**Training: What works in Revit**

By Bill Brown

I have trained a few thousand people from age 13-70 at the high school, community college, and professional level. Some had tons of architecture knowledge, some none at all. Some had very good knowledge of AutoCAD, some no previous software experience. BTW, I have never had a student of mine (at any age) that wanted to use AutoCAD as their drawing tool of choice after being trained on Revit for a while. Here are my opinions on what type of training works best for Revit:

**New users**

New users need a live instructor that can see their screen. There are so many user mistakes made with Revit in the beginning that are easy to fix and get the new user back in the game…but a big problem if they are by themselves trying to figure it out on their own. Things like closing the Project Browser by accident, opening the Ceiling Plan instead of the Floor Plan, locking the view cube, drawing walls over walls and opening a family (family editor) by mistake are just a few. Many/most of the issues will relate to visibility of things on the screen that are picked up and fixed instantly by an instructor. Good entry-level training (40 hours?) by a live instructor will cover most of these “mistakes” so that users can get themselves out of trouble when they are on their own. I think live-online could work IF the instructor could go to the student’s screen…or even show one student’s screen to other students.

**Users with a little use of the software**

This group would benefit most from a live or live-online instructor demonstrating targeted Revit topics such as family creation, customizing system families, creating smart materials, phasing, etc. This group still makes rookie mistakes and may have had imperfect training or tried to learn it on their own. This group really benefits from seeing other class member’s mistakes/problems. A good live-online instructor could model many of the rookie mistakes and show better/proper ways to use the software. Many users with little use of the software have common questions/issues that get answered in a group setting more efficiently.

**Intermediate level users**

This group has been using Revit a bit…maybe been through a couple projects…and needs targeted training to address their weaknesses and to explore new features of the software. Online learning such as CADLearning, Lynda.com, and even just YouTube are good for this. The software vendors have 1-3 day workshops that can be even better…. IF the presenter is good and the people in the class are close to the same level. Instructors can’t go off on tangents too much or let “that one student” highjack the workshop.

**Advanced level users**

This group has used the software on several projects in Revit and ONLY needs targeted training. One to three- day workshops or online training in new disciplines/technologies like MEP, Structure, Navisworks, Advanced Family Creation, etc from expert trainers with industry experience is optimal.

Conferences, User Groups, and even AUGI.com are also good learning resources for the advanced users. They need other advanced users to exchange ideas with and get information from.

**Textbooks**

I personally do not like texts as a way to learn Revit. They are really time-consuming. They are good for reference and some, like the SDC books, are good for practicing on simple, sample projects. Most Revit texts are step-step, so when the student misses a step or pushes a wrong button, they can get frustrated quickly. Books almost never deal with typical user errors as describe their step by step process. Most texts are also to “wordy” (they are the size of the ole phone books!), so users tend to just look for the steps they have to follow….and not read all the author has to say (which many times is important) so they can complete the exercise.

**In-house vs off-site**

I have trained at a few firms “in-house”….usually in a conference room. It is very convenient for the students and employer, but has some drawbacks. The biggest was people being pulled out of training to deal with an office issue. Then they come back in…..behind and confused. The project managers were the biggest offenders…..they rarely were able to stay for all of the training. The good thing about in-house training was the students stayed the entire time. With off-site training, people would come back very late from lunch, occasionally leave in the early afternoon to (I really don’t know) beat the traffic or pick up their kid or something. That generally didn’t happen in the office.

**How long should a training session last?**

Ideally training is done in short segments over a long period of time. People learn better and retain more if given smaller pieces in multiple sessions with the chance to digest the info and come back with questions. Most people have about a 15-20 minute attention span (less in the late afternoon) for lectured content. Most of my “students” (age really not a factor here) did pretty well in 2-hr blocks implemented with hands-on training…..then were able to go back to work without killing the day. Half-day training was also not too bad….again, when students know they can still get the critical work done, they tended to be less distracted. Half-day training worked MUCH better in the morning. Attention spans in the afternoon were frequently a problem. I did Saturday workshops that went from 8-4 for several years. Mornings up to lunchtime went great. Afternoons were almost always a problem. By 2:30, most were DONE. I think live-online training of an hour or two in the morning would be popular with employers and students as it can be done in the office without killing the day and being too tired to focus.

**Training at night**

I was a trainer at night one summer. I thought it would be poorly attended and unpopular. I was wrong. We went from 6-10 twice a week for 6 weeks. 48 hours of training. They finished at 5pm, ate dinner and did their phone calls and emails….then to the conference room at 6pm sharp. I think not having work deadlines and PM’s staring at them made it good. Free training was also appreciated. Almost all were new users who really wanted to learn the software but didn’t have enough software knowledge to leverage the employer to pay for their training “outside”. They ended up somewhere between intro and intermediate level users….certainly able to leverage other training options to get their software knowledge up. Plus they knew that they could now be put on “Revit Projects”.

**Notes**

I will finish with “taking notes”. I have learned over the years that people do not listen/comprehend well when they are frantically taking notes. Revit has a lot of processes that require several steps. I found that when students tried following me while trying to write it all down…..it didn’t work so well. I wanted them to pay attention to ME and my awesome Revit demo…not their notes. So I started providing the students MY notes….as I thought they would need them if they were going back on their own and do what I did in the workshop a week later. Not written like a textbook, but like I said it in the Revit demonstration they attended. Turned out to be VERY popular with the students.