Training the Active Training Way

8 Strategies to Spark Learning and Change

Mel Silberman

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About This Resource

Why is this topic important?

Trainers can no longer be information dispensers. People forget most of what they hear, and new knowledge is constantly emerging. Trainers must be facilitators of learning, helping the people they train to be adept at meeting the ever changing challenges they face at work. *Training the Active Training Way* provides specific strategies to make that realignment possible.

What can you achieve with this book?

This book examines eight strategies that all trainers can use to spark active learning in their training sessions, both live and virtual. They provide practical guidance on the best ways to open and close training sessions, deliver "brain-friendly" presentations, facilitate lively and focused discussion, promote productive team learning, enhance experiential activities, develop lasting skills, and blend in technology. With these strategies, ordinary training sessions can be turned into extraordinary events.

How is this resource organized?

After each of the eight strategies is explained, three to five tips are given to implement it. Each tip contains action steps and examples taken from a wide variety of training topics. A worksheet is provided for each tip to use for planning how the reader might apply the tip to his or her own situation.

About Pfeiffer

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Introduction

It's not what you tell your participants that counts. What counts is what they take away with them. That's because the more you tell them, the more they will forget. Moreover, you can't learn for them. They must do it themselves. Your role as a trainer, therefore, is to spark and guide their learning and help to make it last. How to do that is what *Training the Active Training Way* is all about.

The "active training way" was first introduced back in 1990 in my book, *Active Training: A Handbook of Techniques, Designs, Case Examples, and Tips.* (The third edition of this book will soon be published.) On the heels of *Active Training's* success, I compiled a fieldbook to go along with it entitled *101 Ways to Make Training Active.* (The second edition of this book was recently published.) Now, I am providing a third resource on "the active training way."

Active Training remains the most complete text. It not only provides an extensive rationale for "the active training way" but also examines the entire context of active training, from assessment to design, to facilitation, and to evaluation. By contrast, *101 Ways to Make Training Active* is the ultimate book of recipes for trainers. It contains 101 methods to host a learning feast and 200 quick tips for organizing and facilitating them. It's a book you peruse looking for instant ideas for promoting active learning in your training session.

Training the Active Training Way is not a recipe book. Its objective is to guide you to be an exceptional chef who prepares meals of learning that participants will be hungry to participate in. While it's a book you don't need to read from cover to cover, it has a comprehensive plan you can follow, rather than a collection of ideas from which you pick and choose. At the same time, it is a quicker read than *Active Training.* In less time, the reader obtains concise plans for making training come alive.

The eight strategies in *Training the Active Training Way* are for any trainer, even if someone teaches dry material. The strategies also apply to any topic, from the softest to the hardest. They work with small groups or large audiences.

They are ideal for both live and virtual classrooms. From team building to safety standards, from conflict management to project management, from new employee orientation to advanced training, *Training the Active Training Way* will help you turn your ordinary training sessions into extraordinary events.

The Eight Strategies

If you want to spark active learning in your training sessions, the eight strategies presented here will bring you success. You don't need to heed all eight, but I have found that most of them are critical for any trainer, at any level, and in any subject matter.

Strategy 1: Engage Your Participants from the Start

Use opening activities at the beginning of an entire course or at the beginning of any single training session to develop a climate for active learning, promote peer interaction, and build immediate involvement in the learning topic.

Strategy 2: Be a Brain-Friendly Presenter

Present information and concepts that maximize understanding and retention through techniques that stimulate participants' brains to be mentally alert and receptive to new data.

Strategy 3: Encourage Lively and Focused Discussion

Structure discussion so that participants are motivated to participate and pursue the topic in depth.

Strategy 4: Urge Participants to Ask Questions

Motivate participants to ask thoughtful questions and seek information that will answer them.

Strategy 5: Let Participants Learn from Each Other

Set up effective group learning and peer teaching activities that require peer collaboration.

Strategy 6: Enhance Learning by Experiencing and Doing

Design and facilitate games, practice exercises, role plays, and other experiential activities to enhance the learning of information, skills, and values.

Strategy 7: Blend in Technology Wisely

Effectively integrate synchronous and asynchronous e-learning tools with classroom learning activity.

Strategy 8: Make the End Unforgettable

Close a learning experience so that participants review what they have learned, reflect on its importance, consider future steps, and celebrate their accomplishments.

Training the Active Training Way is organized around these eight strategies. Following a brief introduction about each strategy, you will find a group of three to five tips for its implementation. A worksheet is provided for each tip (there are thirty-two tips altogether) to encourage you to apply it to your training session. For example, the second tip for Strategy 1 is "Structure the initial social interactions among participants." The following illustrates how you might complete the sheet found on page 16:

PLANNING SHEET
Structure the Initial Social Interactions Among Participants

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.
Technique: (check one or more)

- ☐ Start off with social icebreakers
- ☑ Weave course content into your social icebreakers.

My Plan

Use the "Stand Up and Be Counted" activity for my time management workshop. Mix in items that pertain to the topic, such as:

Stand up . . .

- ✓ if you create a daily "to-do" list
- ✓ if you wait till the deadline to get a job done
- ✓ if your desk is usually cluttered
- ✓ if you deal with email as soon as you read it
- ✓ if you have difficulty saying "no"
- ✓ if you take care of the easiest tasks first
- ✓ if you maintain a "tickler file"
- ✓ if you make time for important priorities
- ✓ if you delegate things that others can do

As you become acquainted with each strategy in this book and the tips that support them, consider how it applies to your training situation. Understand that each training situation has its own unique context. For example, you might conduct some of your training in brief, single sessions (from 1 to 3 hours in total length). In such brief periods, you might have time for only one short opening and/or closing activity. Therefore, limit yourself to a single technique and keep it quick. When your training involves a multi-session format, there is time for more openers and closers and the employment of non-traditional methods such as team learning. In that case, make use of more techniques. Or you might be working with a subject matter that is very technical in nature and there is little, if any, need for extended discussion. In that case, ignore the strategies on lively and focused discussions. Or you might be involved in a leadership development program that requires skill in managing real-world situations. In this instance, be sure to consider the advice on experiential learning. While each strategy may be important to your specific situation, some will naturally have greater applicability.

Please heed some words of caution if you are a new or infrequent trainer. There are more ideas in this book than you will be able to use with confidence until you have more experience. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Less is better than more. Find tips that stretch you a little, but don't stretch yourself to the point of overload. Your skills as an active trainer will grow by taking small steps away from straight lecture and slides, consolidating what you can do well before expanding your repertoire. You might begin, for example, by inserting a few simple tips, such as providing an initial case problem before you lecture or asking participants to recap what you presented with someone seated next to them. Observe how well the tips work for you. After you have tasted some success, you can add other strategies.

Those of you with more experience will, no doubt, find many of my strategies and tips familiar. Use this book as a way to assess what you are currently doing to promote active training and select areas in which you would like to sharpen your efforts and expand your repertoire.

Regardless of whether you are a new or veteran trainer, I hope you find *Training the Active Training Way* to be an eminently practical guide that will spark learning in your training sessions.

STRATEGY 1
ENGAGE YOUR PARTICIPANTS FROM THE START

In order to learn something well, your participants must listen, observe, ask questions, and discuss the material with others. Above all else, participants need to "do it." That means figuring out things by themselves, coming up with examples, and doing tasks that depend on the knowledge they already have.

The success of active training depends on your ability to form and sustain a learning environment in which participants take on the responsibility to be "doers." Above all, they must be willing to use their brains—studying ideas, solving problems, and applying what they learn. While many of the strategies in *Training the Active Training Way* are fast-paced, fun, supportive, and personally engaging, you cannot depend on a grab bag of training tricks for success. There must be a climate right from the beginning that supports your creative methods. The longer you wait to create this climate, the longer your participants have to settle into being passive learners.

Engaging participants right from the start applies to both single-session and multi-session training events. If you want your participants to start learning actively, give them a taste of it right away. Get your participants to do something before you even start serious training. Think of it as the appetizer before the main course. Whet their appetites, and they will be hungry learners.

