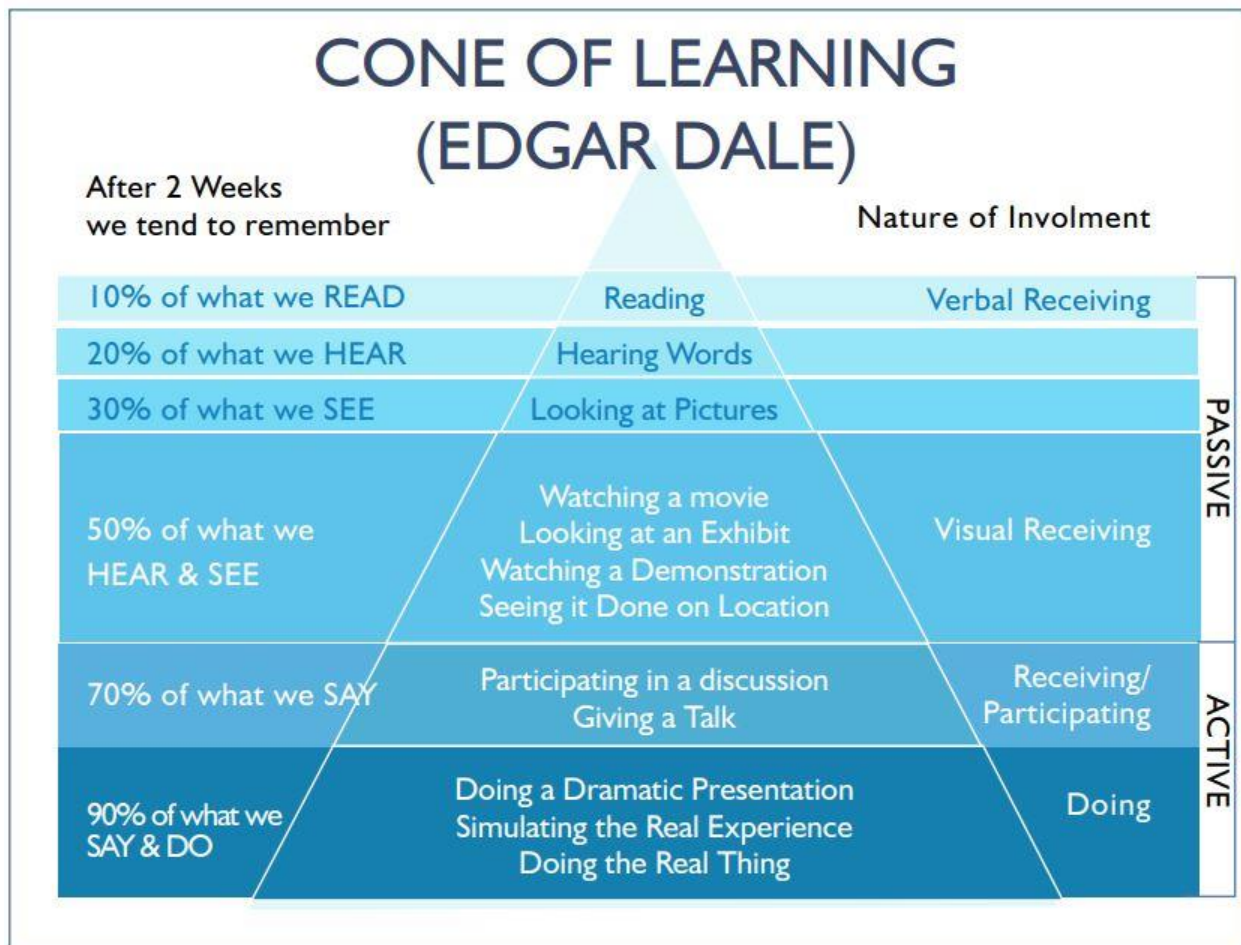# Dale's Cone of Experience:
Incorporating Interactivity into Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Faculty Development (FD)

Dale's Cone of Experience is a model that incorporates several theories related to instructional design and learning processes. During the 1960s, Edgar Dale theorized that learners retain more information by what they "do" as opposed to what is "heard", "read" or "observed". His research led to the development of the Cone of Experience. Today, this "learning by doing" has become known as "experiential learning" or "action learning".

Adapted from E. Dale, Audiovisual Methods in Teaching, 1969, NY: Dryden Press.

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How Can Dale's Cone of Experience be used to add interactivity to CME and FD programs?

During program development, presenters should consider the most effective methods of learning when considering how to enhance the degree of interactivity into workshops and presentations.

According to Dale's research, information presented verbally is the least effective method of learning. The most effective method of learning involves direct, purposeful learning experiences, such as hands-on practice, simulation or real-life experiences. The Cone of Experience also highlights the average retention rate for the various methods of teaching. It reveals that "action-learning" techniques result in up to 90% retention. People learn best when they use perceptual learning styles which are sensory-based.

When selecting learning activities, the further you progress down The Cone of Experience, the more effective the learning will be for the participant's and the more likely they will be to retain the information.

When selecting learning activities, ask yourself these questions:

1) Where the learning activities that I am planning for this session fall within the Cone of Experience?

2) Can I increase the quality of the learning by utilizing a learning activity that is lower on the Cone of Experience?

3) Can I incorporate additional "senses" to enhance the learning activities?

4) How realistic will the learning experience be?

References:

Diamond, Robert M. Designing and Improving Courses and Curricula in Higher Education. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1989.
Dale, Edgar. Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching, 3rd ed., Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1969, p. 108
Bruner, Jerome S. Toward a Theory of Instruction, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1966, p. 49.

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