



# INTERGREEN

## Module 4 - Peer-to-peer training

Final version



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## Introduction

The aim of this module is to train participants to develop skills for sharing and transferring their knowledge to their colleagues and agents in other municipalities.

Indeed, the sustainable development skills and knowledge developed by participants throughout the previous training modules take on their full meaning if relayed to as many people as possible. Whether it's by organizing full-day or half-day workshops, presenting case studies, demonstrating the tabletop game or promoting the course online, there are many ways to do this within your professional circle.

This learning technique is known as peer-to-peer training, and is widely used in professional environments. Together, we'll look at the advantages of this technique, as well as the different formats available.

We'll also look at the process of setting up a peer training program in a workplace, specifically that of a municipality.

Finally, as this is the last module, we'll take the opportunity to discuss the various techniques and tools used throughout the training, including those mentioned above, which can be useful in knowledge sharing.

### 1. Peer-to-Peer introduction

#### 1.1. What is Peer-to-Peer?

Peer-to-Peer learning is a type of mutual learning and training strategy. It involves participants of the same level engaging in collaborative education. Peer-to-peer learning is invaluable in many situations.

While it's usually associated with classrooms, peer learning is also important at work. It creates an engaged workforce that is constantly developing its skills.

Put simply, peer-to-peer learning is when one or more students (or coworkers) teach other students (or coworkers).

Regardless of whether individuals are students or coworkers, people support each other throughout the learning process. Each learner must be treated the same no matter their ability.

**In the classroom**

- Students teaching other students
- Teacher changes role from authoritative instructor to shared learning facilitator
- More advanced students explaining difficult concepts to weaker students

**In the workplace**

- Employees teaching their colleagues
- Manager abdicates his/her authority to empower employees
- Tenured employees sharing knowledge with recently hired recruits

Peer learning isn't just for students at school or college. Colleagues at work can learn from each other through a peer-to-peer organization. In the same way that students teach each other, employees teach one another.

As well as employees learning new skills, managers can also benefit. Peer training empowers managers to identify knowledge gaps within companies.

It's important to note that peer learning is not a cut-and-dry concept. Any meaningful collaboration of peers at work can be considered peer learning.

## 1.2. Reasons why you need a Peer-to-Peer organization

Keeping people's skills in sync with fast-changing markets is the biggest challenge of our time. Employees' experiences and knowledge are one of the biggest assets to an organization. And this should be leveraged.

Think of all the knowledgeable and capable colleagues you interact with daily. Now think about how much expertise the whole group could gain if this knowledge is shared.

Peer learning is especially well-suited to the way humans learn new information.

It's easier for us to learn new skills in an environment that includes the four key stages of the "Learning Loop".



These stages are:

- Gaining knowledge
- Applying that knowledge
- Receiving constructive feedback
- Reflecting on skills and lessons learned

Peer-to-peer strategies cover all these stages, making for well-rounded and effective training.

Here are some of the benefits you can expect to see in a successful peer-to-peer organization:

- **It encourages connectivity and collaboration.** As peers interact with each other, they learn how to work together as a unit as opposed to individually. This develops into a positive workplace culture of sharing.
- **It can help to boost workforce morale and well-being.** Employees that help their colleagues learn and develop their skills boost self-confidence. This lends itself to an increased sense of belonging and connection.
- **It can increase engagement.** By being teachers, as opposed to just students, employees are more invested in an activity. Rather than taking directives, employees actively want to learn and teach others.
- **It can improve retention & productivity.** Workplace learners can learn more efficiently when a peer provides support. Giving them more time to absorb knowledge can help them remember information.
- **It helps to ensure new employees feel comfortable.** Connecting an experienced colleague with a new recruit helps them feel more integrated. The new hire can learn new aspects related to the job and organization seamlessly.
- **It provides a safe space to ask questions.** Employees feel more freedom to challenge ideas with their peers. They are more likely to raise concerns with a colleague than with a manager or boss.
- **It reinforces employees' existing knowledge.** Many studies have shown the benefits of the learning-by-teaching effect. Colleagues who spend time teaching what they've learned have a better understanding too.