So let's get started figuring out how to get your participants active from the start. We will focus on four tips:

Tip 1: Give Participants Something to Do Before the Session Formally Begins

Tip 2: Structure the Initial Social Interactions Among Participants

Tip 3: Create Icebreakers That Focus Solely on Immediate Learning Involvement

Tip 4: Enlarge the Pool of Participation at the Very Beginning

TIP 1

Give Participants Something to Do Before the Session Formally Begins

Your participants are gathering for the training session. Most trainers wait until they have everyone's attention and then launch into their design. Why not give your participants something, on topic, to do before you call the class to order? That action will get their brains active in the same way as a race car and motivated drivers when they hear "Start your engines!" If you are leading a multi-session program, make this your practice before every meeting. Your participants will come to class wondering what you've dreamed up next for them to do.

Let's explore some options that give participants something to do before you start.

1. Display a question in full view of gathering participants.

As participants enter the training session, display . . .

- a quotation to interpret (e.g., "What does this mean: 'Nobody washes a rental car.'")
- a provocative question to answer (e.g., "What kinds of employee recognition really work?")
- an interesting problem to solve (e.g., "How can this company be profitable with its current level of debt?")

Give participants a few minutes to ponder the question individually or in pairs before you formally begin.

2. Give out a pre-class activity.

Hand out to participants a sheet of paper containing a pre-class activity that involves words, problems, graphics, or other connections to the material you are about to teach. Some choices include:

- a brief crossword puzzle
- scrambled words
- brain-teasers (sometimes called "wuzzles")
- a document riddled with errors
- a list of vocabulary words to define or translate
- a short, fun, quiz
- an interesting survey to complete
- a story that needs an ending

3. Ask participants to create a question.

Give participants an index card as they await the beginning of the session and invite them to write down a question they might have about the upcoming topic. They can write a question alone or together with a participant partner. The question could be about:

- the contents of a pre-reading assignment (e.g., "What kinds of companies were studied in Jim Collins' book *Good to Great*?")
- a pre-course assignment that was given (e.g., "What's the answer to the third problem you gave us?")
- something of curiosity to the participant about the topic to follow (e.g., "How can you read the social style of a person?")

You can collect the question cards and read as many as you can before you begin. You can also shuffle the cards and redistribute them so that each participant receives someone else's question. Then you can invite willing participants to read the questions on their cards and ask you to answer them or attempt to answer them themselves.

PLANNING SHEET
Give Participants Something to Do Before You Formally Begin

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Display a question in full view of gathering participants.
- ☐ Give out a pre-class activity.
- ☐ Ask participants to create a question.

My Plan

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TIP 2

Structure the Initial Social Interactions Among Participants

It's always a good idea to use the opening moments of a training program as a time to get to know your participants and for your participants to get to know each other. By doing this, you begin to create the interactive community that sustains active learning. This step is usually considered when participants are strangers to each other. However, it can also be used when participants know each other well. Here are some structured ways to accomplish this.

1. Start off with social icebreakers.

There are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of social icebreakers that trainers have invented. (My own book, *101 Ways to Make Training Active,* has twenty-three of them!) They tend to be fun, fast-paced ways to structure social interaction so that even the shiest participants don't need much courage to participate. The techniques employed in these activities include:

- polling or voting
- conversing in small groups or pairs
- playing a game
- mingling in an open space
- obtaining very brief verbal responses
- drawing
- moving around

A good case in point is an activity known as "Human Scavenger Hunt." This is a popular icebreaker that can be designed in a number of ways and for any size class. It fosters social interaction and uses physical movement right at the beginning of a class. It is appropriate both when participants know each other already and when they do not.

The process of the activity is to devise six to ten descriptive statements to complete the phrase "Find someone who. . . ." Statements typically refer to personal information such as in the following examples:

Find someone who:

- has the same first initial as yours
- likes/enjoys (reading mysteries, hip hop music, crossword puzzles, etc.)
- has (a pet, a tattoo, a birthday this month, etc.)
- is motivated by (a special friend, a good preacher, money, etc.)
- dislikes (exercise, eating breakfast, clutter, etc.)
- has a/an (MP3 player, espresso machine, mortgage, etc.)
- has already (been to our new headquarters, had Six Sigma training, dozed off today, etc.)

The human scavenger items are given to participants with the following instructions: "This activity is like a scavenger hunt, except that you are looking for people instead of objects. When I say 'begin,' circulate around the room looking for people who match these statements. You can use each person for only one statement, even if he or she matches more than one. When you have found a match, write down the person's first name."

When most participants have finished, the trainer calls a stop to the hunt and reconvenes the full class. A token prize can be given to the person who finishes first, but more importantly, the trainer surveys the entire group about each of the items. (For example, the trainer can go through the alphabet and ask all the people whose first name begins with A, B, C, and so forth to raise their hands and introduce themselves to the class.)

2. Weave course content into your social icebreakers.

There is no law that limits a social icebreaker to "social" information. Here is an excellent opportunity to engage participants in the class content right from the start. For example, an item in a Human Scavenger Hunt can ask for someone who knows a fact or concept from the subject matter you teach. You might say: Find someone who knows . . . how to splice a cable; the four stages of team development; one way to limit a Web search. You can also ask who has recently read a book about. . ., has had previous coursework in. . ., or has a great idea for. . . .

Another example of a social icebreaker that can go beyond personal information is one I call "Stand Up and Be Counted."

The process involves explaining to participants that you would like to conduct a quick survey to help everyone know "who's here." The trainer asks participants to *stand up and be counted* if something just said applies to them. Here are some statements that relate only to personal information:

Stand up . . .

- if you drink milk every day.
- if you have more than three siblings.
- if you have met someone famous.
- if you root for [supply name of team].
- if you love chocolate.
- if you are left-handed.

Added to this mix (or replacing the items entirely so that they only refer to the subject matter) might be any of the following:

Stand up . . .

- if you have used a scanner.
- if you believe that performance appraisals are a waste of time.
- if you think your business writing skills need to be improved.
- if you prefer organizing ideas over developing them.
- if you can create a spreadsheet.
- if you know when to use it's and when to use its.

So think about the social icebreakers you already use or ones you might use in the future. Don't limit them to merely "getting to know you." Introduce your subject matter within these openers. As you do that, you'll advertise some of the elements of your upcoming information, help participants to become familiar with some key items, and hopefully build interest in what's to follow.

PLANNING SHEET
Structure the Initial Social Interactions Between Participants

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Start off with social icebreakers.
- ☐ Weave course content into your social icebreakers.

My Plan

TIP 3

Create Icebreakers That Focus Solely on Immediate Learning Involvement

Besides "social" icebreakers, consider using "learning" icebreakers.

"Learning" icebreakers ask participants to respond to initial questions about the training content, to try out learning activities related to the subject matter without previous instruction, or to view presentations or demonstrations that give an initial description of knowledge and skills to be learned later on. These activities help to introduce a session in a dramatic, active manner that draws participants into the topic right from the beginning.

1. Quiz your participants (for the fun of it).

Normally, quizzes are something participants hate. However, a quiz can be used to form a learning icebreaker. An example is a technique I call *Active Knowledge Sharing*. It would work with any group and with any topic. Here's what to do:

A. Devise a list of questions pertaining to the subject matter you will be teaching. You could include some or all of the following categories:

   - words to define (e.g., "What is a 'critical-position profile'?")
   - multiple-choice questions concerning facts, concepts, procedures, and so on (e.g., "What percent of unhappy customers never complain? 56% 76% 86% 96%")
   - people (important to the subject matter) to identify (e.g., "Who is Stephen Covey?")
   - questions concerning actions one could take in certain situations (e.g., "How do you ask a person, without offending, to listen carefully to what you're about to tell him or her?")

- incomplete sentences (e.g., "[fill in the blank] is a process to develop creative ideas.")

B. Ask participants to answer the questions as well as they can.

C. Then invite them to mill around the room, finding others who can answer questions they do not know how to answer. Encourage participants to help each other. Or invite participants to compare answers with a partner or small group of peers.

