

ACCEPTING THE “CHALLENGES” OF TRAINING

BASIC TENETS FOR TRAINERS

As a presenter, you are:

- ❖ the **teacher** in that classroom, even if you are the youngest one there.
- ❖ responsible for the learning of **ALL** participants.
- ❖ responsible for the learning **climate**.
- ❖ responsible for controlling **behavior** of participants.

As a presenter, it is best if you:

- ❖ operate in a **professional** mode and **not a personal** mode.
- ❖ stay on the offensive and **never get defensive**.
- ❖ never let them see you sweat!
- ❖ **don't assume** anything.
- ❖ **read the audience** continually and be ready to **shift gears** quickly.
- ❖ carefully word **statements**, monitor **body language**, and control facial **expressions** and **tone of voice**.

AVOID CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Overview:

The first 10 minutes are absolutely the most critical.

Plan Well—Plan for success and retention

Know your content

Use avoidance techniques

Use good teaching techniques

Assume the responsibility of teacher

Arrangements and Facilities

Be sure everyone can see and hear. Just like students, if they can't see and/or hear, they will not engage in the workshop and this will lead to behavior problems in addition to a lack of learning success.

Close up front (see below) on facility conditions that are beyond your control. If the temperature is/is likely to be unpleasant, mention it, state that neither you nor they can control it, try to get a commitment (even if non-verbal) to not let it interrupt their learning. This will eliminate most of the complaints and nagging that can occur.

Arrangement of participants affects behavior.

1 participant per computer works well with average and advanced participants

2 works better with less experienced participants (with 2 people working together, you have 2 people hearing directions/information. If one forgets, the other may remember.) In

some cases, this can be the arrangement of choice, even if enough computers are available. The teacher must take the responsibility to make sure the participants trade jobs (typer and watcher). If not, one will dominate while the other watches. Mentioning this up front will take away much of the tension for those that don't like to move/change.

3 doesn't usually work well at all; 1 works and the other 2 talk.

Critical Beginnings

Establish credibility. Begin the workshop by introducing yourself and establishing credibility. Describe the experience that you have acquired that qualifies you to teach/present this workshop. Emphasize that the presenter is a learner – not an expert. This will “take the heat off” when you don't have an answer to a question.

Make eye contact with everyone in the workshop. This is important throughout the session as well. Avoid standing on just one side of the room or addressing less than the whole group.

Get participants active and verbal in the first few minutes of the training. This can be done by using a “pair share” with the person next to them. No “reporting out” is necessary. This is more powerful if it is used to have participants state what they are anticipating as outcomes/benefits from the workshop or is in some way related to the content rather than a “get to know you” kind of exchange. Even more powerful is to have this time generate, in only 2-3 minutes, something that will be used during or at the end of the workshop.

Honor and recognize prior knowledge. Allow those with prior knowledge let everyone know so that they can let it go and get on with the workshop. This can make a remarkable difference in how some participants act.

Review the time frame/schedule of the workshop. Don't hand out agendas with times defined. This causes frustration (and negative behavior) if the workshop doesn't stay exactly on schedule. Include when it will officially end. **Never** tell them it will end early if there is ANY chance it won't.

Nominate a timekeeper. Enlist a volunteer to help you with timekeeping for lunch, a 15 minute warning at the end for reflection and commitment, etc.

Consider nominating a “tail twister.” Enlist the help of a volunteer to keep the focus on the objectives...someone who will say (so you don't have to) that it is time to move on, that the discussion is off topic, etc. This is similar to a “peer chill” technique used to address challenges (see below).

Create a need. Give an overview of the workshop and its value. Include what they will **know** and **be able to do**. Describe what's in it for the participants – how they will benefit, how it is practical, etc. Describe what they will be able to do with the skills learned. It may be helpful to have some participants verbalize what they hope to know and do as a result of this training.

Give the big picture. Why we're here. How this fits in the scheme of things. This can include how this training relates to curriculum, sequence of student skills, other trainings, etc.

State the goals and outcomes. Present the goals and outcomes as outcome based to define exactly what participants will be able "to do" and "know" at the end of the workshop. Stating that you are confident that they will truly be able to do these things is more powerful and positive than just listing objectives. This sets the prior confidence and expectation for success and makes participants feel confident in you as a presenter.