## 2. How to set up and implement a Peer-to-Peer learning program in the workplace

### 2.1. How to introduce Peer Learning as a practice

Peer learning can happen in numerous parts of an employee's job. Let's take a look at how to introduce peer training as a practice in the workplace:

#### 2.1.1. Peer training during onboarding

Onboarding is the first place where employees can participate in peer learning. Let's look at three ways to implement peer training into onboarding:

##### 1. Provide a peer mentor or coach

Pair entry-level employees with a more experienced peer. Having a mentor can help new hires integrate smoothly into a company.

They can connect new employees with other colleagues to cultivate important workplace relationships.

##### 2. Use an onboarding platform

Give your new team member access to a collaborative onboarding learning platform (shared drive or space). The platform should share everything from company culture to payroll information.

Knowing the ins and outs of their new company will help new employees feel that they fit in. It'll set them up for success and let them hit the ground running on their first day.

##### 3. Set up an online workgroup

Online workgroups allow employees, new and old, to create collaborative learning communities. These tools boost productivity by helping teams work together more efficiently. The best part is that knowledge is shared via one easily accessible platform.

#### 2.1.2. Peer training in constant performance

You can implement peer training into your colleagues' day-to-day work lives. Let's look at three ways to implement peer training in your colleagues' constant performance:

##### 1. Peer learning lunches

Also known as "learn at lunch" or "brown bag" events, lunches make for popular trends in peer training.

In these peer learning sessions, co-workers aren't just gaining new information. They're interacting with their peers in a relaxed, social environment.

Because of their informality, people are less intimidated and more open to sharing. In exchange for their participation, co-workers can look forward to a free lunch. It's a win-win!

## 2. Social learning tools

Social media isn't just for sharing and liking pictures of family and friends. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter have immense social learning value in the workplace.

Facebook's own Workplace is a great tool for collaboration and fostering more interaction. It facilitates online group work, video conferencing, and resource sharing.

## 3. Learning management systems (LMS)

Cloud (advanced) technology enables peers to work remotely and collaborate in real time. Once uploaded, employees have unlimited access to the information they need.

### 2.1.3. Peer training during reviewing processes

Reviewing processes is a great learning opportunity for employees, and peer training helps to facilitate that. Let's take a look at three ways to implement peer training during reviewing processes:

#### 1. Peer performance feedback

Peer reviews let employees gain a full understanding of their work and the work of their peers. More transparency and feedback add insight that a manager might not be able to give.

#### 2. Group reflection conversations

Verify to have sufficient aside time for teams and the peer-to-peer organization as a whole to assess their work, value, and beliefs. Group reflection helps employees build their emotional intelligence.

#### 3. Continuous peer training sessions

Workshops run by experts outside the organization have their value. But ongoing peer interactions are where the real magic happens.

Ask your colleagues for their input on how they'd like to run the sessions and how often they'd like them to happen.

Keep up to date with the latest trends in peer learning to keep your peer training sessions relevant and engaging.

## 2.2. How to set up a peer learning program within the workplace

Here's how you can set up a peer learning program within the workplace and make sure it's successful in seven steps:

## 1. Select a peer learning facilitator

A facilitator will help the process run smoothly. They should keep the conversation flowing but not be directly involved. They must stay neutral, and there is no authority associated with their role.

## 2. Create a safe environment to learn from each other

There's no good in setting up a peer training session if no one feels comfortable sharing. Everyone should feel they can speak up and share their experiences. Participants must feel safe to ask questions without feeling embarrassed.

Emphasize the importance of respectful communication. The facilitator (see above) can help set up a code of conduct.

## 3. Set up networking events

Networking events aren't all about exchanging business cards. They can be a great source of new perspectives and ideas.

Set up happy hour meetups, industry seminars, or office mixers. These sharing events will help form trust and build connections among colleagues.

## 4. Pair seasoned employees with recruits

Ask seasoned employees to create Peer-to-Peer learning content for new employees. It will give the newcomers a chance to learn their jobs hands-on and to integrate into the company.

## 5. Find common reasons to learn from each other

Finding the commonality between experiences helps employees relate to one another. Employees might be surprised to learn their colleagues have struggled with a similar problem. This drives a desire to learn how they overcame the issue.