D. Reconvene the full group and review the answers. Fill in answers unknown to any of the participants.

2. Create a true/false game.

Another "learning" icebreaker can be formed around a game I have titled "True or False?" Create an equal number of true and false statements about your subject matter. Assume that your participants don't know the answers to many, if not most of the statements. Place participants in small groups or pairs and invite them to guess which statements (listed on a sheet of paper or displayed on a board or screen) are correct and incorrect. This is an effective way to get them to be curious about what they will learn, without any stigma when they do not know the answers. Here are true/false statements taken from a "True or False" icebreaker for a training program for mutual fund accountants:

- All fixed income securities are taxable.
- You can purchase a bond with a par value as little as $25.
- The current yield of a bond is calculated by dividing the annual dollar coupon amount by the current price.
- All bonds are backed by a pledge of collateral or other lien.
- A junk bond is sometimes issued by an established company.
- Some bonds can be redeemed prior to maturity by the issuer.
- Bonds sold at a large discount from the face value are called "zero coupon" bonds.
- A bond holder cannot demand early redemption of the bond.

- Bonds cannot be exchanged for common stock.
- Treasury notes have more marketability than bonds.

3. Have participants do something they've never done before.

A different way to create "learning" icebreakers is to ask participants to try out a skill before they are taught how to do it. At first, this idea might sound bizarre. Wouldn't participants be embarrassed or angry? If a playful mood is created, however, trying to do something you're not sure how to do can be not only fun but also motivating. For example, you could ask participants to attempt such things as:

- selling a new software package
- writing a business plan
- doing a process map
- creating a cause-and-effect diagram
- analyzing a case study
- speaking in a foreign language (with lots of hand motions!)
- handling an irate customer

4. Use an opening exercise that dramatically introduces your training topic.

Many trainers have employed brief exercises near the beginning of their training programs to engage participants or to immediately teach them a fundamental point. You can sometimes use a well-known exercise for this purpose. For example, I have used the well-known drawing of the "old lady/young lady" as an opener for a training program on coaching skills for managers. This drawing, originally published in *Puck* in 1915, uses the ambiguous picture to examine stereotyping and group pressure on perception. Typically, participants are asked to relate their feelings and opinions about the woman they see in the drawing, not realizing that it can be viewed in two different ways. Instead of using this drawing for its traditional purpose, I have used it as the basis for an interesting coaching exercise, employing the following instructions:

- Obtain two volunteers. One is to serve as a coach. She should be a person who has previously seen the drawing. (You will always have some participants who have seen it.) The other volunteer is to portray a new employee who needs assistance in seeing both women.
- The coach should try to show the employee how to see both women. (If the employee is successful in a matter of seconds, replace him with someone else.)
- After the employee has seen both women, observers should tell the coach in terms as descriptive as possible what she did to help the employee succeed.
- Then discuss what behaviors were helpful or harmful in loosening up the employee's perceptions of the drawing. Compare these behaviors to common coaching situations.

You can also create your own exercise. For example, trainer Jacqueline Hicks began a session on "identity theft" by asking participants to complete a form that "would be useful to me during the session." The form asks for the participant's full name, address, phone number, email address, date of birth, and Social Security number. Participants completed the form without comment. When the form was completed, the trainer explained to the participants how easily they could now become victims of identify theft, based on the information they just revealed. Needless to say, the participants were jolted by their behavior and were all ears to learn more about the topic. Yet another example comes from trainer Ellen Hoffman, conducting a program on job search. She passed out index cards to each of the participants. Unbeknown to them, three of the cards were yellow, while the rest were white. Participants who had white cards were asked to gather in the front of the room and form a circle. Then the three participants with the yellow cards, now standing apart from the group circle, were asked to introduce themselves. She then said: "Notice that the only people you got to know were those who *stood out* from the group. Standing out from the crowd of applicants is what you want to do when you are seeking a job. This workshop will help you accomplish that." The participants were immediately hooked.

There is no limit to the ways in which you can create a learning icebreaker. Experiment. Think "out of the box." Once you come up with a winner, you can use it year after year.

PLANNING SHEET
Create Icebreakers That Focus Solely on Immediate Learning Involvement

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Quiz your participants.
- ☐ Create a true/false game.
- ☐ Have participants do something they've never done before.
- ☐ Use an opening exercise that dramatically introduces your training topic.

My Plan

TIP 4

Enlarge the Pool of Participation at the Very Beginning

Beyond any structured activities, your training session will not spark active learning unless participants are eager to participate. The bad news is that only a small minority will actively participate (raise their hands, volunteer, ask questions and so forth) unless you do something to increase the number of participants right from the start. Once the frequent participators are established, it's very difficult to increase the pool of participation.

Many trainers assume that several participants do not participate because they are either shy, insecure, or disinterested. Of course, that's true for some participants, but hardly for the majority. Rates of participation are much more influenced by the trainer than determined by the participants. I have observed time and again that trainers have a habit that they are unaware of. This habit leads to lower participation and needs to be changed. Are you curious what habit I'm referring to?

Assuming the trainer asks interesting questions, sets a non-threatening climate, and encourages participant response, the one problematic behavior I often see is that trainers *call on the first participant whose hand is raised.* The reason this occurs is that it seems rude not to do so, especially if the participant in question does not volunteer constantly. In addition, many trainers are grateful that the participant is raising his or her hand when the rest of the class seems disinterested or afraid. The problem that arises is that participants (and trainers) get used to a single volunteer (or maybe just a few) and the pattern and rate of participation are set. Sooner or later, a small minority of participants fill the role of responding to trainer requests for participation.

Without realizing it, most trainers even use language that promotes a small pool of participants. They say things like "*Who* wants to give his views next?," "Can *anyone* tell me what the solution is here?" "I'm looking for *someone* to. . . ."

Here are five guaranteed ways to increase the pool of participation. You don't need to do all of them, but you should get in the habit, as soon as possible, of employing some of them. Also, don't expect great results the very first time you use the techniques you select. The good news is that, once the participants get the hang of what you are doing, even after one exposure, they will start to respond with greater frequency.

1. Create the opportunity for "pre-discussion."

Pose a question and invite participants to discuss it with others seated near them. Say: *Take a few minutes to discuss this question with your partner before we open the floor for discussion.*

Next, ask the question again for a total group discussion.

2. Obtain a commitment to participate.

Pose a question and ask: *How many of you have some thoughts about this?*

Encourage several participants to raise their hands before you call on any participant.

Call on participants who have not volunteered so far or, if time is available, call on all those with hands raised.

3. Specify how many you wish to participate.

Ask a question and open it up to the entire group.

Say: *I'd like to ask four or five participants to give me their opinions.*

4. Establish a "new" participant rule.

Pose a question.

Say: *I'd like some new participants this time. Who hasn't shared his or her ideas yet?*

5. Use a "call on the next speaker" format.

Ask participants to raise their hands when they want to share their views and request that the present speaker in the class call on the next speaker (rather than the trainer performing this role).

Say: *When you are the speaker, please talk to other participants rather than addressing me.*

PLANNING SHEET
Enlarge the Pool of Participation at the Very Beginning

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Create the opportunity for “pre-discussion.”
- ☐ Obtain a commitment to participate.
- ☐ Specify how many you wish to participate.
- ☐ Establish a “new” participant rule.
- ☐ Use the “call on the next speaker” format.

My Plan

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STRATEGY 2

BE A BRAIN-FRIENDLY PRESENTER

Your participants' brains are your best allies. Too often, trainers think that there is nothing going on in their participants' heads. Nothing could be further from the truth. Technically speaking, if nothing is happening in participants' brains, they are *dead*. Their brains are *alive* and working (even when they are asleep). The issue is what are their brains thinking about?

I appreciate the fear that participants are thinking about everything but what you want. Yes, participants, like all human beings, do a lot of "mind-surfing." Your task is two-fold: to interest their brains in what you are presenting and to help their brains to really go to work so that they learn and retain the presentation as well.

Before discussing some strategies on how to get their brains on your side, let's back up a moment and examine further why you need to be a brain-friendly presenter.

The brain does not function like an audio or videotape recorder. Because of its storehouse of prior information, incoming information is continually being questioned. The brain asks questions such as:

Have I heard or seen this information before? What does it remind me of?

Where does this information fit? What can I do with it?

The brain doesn't just receive information—it *processes* it. Our job, as trainers, is to facilitate that processing.

In many ways, the brain can be compared to a computer. While a computer receives information, it needs software to interpret the data. Participants' brains need to engage their own software as well. Their brains need to link what they are being taught with what they already know and how they already think and learn. When participants are denied that opportunity, their learning is passive and their brains don't make these connections. Furthermore, a computer can not retain information that it has processed without "saving it." Participants also need to be tested on the information, recap it, or perhaps explain it to someone else in order to store it in their memory banks. When learning is passive, the brain doesn't save what has been presented. It may stay in temporary memory for a short time but never makes it into permanent memory.