State scope and parameters of workshop.

- ❖ What will be covered
- ❖ What **won't be** covered
- ❖ An "**Idea Board**" will be used for other topics. Offer an avenue to address other topics of interest to the participants. Have participants record questions/comments/ideas that arise on sticky notes and place them on the Idea Board. Those questions/comments/ideas can then be addressed with the individual or with the whole class as determined by the trainer.

"Close up Front"

- ❖ **Bring up any predicted negative issues.** This "closes" the issues and prevents them from coming up during the training. Do this even if you don't have an answer or resolution. Just mentioning the item "closes" it. If brought up during the workshop, you can refer back to the discussion at the beginning.
- ❖ **Address the subconscious by storytelling.** Storytelling is a very powerful teaching technique as it addresses the cognitive and also the subconscious. Storytelling increases the chance of understanding and improves retention. Similes and metaphors are "small stories" and provide the same benefits and are powerful teaching tools.
- ❖ **Use negative space and storytelling to address negative attitudes subconsciously before they are exhibited.** This can be done using a "negative/resisting change space." Decide in advance where you will stand to address negative comments; subconsciously assign that space as negative through the use of storytelling (Robert Garmstrom does this by telling a story of a bear that lived in a cage. "All the bear did day after day was walk in a circle. One day the bear's owner removed the cage. Guess what – the bear continued to move in a circle. I know that all of you are ready to get out of the cage and move onto new techniques/skills."

Robert moves to a neutral space away from where he will be presenting to tell this story. After telling the story, Robert uses that space as his neutral space to address negative comments. Subconsciously he is saying, “You are being like that bear.”) This technique can be used when bringing up any predicted negative issues (see above).

Address issue of attendees with great variance of expectations.

- ❖ **State goals as outcomes.** “By the end of this workshop you will be able to....”
- ❖ **Explain and use the 4D format.**
 - Discuss** -an overview of the topic to be covered, using as many familiar analogies as possible
 - Demo** -participants watch or listen while the skill or knowledge is shown
 - Do together** -structured time for participants to practice the new skill or knowledge. This gives the insecure SECURITY that they need in order to work.
 - Discover** -time at the end of each topic for the “overachievers” to try things on their own while the presenter helps participants who need reteaching. This gives “overachievers” HOPE that there will be time for them to explore.
- ❖ **State scope** of workshop to make clear what will be included in the workshop; don’t mention items that will not be covered (because this makes participants thin, ‘Oh, I wanted this workshop to cover that!’ and increases the likelihood of disappointment that results in challenging participants).
- ❖ State that other topics will be put on the “**Idea Board**” for future workshops – to keep the workshop on focus, but honor the questions that participants have.

Address issues of attendees with great variance of prior knowledge.

Identify “sneakers”/”assistants” – setting up the “over qualified” as teaching assistants. Give each group (“sneakers” and “teaching assistants”) HOPE and SECURITY by explaining the 4D training format. Give “under qualified” an avenue for assistance by setting up “auditors”/”peer pairs.” This will prevent them from bringing down the workshop for others. Give the “overqualified” hope that they will be able to go beyond the basics.

Teaching the lesson/content

Teach concepts not software.

Use the power of storytelling.

Use similes and metaphors as small “stories.”

Separate to simplify (content vs. skills). When teaching new skills, use familiar content. For example: When teaching creation of formulas in a spreadsheet workshop, use a gradebook rather than an amortization table/schedule.

Break content into chunks. Keep referring to the big picture and where each chunk fits.

Review often. Remember the old teaching strategy –“Tell them what you’re going to do, do it, tell them what they did.”

Check for understanding just like you do with students in the classroom.

Use the 4D format.

Zoom out to the big picture occasionally. Bring them all back together so we aren’t just focusing on the little skills. (Using a model is sometimes helpful.)

Don’t hold the handouts until the end.

- ❖ This is frustrating to participants and can make them angry to receive the handouts after they have worked hard to take notes.
- ❖ The handouts can help participants stay with you during the workshop and can be used as an advanced organizer.
- ❖ Making notes on the handout can help them “hang the content on little pegs in their mind.”
- ❖ The handout can serve as the model for “the big picture” that global participants need.
- ❖ Number the pages or sections and refer to the page/section numbers during the training to help participants follow along.