## 6. Encourage diverse perspectives

Bringing together employees from different backgrounds fosters an open-minded, global company culture. This can make them better equipped to see situations from many perspectives.

## 7. Keep track of comprehension

Ask your peer learners for suggestions and feedback on the lessons they have learned. Make a note of learners' consumption of the educational content. You can use this information to improve future peer training programs.

### 3. Other Peer Learning formats you can use in your daily activity

#### Action learning groups

Action learning groups are small groups of 5-7 people. They are peers at a similar level of responsibility and experience, usually working on solving complex problems that may appear complex or unsolvable. Action learning is a process of insightful questioning, reflective listening, generating new actions, and learning from a shared group.

While action learning focuses on teamwork, it also encourages workplace autonomy. Each team member is expected to contribute to the group, coming up with their solutions. This helps build teams made of insightful and productive employees with good problem-solving and leadership skills.

#### Debates

A debate is a formal activity where a participant has a particular point of view and attempts to convince others having a different point of view to agree with the participant's specific point of view. Debates encourage higher-order and critical thinking skills amongst all involved members. Although debates are not always focused on generating new actions and learning, the members often implicitly learn a great deal about other points of view than their own.

#### Discussion groups

In discussion groups, employees share their insights and opinions to decide or enhance their understanding of a topic. Similar to debates, group discussions are also not focused on generating new actions and learning.

Discussion groups lead to a significant exchange of ideas among members, help research and formulate arguments, identify and rectify mistakes, generate thought-provoking questions, and solve problems.

#### Coaching

Peer coaching is a confidential, mutually beneficial relationship where two professional colleagues learn new concepts and share ideas, and solve work-related problems together. The peer coach can be a supervisor, mentor, or veteran employee in the same department. Since peers work on things together, peer coaching is not an exercise of advice or guidance but a give-and-take.

## 4. Tools, Apps, and Skills supporting Peer-to-Peer

There are some resources that can support Peer-to-Peer learning. They are skills, tools, and techniques. In the Inter Green project, there is also a tool kit, composed of the board game and the online training course.

### 4.1. The Inter Green toolkit

#### Board game

As a supportive learning instrument of the training, the board game used game scenarios based on real problems related to sustainable development. The objective is to provide participants with the opportunity to practically demonstrate knowledge and skills gained through the program.

#### Online training course

Based on the contents of the training program, the online course is created to build knowledge, and skills in sustainable development among all the employees within municipalities, state institutions, and organizations that will need it.

### 4.2. Other digital tools

#### Video conferencing software

In the era of the virtualization of tasks, video conferencing software can play an important role in peer-to-peer learning too. Being connected but not in the same place, and avoiding time-consuming activities, can make learning more efficient. Also, it is a useful tool to share experiences and opinions with people coming from all over the world (the online meetings between the participants of the Inter Green training course were a great example of it!).

Examples of video conferencing software: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet...

#### Survey software and questionnaire tools

To evaluate the knowledge of the participants before, during, or after the learning activity, but also as real learning instruments: surveys and questionnaires can be good allies.

Examples of survey software and questionnaire tools: Google Form, EU Survey...

#### Collaborative platforms

As mentioned before, collaborative platforms are perfect for sharing content and learning materials between colleagues. Documents can be uploaded if necessary and available to everyone or only a category of people, participants can share their work and download the resources in case of need... the advantages are numerous.

Examples of collaborative platforms: Google Drive, Whaller...

### 4.3. Skills supporting Peer-to-Peer

The main skills supporting Peer-to-Peer are:

- **Communication skills.** Good Peer-to-Peer learning goes through good communication. If you are in charge of the activity, then you are responsible for creating an environment where people can interact, listening, questioning, explaining, and giving feedback.
- **Organizational skills.** A strong organization will help you before, during, and after the activity.
- **Adaptability skills.** You should be prepared that things could not possibly turn as expected. The best way is to prepare yourself for it, finding solutions to potential problems that will come.
- **Facilitation skills.** They are the abilities needed to master working with a group. Even more than communication, they will help you to improve participation and increase clarity in the activity.