What occurs when trainers flood participants with their own thoughts (however insightful and well-organized they are) or when they rely too often on "let me show you how" demonstrations and explanations? Pouring facts and concepts into participants' heads and masterfully performing skills can actually interfere with participant learning. The presentation may make an immediate impression on the brain, but it may lull participants into thinking that they will never forget what they heard and saw. However, participants simply cannot retain very much for any period of time unless they do the work to store information intelligently. That work can't be done solely by the trainer, regardless of how dynamic he or she is.

The bottom line is that just because you "covered" certain information with your participants does not mean that it was "uncovered" by them. Fortunately, there are a number of brain-friendly ways to teach information, concepts, and skills that maximize participant understanding and retention. Let's take a look at these four tips:

Tip #5: Build Brain Interest in What Is Being Presented

Tip #6: Help Your Participants' Brains to "Get It"

Tip #7: Involve Participants Throughout Your Presentation

Tip #8: Help Participants "Save" the Presentation in Their Brains

TIP 5

Build Brain Interest in What Is Being Presented

The first brain-friendly tip to consider if you want learning to occur is to get into your participants' heads. To use the computer metaphor, you need them to bring your material onto their "desktops" rather than something else that will distract them from the presentation at hand. That way, the information coming into their brains is your information, rather than other miscellaneous data. Instead of diving right into your content, try building your participants' *brain interest and involvement* in the subject matter. Consider these four suggestions to help you to do just that.

1. Lead off the presentation with a story or interesting visual.

To build interest right away, a story or a dramatic visual might grab your participants' attention. Here are some examples:

- Show slides that startle participants (e.g., a past and current list of top grossing companies in different industries).
- Tell true stories with unusual events or surprise endings (e.g., an account of the "group think" that was responsible for the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba back in the early part of John F. Kennedy's brief term as President).
- Present something that participants may never have seen before (e.g., an upcoming ad campaign for a new company product).
- Read a fable, allegory, or fictional letter that makes a dramatic point (e.g., Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes,* a story about withholding feedback from the boss).

- Display a chart containing interesting numerical data (e.g., displaying the performance of hedge funds during the past five years to a group of financial planning consultants).

After presenting the story or visual, make the connection to the topic or challenge participants to discover it.

For example, trainer Sonia Reynolds was about to give a presentation on counterfeiting to a group of bank tellers. To the delight of her audience, she gave each participant a brand new $20 bill. The tellers were then asked to determine whether the bills they received were real or counterfeit. Participants were invited to compare bills with each other. After receiving a variety of opinions (mostly that the bills were real), she proceeded to explain the security devices that are currently being used to make it difficult to produce counterfeit bills. The audience was very engaged with her information as they put their bills to the test.

2. Present a short problem.

You can also build interest by structuring a presentation around a problem. Here are some examples:

- an account of a retail store manager who needs to reduce the amount of time it takes his employees to refill merchandise on the store shelves
- a case problem in which an administrative assistant must reduce a sixty-word text to a thirty-five-word text without altering the information it provides
- a document written in German that needs to be translated so that someone can respond to a business inquiry
- a detective story that requires technical knowledge about scanners to solve the crime

Below is a case problem used by trainer Jose Virella to introduce a presentation on finance for non-financial managers.

> *Your team is evaluating whether to invest in an ice cream parlor. Your initial investment in the project is $100,000. You will receive cash inflows for the project of $40,000 in Year 1, $20,000 in Year 2, and $80,000 in Year 3. The discounted rate for years 1 to 3 will be 10 percent.*
>
> *In order to make your decision, you will determine the* net present value (NPV) *of this investment. The NPV is a method for calculating your expected future financial state for a project in present terms. If the NPV is greater than 0, you will decide to invest. If the NPV is less than 0, you will pass on the project. I will show you how to calculate the NPV using a specific formula. Listen and observe carefully so that you can figure out your NPV and make a recommendation to invest in the project or not.*

3. Ask an opening question.

A question related to your presentation might motivate participants to engage their brains. Pose it and encourage participants to give the best answer they can. Even invite a few participants to make a guess when the question is beyond their knowledge. Don't tell them, however, if they are right or wrong. Merely thank them and ask: "Would you like to know the answer?" Promise them that you will explain the answer during the presentation. Here are some questions that might make them curious:

- Why do we need a succession plan for our organization?
- What are SMART goals?
- What is a SWOT analysis?
- What do you think the book *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* is about?
- How does our software detect viruses?
- What do Kouzes and Posner define as the five practices of exemplary leadership?

4. Give highlights or "coming attractions" of the presentation.

With enthusiasm, tell your participants what's to follow. Focus both on the features (what will happen) and benefits (what participants will take away) of the presentation. Here are some examples:

- "Today, we will look at how to conduct an effective job search, including how to network and how to use the Internet. I hope you will get some tips that you can use right away."
- "We are going to compare a Gantt chart to a PERT diagram. Let's see which project management tool you wind up liking more."
- "The next thing we will learn is how to change the mind of someone who actively resists your recommendations. For example, I will show you how to overcome resistance of a person who is opposed to videoconferencing meetings for our virtual teams."

PLANNING SHEET
Build Brain Interest in What Is Being Presented

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Lead off the presentation with a story or interesting visual.
- ☐ Present a short problem.
- ☐ Ask an opening question.
- ☐ Give highlights or "coming attractions" of the presentation.

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TIP 6

Help Your Participants' Brains to "Get It"

After engaging the interest of your participants, it is time to begin the actual presentation. As you put it together, remember that your goal is to maximize your participants' understanding and retention of the subject matter. Don't assume, however, that they will "get it," let alone remember it, even if you explain the material clearly. Consider these five techniques to help you to do just that:

1. Present your major points and conclusions up-front.

Provide advanced notice of what's to follow that helps to organize participants' listening.

Here is an example:

> *Trainer Luke Stanley introduced a unit on brainstorming techniques by stating: "I'm sure most of you know what brainstorming is. (He obtains confirmation.) It's a great way to get the creative juices flowing on a team, but some people have complaints about the technique. They feel that the ideas produced are too "off the wall" and that the technique promotes quantity (of ideas) over quality.*
>
> *I am going to show you three variations to the standard brainstorming technique of simply tossing out and quickly recording as many ideas as possible. These variations are designed to deal with the objections I just mentioned. One is called "round robin" brainstorming; the second is called "part changing"; and the third is called "brainwriting."*

2. Reduce the major points in the presentation to bullet points.

Bullet points act as headlines or memory aids. Display these bullets as you present your material in more detail. Here are some further suggestions:

- The shorter the bullet the better. You might even go for a single word. For example, a presentation on the Heimlich maneuver might be developed around three simple words . . . *encircle, lock,* and *squeeze.*
- Grab interest by making each point sound like a newspaper headline or TV ad. For example, "Different Strokes for Different Folks" might be an attention-getting headline when you want to explain how people are motivated in different ways.
- Don't always explain the bullet yourself. Invite participants to guess at its meaning. For example, you might ask participants to have a brief discussion with a partner on the meaning of a bullet that states "stress can be good for you."
- Use a mnemonic devise by composing your major points into an acronym (the first letter of each point or fact forms a word). A well-known example is Neil Rackham's four-step sequence of questions that successful salespersons use that he calls SPIN questioning:

  S situation questions that gather information from the client

  P problem questions that uncover issues or difficulties facing the client

  I implication questions that explore the consequences of the client's problems

  N need-payoff questions that get the client to state the benefits a sales solution might offer

3. Provide user-friendly examples.

Today's participants usually learn better from concrete examples than from abstract definitions. Furthermore, many participants learn inductively more easily than deductively. For example, if you were discussing the "Pareto Principle" (the 80/20 rule), giving concrete examples that participants understand will help them induce the concept faster than deducing the concept from examples given after an abstract definition. Here are some tips when selecting user-friendly examples:

- Think about daily activities everyone experiences (e.g., a person with a "visual" learning style is more likely to make a shopping list than a person with an "auditory" style).
- Allude to the TV programs your participants watch, products they buy, social activities they enjoy, and musical preferences they have (e.g., a person with a high task orientation is likely to watch "The Apprentice" while a person with a high relationship orientation is likely to watch "The Bachelor").
- Mention well-known people who illustrate certain traits or actions (e.g., Mother Teresa is a perfect exemplar of "interpersonal intelligence").
- Create interesting stories or case histories that contain examples of your subject matter (e.g., a "fish tale" is a story of how a manager inspired teamwork using the principles of the best-selling book *Fish*).