Delivery

Praise. Even though they are adults, they still need a pat on the back! (Careful of saccharine praise.) Give recognition, encouragement, and approval when participants offer suggestions/ideas, ask a good question, etc.

Assist by telling/asking not doing. When giving assistance, talk the participant through the process rather than taking over and doing it for them.

Give participants choices, if appropriate. Adults deserve to have some choices. If you ask participants to discuss a topic with those around them, include the option to write down their thoughts alone if they choose. This can eliminate some negative body language, tone of voice, statements of participants, etc. The choices might include lunch time, etc. If time starts running out and all the lessons/content have not been completed, give participants choices about how to proceed.

Don't try to force adults to participate. If a participant doesn't want to participate in an activity, especially one that involves movement, touching, acting, role-playing, don't embarrass them by trying to make them participate. Respect their space and dignity. Work around them and ignore that they aren't participating. If you see that someone is uncomfortable with the activity, ask them to take notes or record or some other involvement activity (ask privately).

Carefully Word Statements

- ❖ **Avoid too much "I."** Use "third party" in stories to avoid too much "I" when sharing experiences. "A third grade teacher did....."
- ❖ Never sound like you are **bragging or being condescending**. Condescension will be a magnet for verbal attacks, etc.
- ❖ **Avoid "should-ing"** on participants. Instead of "you should, try "research says that..." If it appears that the participants don't want to know about research, then change the working to "experience shows..."
- ❖ Avoid making statements as **absolutes** unless you are ready to provide proof. If it is an opinion, be sure to state it as your experience or opinion. You can prevent an argument with your opinion by a neutral statement (see below). A challenge to an absolute can lead to a "prove it" situation—a no win situation.

Stay on track. Don't let one or two participants hinder the whole workshop. Keep the workshop moving in the direction intended. Try not to get bogged down. This causes frustration on all participants....those that need the extra time as well as those that don't.

Avoid whole group reporting out. Many participants consider this a waste of their time. They don't want to listen to other people who came to learn, they want to spend their time listening to the you, the "expert." Carefully consider the time required for whole group reporting and weigh it against the loss of time.

Don't apologize. Apologizing for things like mistakes on the PowerPoint, etc., is like attracting sharks with blood. Be very factual rather than apologetic: "I see" rather than "I'm sorry."

Closing

Revisit the goals and objectives. State the same things that were stated at the beginning: what they now know and can now do.

Review the “Idea Board.” Even if time does not permit addressing any of the issues on the board, dignify their responses by mentioning the board and lack of time. You can offer to respond to them via email on some topics.

Celebrate! Emphasize the accomplishments. Quickly review all the concepts explored in the workshop.

Provide for reflection and commitment. Ask participants to take a moment to think about what they learned today for which they are most excited. Then have them describe how they plan to use that skill/technique/information. Participants could share this with a partner or write those plans down on paper. There is no need for whole group sharing.

ADDRESS CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Deal overtly but non-aggressively with inattention, passive behavior, prima donnas.

Use proximity (walk/stand close).

Call on them (name first!) and giving them time to respond.

Ask their opinion (name first).

Provide a mobile activity like changing groups or partners.

Identify and Deal with Difficult Participants in a Positive Way. Use their name in an example (positive one) or a story. For example: “I know that Joe Problem would do in his classroom. (Or “...would never.....”)

Remove anonymity. Elicit their name aloud for the group to hear. Ask their campus at the same time. Do this at a non-aggressive time, such as when about to give an example or tell a story, then use their name in the story. “Non-anonymous” participants are less likely to act out.

Address Verbal Challenges Directly.

“Neutralize it” by making “neutral” comments.

- ❖ “I understand what you are saying.”
- ❖ “That’s a thought.”
- ❖ “You’ve had different experiences than I have.”
- ❖ “That’s interesting.”

“Peer Chill” it by letting other participants respond.

- ❖ “Does anyone else want to make a comment on this topic?”
- ❖ “Does anyone else agree?”
- ❖ “Has anyone else had the same experience?”

“Zing” on to Other Things.

- ❖ Quickly move on to another topic/thought.
- ❖ “That makes me think of....”
- ❖ “Oh! What about....?”