### 4.4. Other tools and techniques

#### Verbal tools

There are some verbal tools that can be used in training facilitation or peer-to-peer learning, to engage participants and involve everyone.

## Icebreakers

An icebreaker is an activity or a game designed to welcome participants and warm up the conversation. Usually used at the beginning of the meeting/training or after a break, it helps to

### VERBAL TOOLS FOR TRAINING FACILITATION

When facilitating a group conversation in a training session, you can use a number of simple verbal tools to engage participants and to make sure everyone is involved.

#### Probing



Probing is used to determine the mood or general opinion of the group towards a certain topic or point in the discussion. Just asking for a 'thumbs up, thumbs down' survey can be enough to get an impression of the general opinion of the group.

#### Paraphrasing



Paraphrasing means to express the same content that was just stated before but with your own words in order to check that both you and other members of the group have the same understanding.

#### Redirecting questions and comments



Redirecting a question to the group helps to involve participants more into the discussion. In addition, it also helps the reflection of the group.

#### Bridging and referring back



This helps the group to follow the discussion and to connect ideas by recalling an earlier discussion or idea.

#### Shifting perspective



If the group gets stuck at some point in the discussion, try to shift the perspective and look at the problem from a different perspective.

#### Summarizing



Repetition promotes learning, and summarizing what has been learned so far will help the group reinforce the learning. Do it often or ask someone from the group to do it, a participant who rethinks and recaps the learning content aloud will likely retain significantly more memories about it.

#### Giving positive reinforcements



It's important to encourage people (especially less assertive ones) to state their opinions. Therefore, when someone brings a good point, state it, in order to show his/her participation is appreciated, so later on he/she will feel confident enough to bring another idea into the discussion.

#### Including quieter members



Encourage less talkative members to contribute to the discussion. Ask directly for their opinions and ask if they have any question to ask. At the same time, keep in mind that people do have different learning and thinking styles and may not feel comfortable if they are 'encouraged' too much.

ensure that all attendees are equal participants and that they are fully engaged. According the purpose, icebreakers can help to get to know each other, support team building, improve teamwork and collaboration or just have a funny moment.

Here you can find a list of icebreakers that you can use at any time:  
<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/icebreaker-games/>

*(More tools, apps, and skills could be added, according to what other partners will also propose/use)*

## 5. Practical example: How to Implement Peer-to-Peer Learning in Your Organization

If you were in charge of organizing peer-to-peer learning, from where would you start? Let's see the five steps that can't be missed:

### 1. Draw up the agenda

Just after or just before having the agreement from your supervisor, you should provide the agenda of the activity. For that, you have to define the objectives, the place where it would take

place (if it isn't set by your organization), the duration, and the time. The agenda has to be clear but doesn't need to be very detailed, just enough to allow participants to know what the main contents will be (especially if they don't know it yet).

*Practical exercise:* your supervisor agrees to organize a peer-to-peer learning activity on sustainable development next week in the meeting room, but he needs a program for the activity. Draw it up!

## 2. Prepare the program for the activity

Starting from the agenda, then you will need to define a more detailed program: type of activities, type of support, starting and ending time of each module... The more the program is detailed, the more it will be easy to follow it. A good program is half of the job already done.

## 3. Draw up an evaluation form (before and after the training)

Evaluation forms can be very helpful to evaluate the impact that peer-to-peer learnings have on the participant's knowledge and skills (and also to justify the interest in the activity to your supervisors). If possible, it's always recommended to have an evaluation form before the training, and an evaluation form after the training. Questions don't need to be the same.

*Practical exercise:* create an evaluation form to be distributed before the training to the participants of your activity.

## 4. Be sure that you will have an audience!

If you are in charge of the organization of the event, you can ask to receive confirmation from the persons invited to attend. It can also be a good idea to send a reminder a few days before the activity. It's a good way to start to create a bond with the participants.

## 5. Set up the activity and be prepared

If you have followed the process below and you have read the information shared in this Module, you should be ready to organize your first peer-to-peer learning event! The most important thing now, is to finalize your to-do list with last-minute tasks, to prepare the learning materials that you planned to use, and to be in good shape for D-day!