Here is how I use a compelling example to explain how difficult it is to apply the principles of behavior modification.

> *Scott frequently comes home drunk. His wife Debbie is very angry when this happens and usually berates Scott. This normally leads to Scott getting angry in return and storming out of the house to resume drinking. Debbie is urged to be more reinforcing than punitive. In order for her to follow the advice to "keep a positive focus," she decides to bite her tongue when Scott arrives home drunk and act affectionate when he comes home sober. However, Scott is not interested in her affections, and now Debbie is angrier than ever.*

4. Use an analogy to explain your material.

Earlier, when I compared a brain to a computer, I was using an analogy to help you understand my views on being a "brain-friendly" presenter. The comparison is not literal but figurative. You can paint pictures in your participants' mind the same way.

Many well-known concepts are explained effectively by way of analogy. Here are two:

- A database will hold and organize information for you like an *office file cabinet*. Your information is stored in files like the *folders* in your office file cabinet.
- A body's ability to contain stress is much like *a rain barrel* that overflows when the water reaches the top. We all have rain barrels to contain our stress. As they begin to fill, we start to experience stress-related symptoms. When they reach the point of overflowing, we may have serious illnesses.

To aid you in creating analogies, consider using any of these:

- A familiar object (A good manager is like a *thermostat*.)
- A popular expression (*I've got too much on my plate*.)
- An advertiser's motto (Feedback is *the breakfast of champions*.)
- A common experience (The only one who likes change is *a wet baby*.)
- A physical activity (Who moved my *cheese*?)
- A song, book, or movie title (Are you *rolling your boat gently down the stream* or are you singing *"I'm so excited"*?)
- An animal (Are you a *peacock* in a land of *penguins*?)

5. Employ visuals along with words.

If your participants "see" the point rather than just "hear" it, they are more likely to remember it. There are a number of ways to add visuals in your training session. Some are things you can employ on a regular basis, while others are for special occasions.

- *Presentation slides*. Content presented by slides can visually anchor verbal presentations. They can be enhanced with color, graphics, animation, and audio/video streaming.
- *Handwritten text and graphics*. Important issues, questions, or solutions can be recorded on chart paper or on the black/white board. Adding color and visual graphics enhances the display.

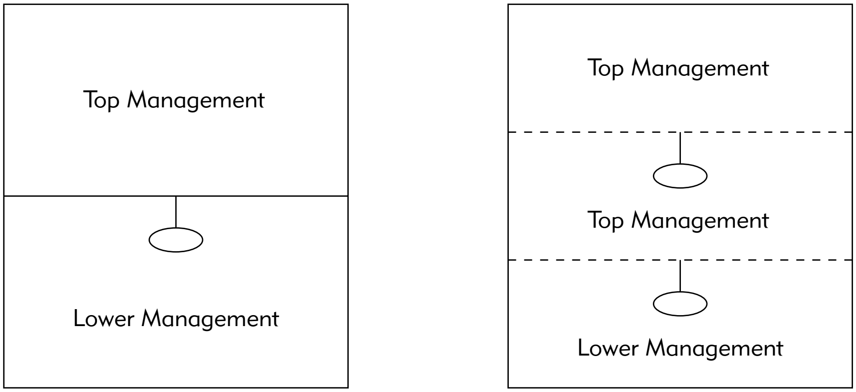
- *Objects.* You can utilize props, equipment, play gear, sculpture, machinery, or any three-dimensional materials that directly or indirectly describe key elements of your subject matter.
- *Documents.* Use reports, diagrams, charts, maps, pictures, or other similar images when they help to explain what you are presenting. It's usually better to have copies for each participant than one copy that is displayed or passed around.
- *Vivid stories.* Tell stories that illustrate the points you are making. The more visual details you include in the story, the more your participants will be engaged.
- *Decorations.* Place colorful items in the training session that are visually stimulating, such as art, crafts, flowers/plants, furniture, banners, balloons, and other decorative things.
- *Dramatic activity.* By asking your participants to watch and/or participate in dramatizations of real work life or fictional events, they can "see" how key actions unfold.
- *Demonstration.* Show your participants how something is accomplished rather than telling them verbally. Involve them, if possible, in the demonstration.
- *Simulation.* Let your participants experience the nature of events, procedures, and problems on a level that approximates or symbolizes the real thing. The visual aspects of simulations are usually unforgettable.
- *Mental imagery.* Invite your participants to visualize situations, both probable and improbable, by having them create mental images evoked by words.

Here is an example of using visuals effectively.

> *An effective way that trainer Rod Napier uses to conceptualize the control of upper levels of management in some organizations is to compare their decision-making power to a window shade. Initiative at lower levels of manage-*

ment is often inhibited when the shade is drawn too far down. It is even worse when the window shade is drawn differently every day. In this instance, initiative is further inhibited because middle managers and supervisors are continually confused about where their areas of responsibility lie. This model is illustrated in the visuals below:

The Window Shade Model of Power



From Mel Silberman, *Active Training* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2006.

PLANNING SHEET
Help Your Participants' Brains to "Get It"

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Present your major points and conclusions up-front.
- ☐ Reduce the major points in the presentation to bullet points.
- ☐ Provide user-friendly examples.
- ☐ Use an analogy to explain your material.
- ☐ Employ visuals along with words.

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TIP 7

Involve Participants Throughout Your Presentation

No matter how scintillating your presentation, your participants are still placed in a passive role as they listen and watch you. Going on too long will leave many participants behind unless you break your presentation up with periods of participant activity. Some experts advocate that you should never exceed ten minutes of lecture with adults before changing the action. Fortunately, steps can be taken to enlist participant participation during the middle periods of your presentation. Consider these four techniques to help you to do just that:

1. Give participants a job to do.

Assign participants the responsibility to listen actively to you or watch something so that, at break points in your presentation, they are able to produce points they agree or disagree with, questions to clarify the material, a summary of its contents, or quiz questions for other participants. Assignments can be given to the group as a whole, to teams, or to specific individuals. Here are some examples:

- Before watching a video on safety procedures at an oil refinery, participants are given index cards on which to write questions they have about its content.
- As a trainer presents tips for preventing sexual harassment claims, participants are asked to jot down questions they might use to quiz other participants to see whether they were paying attention.
- A trainer is showing participants how to interview job applicants so that the questions asked are lawful. Participants are told, in advance,

that they will be asked to interview their seat partners (using only lawful questions).

- A trainer makes a case for why performance appraisals should be abolished. Participants are encouraged to critique the trainer's presentation,

2. Have participants write during the presentation.

Stop at intervals so that participants write down information, reactions, or ideas about what you have presented. To assist your participants, you might provide a preset form or worksheet for them to use that lists the major subtopics of your presentation. Leave plenty of space for note taking. In a session on wellness and nutrition, the result will look something like the following:

	Food Sources of Major Vitamins
Vitamin A	
Vitamin B Complex	
Vitamin C	
Vitamin D	
Vitamin E	

Or, before beginning your presentation, tell your participants to take out blank pieces of paper and divide them into three columns. At the top of each column, ask them to draw (1) a book (for important facts); (2) a light bulb (for the "ahas" or "new ideas"); and (3) a question mark (for any questions they have). Stop at different times and tell participants to write one word or phrase in one of the columns.

Easier yet is a form that contains what appears to be a handout, but with missing words. All participants have to do is fill in the blanks. Some of the ways to do this include the following:

- Provide a series of terms and their definitions, leaving either the terms or their definitions blank.

  a balance sheet: ______________________________

  an income statement: __________________________

- Leave one or more of a series of points blank.

  "The Code Types Used in Uniform Billing Codes"

  -
  -
  -
  -

- Omit key words from a short paragraph.

  The "forming" stage of team development is characterized by ______ on the designated leader and concerns about _________. Members seem more pre-occupied with being _______ by others than with the ______ at hand.

