

# CPD

## Continuous Professional Development

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*Wikipedia defines CPD as:*

*“The means by which members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives”.*



CPD can also be defined as the conscious updating of professional knowledge and the improvement of professional competence throughout a person's working life. It is a commitment to being professional, keeping up to date and continuously seeking to improve. It is the key to optimizing person's career opportunities both today and for the future. (The Chartered Institute of Professional Development 2000)

C - *continuing* because learning never ceases.

P - it is *professional* because it is focused on professional competence in a professional role.

D - it is concerned with *development* hence it is to improve personal performance and enhance career progression.

CPD is, simply, learning, by whatever means helps you fulfil your present and future roles more efficiently, to maintain a sufficiently high standard of professional competence. Having said all of this, "its all about knowledge", and each individual is responsible for their own development; and be required to keep records and provide evidence of their CPD achievements. The British Institute of Funeral Directors (BIFD) at present asks, for the issue of a licence, for twelve hours of CPD over a twelve-month period. How can I achieve this, I hear you ask? CPD can be achieved in two ways, formally and informally, and following is a brief outline to both.

## FORMAL METHODS

- On the job training
- Courses that you have attended
- Attending conferences, or talks
- Writing papers or giving presentations

## INFORMAL METHODS

- Private reading, including current publications, such as The Journal, FSJ, The Funeral Director, anything with articles relating to the industry.
- Networking with other professions outside work, nursing staff, elderly care homes and hospices.
- Mentoring or tutoring others.
- Community activities.

As professionals we have a duty to keep our skills and knowledge up to date. CPD helps us to turn those skills and knowledge into positive opportunities to identify and achieve our career objectives. CPD is an opportunity to do you some good; what and how much depends on the individual. The credibility of our profession is based on the willingness of each professional to learn new skills and to gain more knowledge and experience. If we do something or learn something outside of work that provides a new insight, boosts our confidence or improves our interpersonal skills or communications, it counts! In so much as, it's not what you learn, but how can we use it.

*I don't have the time...* this is one of the most common misconceptions about CPD. It does not take any extra effort be included in your daily activities to gain CPD. Actually the most effective development is the type that flows from the experiences and challenges that you encounter on a daily basis. Many people set aside a regular hour or so every week or month to reflect on what they have done and perhaps to plan ahead. By doing this many of you may find that you are already doing things towards your CPD and not realising it - this is the question of 'feeling the benefit'.

## INFORMATION AND LEARNING - IT'S ALL ABOUT KNOWLEDGE.

Now that we have moved to the information age from the industrial age, success in the workplace of the future will have to depend on our ability to manage information and how to tap into our knowledge. To do this, we have to use our experiences and information and turn that into knowledge that can be remembered, used and if need be re-used. If we don't have the information, then we won't gain the knowledge. Tremendous amounts of information pass between us all every day and peoples' lives and jobs revolve around the information they handle.

We need to be able to know the differences between data, information and

knowledge. Data are the bare facts and can be seen as the foundation of knowledge. These are the things we see on balance sheets, in budgets and statistics everyday. They mean nothing on their own until we add meaning to them and in doing so change data into information.

Information is not just all of the data, for example, death rate statistics. We can see rises and falls in certain areas and by using this data can provide the information needed to plan ahead. Information though is not knowledge. Knowledge comes by putting together more than one source of information to raise our level of understanding. We often think of knowledge being passed on to us through education, training and books, whereas we all interpret information in different ways, we rely on knowledge as being the truth.

There are two types of knowledge, tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge.

Tacit knowledge is what we collect in our development, as we work with colleagues and wend our way through life, but are the things we find difficult to explain. These things are not written down anywhere and won't be found on any induction course. Can you think of any unwritten rules? Such as, how to behave, who to avoid, who not to avoid? We have picked this up through mixing and communicating with others and seeing what goes on around us. As well as this, there are everyday skills you use, things you don't have to question but just get on with. Tacit knowledge can be applied straight away without thinking. On a day to day basis we use our tacit knowledge making us unconsciously competent. But tacit knowledge can give us a problem if it is wrong. As it is so difficult to explain, how do we forget what we have learned and then get to grips with learning again? There is only one way to do this, and that is to change our tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is documented, stored in books, manuals and can be learned, revisited and used again, and education has taught us how to manage explicit knowledge. During our learning we put together the information and our own experiences to create our own interpretation of the knowledge we have gained.

A useful way of extracting your tacit knowledge is to use the following points:

- Know-how what you use to carry out your work task.
- Know-why knowing the purpose of your role.
- Know-what this relates to the actions, some tasks require specific activities to get things done.

- Know-who these are the people who you may need to get things done.
- Know-where this is the knowledge about where to find the information or data you may need.
- Know-when this is all about timing and judgement, knowing when your knowledge should be used, or in some cases not.

The amount of knowledge you need to accumulate over a lifetime of work depends mainly on your chosen career path. Some will require more than others, but we all need knowledge to survive in the workplace. We need to be good at converting our tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge so it is of more use. This is where following a continuous process of making tacit knowledge explicit, updating it and absorbing it, and making it tacit again is very useful. This ensures your knowledge is kept up to date and allows you to drop knowledge that is no longer of use.

Ian Robertson (author of *Mind Sculpture - Unleashing Your Brain's Potential*) offers some very useful advice on how to keep our memory (and hence knowledge) current. He recommends the use of the PQRST method as a practical way of achieving this, the acronym standing for:

**PREVIEW** - before learning something new, form a rough idea what it is about.

**QUESTION** - ask yourself what you may already know about the topic and any questions you would like to answer by learning it.

**READ** - when learning about the new topic do so actively by asking yourself the questions you have posed as you proceed.

**STATE** - when you have finished learning the new topic, review it and attempt to relate it to the knowledge you already have.

**TEST** - test yourself on what you have just learned.

Try putting the PQRST method to use when carrying out your CPD, see if it helps.

Knowledge is the heart of lifelong learning, and is at the heart of our working lives, so as a member of the BIFD, which was set up for education and learning, why not carry on being professional and competent? Albeit sometimes unconsciously, by developing your skills and knowledge through CPD and help keep The British Institute of Funeral Directors alive!