“Bing” on to Other Things.

- ❖ Ponder the participant comment for a moment, make a neutral comment, then move to another topic. Not quite as sudden a change as a “zing.”
- ❖ “Hummmmm....the next point is interesting also...”
- ❖ “Hummmmm....I’ll have to think about that point. The next item is....”
- ❖ Dignify, but don’t agree.

“Break Out” if necessary.

- ❖ Suddenly notice your watch and take a break.
- ❖ Tell “challenger” that you would like to hear more at the break.

“Idea Board” it.

- ❖ State that the topic needs more discussion and you will add it to the Idea Board to discuss if time allows.
- ❖ If the comment is too off topic, state that this is beyond the scope of this workshop and move on.

Remember you can’t raise the dead. Dr. Ernie Stackowski says that some participants are Lazarus. The difference is, you can’t raise them from the dead.they appear to be hopeless. As teachers, we think we should reach **everyone** and that we can raise the dead. In the case of short-term training sessions, you can’t and shouldn’t feel guilty after you have done everything that you can. This leads to the next technique...Release for relief.

Release for relief. As a last resort and as the one responsible for the learning climate of the whole group, you may have to make some decisions concerning the “dead” and release them from the training. **Base the decision to release on whether it benefits the rest of the group.**

- ❖ If the group seems to be hindered in any significant way by the challenging participant, decide if it is severe enough to “free the challenging participant up for other opportunities.”

- ❖ If the group seems to be OK with them there, decide if **you** can continue in a positive way. If you can't, proceed with the "release."
- ❖ You may have to base the decision on district philosophy and may not be able to implement this technique.

Address them privately. Never confront them in front of the group. If you have to, use the "break out" technique and then talk to them alone.

Make it easy, yet uncomfortable, for them to leave.

Make it **easy**. Blame the problem on you or the content. **Never** blame them directly as this will be taken as a full frontal assault and will result in confrontation.

- ❖ "It seems that the content of this workshop is not something you feel you need. Feel free to leave now, then select a more appropriate workshop later."
- ❖ "It appears that I'm not meeting your needs. Feel free to leave now, then select a more appropriate workshop later."
- ❖ The closest comment to blaming them could be, "It seems that you are not feeling successful (or happy) with this workshop."
- ❖ Make it uncomfortable for them. The statements above are stated in a positive way, yet when they hear it, it will make most of them feel uncomfortable. Some may disagree and decide to stay and behave. Others may feel uncomfortable and leave anyway.
- ❖ Frame the private discussion as a concern for them.
- ❖ Definitively use a very concerned tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language.
- ❖ If a concerned manner isn't possible for you, use a very neutral tone of voice.
- ❖ Stay in your professional mode and never go to your personal level.

Management Techniques Vocabulary List

Bing – ponder the participant comment for a moment, make a neutral comment, then move to another.

Break out – call a sudden break to break the tension and provide presenter an opportunity to change the subject.

4D training format

- Discuss** an overview of the topic to be covered, using as many familiar analogies as possible
- Demo** participants watch or listen while the skill or knowledge is shown
- Do together** structured time for participants to practice the new skill or knowledge.

Discover This gives the insecure SECURITY that they need in order to work. time at the end of each topic for the “overachievers” to try things on their own while the presenter helps participants who need reteaching. This give “overachievers” HOPE that there will be time for them to explore.

Idea board – a list displayed for all to see where items can be posted throughout the workshop that are outside the parameters of the workshop, not included in the agenda, and/or listed to be addressed if time is available.

Neutralize – presenter restates comment thoughtfully or makes a very neutral comment that doesn’t agree or disagree with participant.

Peer chill – allowing other participants to say what you WISH you could say to tame other participants (they will!).

Release for relief – allow challenging participants an opportunity to leave the workshop if they are disrupting the whole group.

Sneakers – participants who attend a workshop where they already have the knowledge / skills/experience to be addressed during the workshop; they are “over qualified” and “sneak” into workshops that are too “easy “ for them. They can become “teaching assistants” for those who lack the background necessary for successful during the workshop.

Zing – make a sudden change of topic as if you just thought of something. Also effective to pause as if you are pondering the participant’s comment, then zing to another topic.

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