3. Keep participants "on their toes" mentally.

You can do this informally by asking questions, such as:

- How many of you can give me an example of . . . (e.g., timely feedback)?
- Given what you now know, how do you think our problem with . . . (e.g., employee retention) can be solved?
- Who remembers what is . . . (e.g., a convergent question)? Or how do you . . . (e.g., find the prevailing interest rate)?
- What do you think of . . . (e.g. this proposal)?
- How would you apply this information to . . . (e.g., creating a budget)?
- What is the result of . . . (e.g., pre-authorization requirements)?

- How can you use . . . (e.g., appreciative inquiry)?
- What's the opposite of . . . (e.g., a confrontational style)?

You can also make a game out of keeping your participants mentally alert. One example is "Presentation Bingo." To utilize this technique, follow these steps:

- Create a presentation with up to nine key points. (Or identify key terms or names mentioned in your presentation.)
- Develop a bingo card that contains these key points on a 3 by 3 grid. Place a different point in each of the boxes. If you have fewer than nine key points, leave some boxes empty.
- Create additional bingo cards with the same key points but place the points in different boxes. The result should be that none of the bingo cards are alike, in terms of where the points are located.
- Distribute the bingo cards to your participants. Also provide them with a strip of nine self-sticking colored dots. Instruct your participants that as your presentation proceeds from point to point, they should place dots on their cards for points that you discuss. (*Note:* Empty boxes cannot be covered with a dot.)
- As participants collect three vertical, horizontal, or diagonal dots in a row, they yell "bingo!"
- Complete the presentation. Allow participants to obtain bingo as many times as they can.

As a variation to the above, devise a set of questions that are to be answered in the presentation. Create bingo cards with the answers to those questions. Pause at different intervals in your presentation and ask only the questions that match the information you have already presented. Have participants apply stickers on the answers they choose. State the correct answer. If any participants are incorrect, they must remove the sticker before going on with the bingo game.

A second example of a learning game is a "Team Quiz." This technique is an enjoyable and non-threatening way to increase your participants' accountability for what they are learning from a presentation. To utilize this technique, follow these steps:

- Choose a topic that can be presented in three segments.
- Divide your participants into three teams.
- Explain the format of the presentation and start the presentation. Limit it to ten minutes or less.
- Have Team A prepare a short-answer quiz based on the first segment of the presentation. The quiz should take no more than five minutes to prepare. Teams B and C use this time to review their notes.
- Team A quizzes a member of Team B. If Team B cannot answer the question, Team C gets an opportunity to answer the same question.
- Team A directs its next question to a member of Team C and repeats the process. Team A continues asking questions until the quiz is complete.
- When the quiz is over, continue with the second segment of your presentation, and appoint Team B as quiz master.
- After Team B completes its quiz, continue with the third segment of your presentation, and appoint Team C as quiz master.
- A different approach is to give teams prepared quiz questions from which they select when it is their turn to be the quiz master.

If you want to simplify this technique, conduct one continuous presentation. Divide participants into two teams. At the end of the presentation, have the two teams quiz each other.

4. Add a brief activity that illuminates the topic.

One way to illuminate what you are presenting is to conduct an exercise that illustrates points you want to make. In this instance, you can use a dramatic technique such as a role-playing exercise to involve your participants. For example, you might dramatize:

- a sales call
- a behavioral interview
- a strategic planning strategy
- a win-win negotiation

You can also employ a brief experience that simulates the real thing. For example, I wanted to illustrate to a group of college participants how quickly HIV can spread if safe sex practices are not followed. Participants were each given a blank index card. However, one participant's card contained a small X in the lower right-hand corner. Participants were told to mingle around the room and pair up with another participant. After telling each other their names, they were asked to show their partners their index cards. If a card was totally blank, the partner did not do anything to his or her card. If it contained an X, the partner had to write an X on his or her own card. Participants were told to keep approaching other participants and showing each other their cards. The same instructions were maintained. As participants increased their "contact" with others, the X multiplied. After the exercise, the participants could see how quickly HIV can spread from just one "carrier."

In another example, trainer Gordon Newman was giving a presentation on the importance of team alignment. Midway through, he stopped lecturing and divided the group of participants into two teams. One team was given the task of designing the front end of a car and the other team was asked to design the rear end. The two teams were not allowed to communicate with each other during the exercise. The final result was quire humorous, and the value of team alignment was dramatically reinforced.

PLANNING SHEET
Involve Participants Throughout Your Presentation

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Give participants a job to do.
- ☐ Have participants write during the presentation.
- ☐ Keep participants "on their toes" mentally.
- ☐ Add a brief activity that illuminates the topic.

My Plan

TIP 8

Help Participants "Save" the Presentation in Their Brains

When a presentation is completed, your participants' brains need the opportunity to do something that starts the process of encoding the material. Once any information is recognized and attended to, it moves to *working memory*. In working memory, participants do their own thinking and decide what to do with the information. If they decide that parts of it are not needed, those parts are immediately forgotten. Only what they choose to process further can be encoded into *long-term memory*.

Don't wrap up your presentation with your own summary. All that does is give participants something else to passively listen to and ultimately forget. Give them something to *do* so that they review or "save" the presentation in their brains. Consider these five methods.

1. Invite participants to select a review question.

Provide a list of questions from which participants can select. For example, at the end of a presentation, a trainer might give participants three questions that emerged from the material he or she has just covered. Participants can be asked to vote for one question to be answered by the trainer before he or she continues with new material. By doing this, the trainer helps participants to review what has been taught.

2. Ask participants to recap the content of the presentation.

The recap can be done individually, with a partner, or in a small group. A good way to give this brief assignment is to ask participants to imagine that they had to explain the presentation to someone outside of the group (a co-worker, a friend, or a family member) and needed to assess themselves to see whether they would be successful. Another alternative is to give your participants a self-scoring review test in which you, the trainer, do not get to see the results.

3. Ask participants how the presentation applies to them.

Give participants the chance to reflect on how they can use the knowledge or skill you have just taught in their own lives. Utilize any group format you feel will maximize the quality of the processing. For example, trainer Vivica Vaycox had just completed a presentation on stress management. She divided her participants into trios and asked each trio to discuss the following two questions: (1) "What information was new for you and what was not?" and (2) "Which kinds of changes do you want to make in your management of stress?"

4. Pose a final case problem.

Give participants a problem to solve based on the information given in the presentation. You can repeat a problem you may have used at the beginning of your presentation or give your participants a brand new problem. For example, trainer Tom Devane gave participants a case problem in which they were asked to convert an "as is" process map of an ordering system into a "to be" map. It required the ability to apply the examples given in his presentation.

PLANNING SHEET
Help Participants "Save" the Presentation in Their Brains

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Invite participants to select a review question.
- ☐ Ask participants to recap the content of the presentation.
- ☐ Ask participants how the presentation applies to them.
- ☐ Pose a final case problem.

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Strategy 3

ENCOURAGE LIVELY AND FOCUSED DISCUSSION

Lively, focused discussions are often the best moments in a training session. Participants are engaged, and time flies.

All too often, however, a trainer tries to stimulate discussion but is met with uncomfortable silence as participants wonder who will dare to speak up first. Sooner or later, someone does. But in your experience, how many do so willingly? When I tell trainers that the average number of frequent participators in virtually every training session is *four,* they are not surprised. The number comes close to their experience. When I tell them that they are not just any four participants, but the *same* four participants, throughout the training program, they think a bit and usually agree that that's true in many of their classes as well. What is your experience? Do you hear from the same "usual suspects"?

If you are fortunate enough to have groups in which the participation is greater, a different problem may emerge. There is lots of participation, but perhaps the discussion goes off on tangents and/or the quality is disappointing. It may feel nice to have so many participants involved, but is the time taken really worth it?

