel the most anxious - delivering to others. On the occasions when I did get a bit lost with the course it was always when I started to dwell on the first aid techniques and not the training points that were being discussed. Naturally, I still had a lot of first aid techniques to learn, but this was not the place for that.

Post course Training

Having been guided so effectively through the initial training course, it was now up to me to decide how soon I wanted to progress to being 'signed-off' to deliver my own courses.

¹ The Train The Trainer program has since been modified and now starts with a 2 day course.

To do this, I had first to observe, and then assist, on courses being run by existing trainers. How many courses and how long this takes depends on the individual.

I chose to take a month out of work and attend as many courses as possible. Other trainees choose to attend a course here and there and obviously it depends upon individual commitments and flexibility. Also, it is not simply a matter of attendance, eventually, an approved trainer must observe you delivering a course and agree that you have reached a sufficient standard in your delivery and first aid knowledge.

Along with developing your training skills, observing and assisting on courses is where you acquire your first aid knowledge base. After a couple of observations, I started delivering individual topics on courses with the support and feedback of an experienced trainer. I also started writing 'lesson plans' which is a posh way of saying that I made some notes that I thought would help me deliver first aid training.

These notes were an important part of the learning process and they evolved over a number of weeks as I became more confident and began to appreciate the structure of the individual courses.

Working with different trainers was useful too. I came to appreciate why ITC puts so much effort into training its providers. The 'syllabus' and style of ITC, unlike many other first aid organisations, is based upon solid educational principles that are applied in an imaginative way so that people on an ITC course really do learn how to *do* first aid rather than to recite lists of symptoms, etc.

Much of the style of an ITC first aid course is based on active participation along with reviews and mini-talks on individual ailments. I was certainly impressed during my training with just how well thought out the courses were. The fact that this goes well beyond the standard demanded by HSE, for example, speaks volumes for the dedication of ITC to providing quality training.

Now, this is starting to sound rather too much like an advert for ITC; during my training I worked with many different trainers and it is only fair to point out that not all stuck to the ITC method of doing things. I found this difficult as I was trying to learn the ropes and didn't want too many alternatives to contend with. What I saw was that when a trainer did occasional stray from the methods of training I had been shown, the course lost some of its dynamism and inspiration and so this reinforced my understanding of the ITC approach. None of us are perfect and nobody wants to be a robotic trainer. Happily there is plenty of room for a trainer to show their personality, but in seeing this variation, I also came to appreciate the reasoning and method behind the approach that ITC is trying to promote.

Flying Solo

And so, eventually, the day came for me to deliver my own first aid course. It hadn't always been easy to get here. At first it was difficult to find courses to observe and assist on. Understandably, when you are working with paying clients, trainers do not want too many assistants and so it is necessary to book your place early.

However, when I was struggling to find courses to assist on, I called the ITC office and soon had a full month of training ahead of me. But, it is true to say that if you want to progress quickly then you have to put the work in yourself, tell people your keen, prepare your teaching, and above all, make the time to assist on courses.

My first course went well, I enjoyed it more than I had expected to and was not too nervous on the day (like I always wake up a 4.00am and don't go back to sleep again!).

Now I am looking forward to finding more of my own clients and working for other trainers around the country. It is great to have a network of people to talk to about the business side of things. I have been self-employed for years but never really got the hang of 'selling and marketing' but there is so much experience within the network that I am now struggling for time to put all the ideas I have into action.

ITC offer great support too, you can advertise courses on their own website, they have leaflets and information available for use and are also extremely generous with text relating to courses, etc. so you can use it on your own marketing materials.

Why does ITC do all this? It sounds too good to be true, but ITC succeeds when we succeed. As an awarding body, when my business grows so does ITC; they receive a small fee for each person we assess. Similarly, by being a part of the network, my business grows as the network does.

All in all then, ITC more than lived up to my expectations and I am glad that I decided to follow their path to becoming a First Aid Trainer. They have an excellent 'product' and equally important, they strive to ensure that the quality of that product remains high.

The network of providers is a superb source of support for those starting out on the road to becoming a trainer. You can start small, delivering occasionally, maybe even for one client or within your own organisation, or you can aim to make first aid training your main business. Either way, the path is progressive, well supported and enjoyable.

If you want to know talk more about my experiences with ITC, have a look at my website at www.camfirstaid.com or call me on 0771 717 4079

All the best

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