There are five dependable tips you can use to obtain lively AND focused discussions, time after time. It may help if the topic is really interesting, but these tips bring such good results that even less than thrilling (but, none-theless, important) topics work out fine. These tips are certain to stimulate discussion. Some will even create heated, but manageable, exchanges between participants. All of them are designed so that *many* participants are involved and *several* comments are worthwhile. They are

Tip 9: Engage Participant Interest Before Plunging into the Discussion

Tip 10: State Effective Questions for Discussion

Tip 11: Improve the Quality of Discussion Through Participant Preparation

Tip 12: Alter the Discussion Format

Tip 13: Facilitate the Flow of Conversation

TIP 9

Engage Participants Before Plunging into the Discussion

The notion that you have to build interest first is just as true for discussions as it is for brain-friendly presentations. Merely stating a question is not usually enough to attract participants. Here are some engagement suggestions.

1. Survey participant opinions first.

Ask them one or more questions that elicit their initial opinions. The trick here is to devise polling-like questions that are both concrete enough and safe enough that participants are willing to respond. Examples might include:

- How many of you are in favor of . . . (e.g., telecommuting)?
- Who is a coward when it comes to . . . (e.g., conflict)?
- Who believes that . . . (e.g., our supply chain strategy) gives us an advantage?

You can add interest to the survey by obtaining responses in fun ways. For example, instead of asking participants to simply raise their hands, have them raise both hands (or put "two thumbs up") if their feelings are very strong. You can also ask them to fold their arms if they are not sure of their opinions. Finally, they can put one or two thumbs down in disagreement.

Another technique is to ask participants to move out of their seats and go to a corner of the room that represents their response (e.g., "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" corners). A variation of this idea is to request that participants take seats according to their opinions. In large rooms, for example, participants who agree with a question can get up and sit in the left side of the room, while participants who disagree can sit on the right side. Participants who are unsure can sit in a middle section.

2. Distribute a compelling document that connects to the discussion topic.

Such documents might include:

- A newspaper or magazine article (e.g., "9–5 Spirituality: Is It Really a Trend?")
- A cartoon (e.g., a "Peanuts" cartoon about the dulling effects of PowerPoint slides)
- A chart (e.g., a process map of the current way in which customer complaints are handled)
- A photocopy of an object (e.g., a new company product)
- An image (e.g., a photo of a team in conflict).

Ask for participants' overall reactions to the document or replies to a specific question (e.g., "How many of you are surprised by the many ways that people bring their spirituality to the workplace?"). After obtaining responses, segue to your discussion topic (e.g., "In what ways does spirituality have or not have a place at work?")

3. Provide contrasting opinions on a topic.

You can accomplish this by:

- Two opposing quotations (e.g., "If it ain't broke, don't break it" versus "If it ain't broke, break it.")
- Two or more op-ed pieces or letters to the editor that contain different positions (e.g., for and against the pharmaceutical industry's drug-testing procedures)
- Interview excerpts from two or more experts or well-known personalities (e.g., two CEOs who take different stands on corporate ethics)

- Video clips that conflict with each other (e.g., women active in corporate board rooms and women passive in corporate board rooms)

4. Kick off a discussion with a panel.

This well-known approach can vary widely in design. For example, you might assemble a group of panelists who all speak briefly and then question/debate each other. The audience can be included after a while. By contrast, you can ask a small group of participants to act as panelists and then open up the discussion very quickly to the rest of the class. Don't allow peer panelists to give speeches. Play an active role as moderator, asking questions, obtaining different views, and integrating what's been said.

PLANNING SHEET
Engage Participants Before Plunging into the Discussion

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Survey participant opinions first.
- ☐ Distribute a compelling document that connects to the discussion topic.
- ☐ Provide contrasting opinions on a topic.
- ☐ Kick off a discussion with a panel.

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TIP 10

State Effective Questions for Discussion

Merely choosing a topic and tossing it out for discussion can be a recipe for disaster. For example, take the topic of "e-learning." If you were to ask participants, "Do you believe that e-learning is a good idea?" one or more of the following may occur:

- Some participants won't be clear what you mean by *e-learning*.
- Some participants will assume that e-learning means synchronous activity, while others will assume it means asynchronous activity. The fact that there are different modes might create confusion in the discussion. In addition, some will assume that e-learning is only for independent, self-paced learning, while others will include collaborative tools such as discussion boards, email, and so on.
- Some participants will think that you're asking whether e-learning should be the *only* training solution in an organization. Other participants will interpret the question to mean "Under which circumstances do you think e-learning is a good idea?" As a result, two different discussions might ensue at the same time.
- Because the question is both broad and yet closed-ended (a "yes/no" question), there may be a lot of heat, but little light in the discussion.

You might counter that if any of the above problems occur, a trainer can intervene and modify the course of the discussion. However, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The way to prevent confusion is to think carefully how you want to state the discussion question. There are four things to keep in mind in this regard:

1. Use open-ended rather than close-ended questions.

An open-ended question "opens up" the discussion to wider exploration and encourages deep rather than shallow discussion. A close-ended question limits the discussion to deciding between agreement or disagreement. Here are some contrasting examples:

- "What are the advantages and disadvantages of employee satisfaction surveys?" versus "Are you for or against them?"
- "When are statistics useful and when can they be misleading?" versus "Do statistics lie?"
- "What did you like about Margaret Wheatley's book *Leadership and the New Science*?" versus "Did you like *Leadership and the New Science*?"

The only time a close-ended question might be a better choice is when you want to poll participants and/or spark a debate.

2. Make the wording of questions clear.

Your words may be clear to you, but not to your participants, for one of two reasons: (a) they are open to different interpretations and (b) your language might not be your participants' language. Here are some examples in which the wording may need to be improved:

- A trainer asks: "What should the role of a team facilitator be?" Unfortunately, the word "role" is quite broad. Also, some participants may interpret the word "role" to mean the "job" of the facilitator and therefore give very matter-of-fact answers. Yet others will view the word "role" to mean the "responsibility" of the facilitator, and therefore give more lofty replies.
- A trainer asks: "How should we deal with the energy crisis?" The trainer is actually thinking of the question: "How should we conserve energy?,"

but the participants might focus instead on the question: "How can we develop alternative sources of energy?"

- A trainer asks: "What do you think accounts for fluctuations in the international monetary system?" Several participants can't relate to the phrase "fluctuations in the international monetary system" but would know immediately what was meant if the trainer asked: "Why do you think that the U.S. dollar is worth more in some years when you travel to other countries but is worth less in other years?"

3. Limit the number of questions.

It's usually better to ask just one or two questions at a time. Participants lose focus when you give them too much to ponder. (Trainers are especially prone to asking too many questions when debriefing a game or simulation.) If you have a follow-up question, it's better to ask it later rather than at the same time as the initial question. Furthermore, don't give more than one version of the same question, hoping that one of your versions clicks. Take the time beforehand to compose the questions as effectively as possible.

4. Establish your goals and objectives.

Your discussions will be more focused if you think through what you want the discussion to accomplish. For example, do you want participants to debate or to reflect? To make a decision or to explore options? To increase their doubt or to shore up their determination? To broaden their thinking or to concretize it? While you can't "legislate" the outcomes of any discussion, how you guide it may influence what happens to your participants at the end. Here are two examples:

- The topic is diversity in the workplace, but what is the goal? One trainer decided that he wanted the discussion to focus on how organization members can be encouraged to embrace co-workers who are different from them. Accordingly, the discussion was not focused on whether diversity is good or bad for an organization's effectiveness, but rather on identifying when cross-cultural interactions were difficult and how to overcome those tensions.

- The topic is customer service, but what is the goal? One trainer decided that she wanted her participants to discuss what makes it difficult to provide the kinds of customer service demanded by management. She began the discussion by playing audiotape interviews of customer service reps discussing the obstacles facing them in providing good customer service and then asked her participants to share their reactions to the interview, focusing on these questions: Do you have concerns similar to these individuals? What other concerns do you have that they did not cover?

PLANNING SHEET
State Effective Questions for Discussion

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Use open-ended rather than close-ended questions.
- ☐ Make the wording of questions clear.
- ☐ Limit the number of questions.
- ☐ Establish your goals and objectives.

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TIP 11

Improve the Quality of Discussion Through Participant Preparation

The expression, *garbage in, garbage out,* applies here. Participants, especially the opinionated ones, too often talk "garbage" in the sense that they have little to back up what they are saying. However, if trainers don't push participants to get the facts and to think more critically before they spout their opinions, they contribute to the "garbage in."

At the same time, there are other participants who hold back in discussions when they might be willing to participate if they first have a chance to obtain information and think before they talk. Let's explore ways to get more participants to participate and improve the quality of discussion as well.

1. Let participants "pre-discuss."

Place participants in pairs or trios and present your discussion topic and question(s). Ask them to talk with each other briefly before opening up the discussion to the entire class.

You might say, for example:

> *"Some experts believe that mangers should actively seek feedback from the people who report to them. They believe that asking for feedback not only provides managers with useful information but also sends a powerful signal that the manager-employee relationship should be collaborative rather than hierarchical. So here's a question for you: How can managers encourage direct reports to give them honest feedback? Get together with your partners and talk about your views on the matter for a few minutes. Maybe you both have a lot to say, so give each other a chance to speak. Maybe one of you has*

> *more opinions about this topic and can share them with your partner. Maybe you both are unsure what to say, but do your best. We'll get together as a whole class in three minutes."*

The opportunity to "rehearse" what they might say in the full group will give more participants than usual the courage to participate. The "pre-discussion" also helps them to warm up to the topic and to start thinking in advance of going public.

2. "Snowball" the participation.

To ease your participants gradually into full group discussion, you can have pre-discussion in pairs and then combine pairs into quartets (and even "snowball" into groups of eight, if time allows). Introduce any discussion question appropriate to your group. Explain the "snowball discussion" design, if you wish, at the start of the process, or make it a surprise.

Here is a way to plan a snowball discussion that lasts for thirty-five minutes:

- Pair up participants and ask them to discuss a question for *two minutes*.
- Then ask pairs to form quartets. (If there is an odd pair, have them join one of the quartets). Give them *three minutes* to exchange ideas. Ask each quartet to appoint a spokesperson for the next round.
- Then combine quartets into octets. (If there is an odd quartet, have them join one of the octets). Give them *ten minutes* to hear from each quartet spokesperson and react to the ideas given. Select a spokesperson to report on the octet discussion.
- Then allow *twenty minutes* for full class discussion and closure.

3. Provide background information or arguments.

You can assist participants to prepare for a high-quality discussion by giving them data that might shed more light than heat in the discussion to follow. Some options include:

- A fact sheet

  Data on the number of jobs that have been outsourced in certain industries to workers outside the U.S.A.

- Brief opinions

  Four quotations from experts on safety standards in your industry

- Debate points

  A brief list of pro and con arguments on a controversial topic such as the merits of performance appraisals

- Case example(s)

  Two examples of corporate fraud

When you use this approach, give your participants the data before class or right before the discussion. Give them time to read, discuss the information with peers, and ask questions to clarify the contents.

4. Ask participants to do their own research.

The best way to enhance the quantity and quality of discussion participation is to invite or require participants to collect information that enables them to be informed participants.

Here are some examples:

- Participants are asked to obtain information from government websites to participate in a discussion on disease control policies.
- Participants are required to poll their teammates about the question: "What ground rules should exist for our team meetings?"
- Participants are encouraged to read two different reports on the same event or issue.
- Participants are invited to interview their manager about his or her concerns about the training they are receiving.

PLANNING SHEET
Improve the Quality of Discussion Through Participant Preparation

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Let participants "pre-discuss."
- ☐ "Snowball" the participation.
- ☐ Provide background information or arguments.
- ☐ Ask participants to do their own research.

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TIP 12

Alter the Discussion Format

Generally speaking, an open, trainer-led discussion is a poor format for obtaining wide participation and focused conversation. As I discussed previously, open discussion often yields few participants. You get to hear from four or five participants who do most of the talking in class. If you are concerned that new people will not participate, remember to say, "How many of you want to give your opinion?" rather than "Who wants to start us off?"

If you are lucky enough to have a very participative group, that's great, unless you are worried that the discussion might drag on by the time you allow everyone to speak. To preserve time, say beforehand, "I'd like to ask four or five participants to share. . . ."

Besides or in addition to open discussion, there are many other options. Here are a few of them.

1. Use response cards.

Pass out index cards and request anonymous answers to your questions. Use response cards to save time, to provide anonymity for personally threatening self-disclosures, or to make it easier for shy people to contribute. The need to state yourself concisely on a card is another advantage of this method. Say, "For this discussion, I would like you to write down your thoughts first before we talk together any further." Have the index cards passed around the group or have them returned to you to be read at a later point. Be careful to make your questions clear and to encourage brief, legible responses.

2. Form subgroups of three or more.

Use subgroup discussions when you have sufficient time to discuss issues in depth. This is one of the key methods for obtaining everyone's participation.

You can assign participants to subgroups randomly (for example, by counting off) or purposively (for example, by forming an all-female group). Pose a question for discussion or give the subgroup a task or assignment to complete. It is often helpful to designate group roles such as facilitator, timekeeper, recorder, or presenter, and to obtain volunteers or assign members to fill them. Make sure that participants are in face-to-face contact with each other. Try to separate subgroups so that they do not disturb each other.

3. Have discussion in pairs.

Couple participants into pairs for either a brief exchange (even one minute) or a longer dialogue. Use pairs when you want to involve everybody but do not have enough time for small-group discussion. Create pairings either by physical proximity or by a wish to put certain individuals together. You can ask pairs to do many things, such as reading and discussing a short written document together, developing or responding to a question, or comparing their ideas on some activity they performed previously on an independent basis. Give instructions such as: "Read this handout together and discuss it. Come up with examples or applications of what you are reading." "Create a question you both have about this topic." "Discuss together your response to the following question." "Compare your results on this survey. How are your views alike or different?"

4. Go around the class and obtain short responses.

Use this method when you want to obtain something quickly from each participant. Sentence stems (for example, "One thing that makes a good strategic plan is . . ." are useful in conducting go-arounds. Invite participants to "pass" when they wish. Avoid repetition by asking each participant for a new contribution to the process. If the group is large, create a smaller go-around group. For example, you can obtain short responses from one side of the room, from people who are wearing glasses, or from some other smaller sample.

5. Have participants call on one another.

Ask participants to raise a hand when they want to share their views and ask the present speaker in the group, not the trainer, to call on the next speaker.

Say, "For this discussion, I would like you to call on each other rather than having me select who is to speak next. When you have finished speaking, look around to see whose hands are raised and call on someone." (Do not allow participants to call on people who have not indicated a desire to participate.) Use calling on the next speaker when you are sure that there is a lot of interest in the discussion or activity and you wish to promote participant-to-participant interaction. When you wish to resume as moderator, inform the group that you are changing back to the regular format.

6. Create discussion panels.

Invite a small number of participants to present their views in front of the entire class.

Use panels when time permits to have a focused, serious response to your discussion questions. Rotate panelists to increase participation. An informal panel can be created by asking for the views of a designated number of participants who remain in their seats. Serve as panel moderator or invite a participant to perform this role.

A variation of a panel discussion is a "fishbowl" discussion. A fishbowl is a kind of rotating panel. Ask a portion of the class to form a discussion circle and have the remaining participants form a listening circle around them. Use a fishbowl to help bring focus to large-group discussions. Although it is time-consuming, this is the best method for combining the virtues of both large-group and small-group discussion. Bring new groups into the inner circle to continue the discussion. You can do this by obtaining new volunteers or by assigning participants to be discussants.

7. Stage a debate.

You can also set up an "active debate" that involves every participant in the class, not just the debaters:

- Develop a statement that takes a position with regard to a controversial issue relating to your subject matter (for example, "The retirement of the baby boom generation will create a labor and skills shortage").

- Divide the class into two debating teams. Arbitrarily assign the "pro" position to one group and the "con" position to the other.
- Next, create two to four subgroupings within each debating team. In a class of twenty-four participants, for example, you might create three "pro" subgroups and three "con" subgroups, each containing four members. Ask each subgroup to develop arguments for its assigned position. At the end of their discussion, have each subgroup select a spokesperson.
- Set up two to four chairs (depending on the number of subgroups created for each side) for the spokespersons on the "pro" side and, facing them, the same number of chairs for the spokespersons on the "con" side. Place the remaining participants behind their debate teams. Begin the "debate" by having the spokespersons present their views. Refer to this process as "opening arguments."
- After everyone has heard the opening arguments, stop the debate and reconvene the original subgroups. Ask the subgroups to strategize how to counter the opening arguments of the opposing side. Again, have each subgroup select a spokesperson, preferably a new person.
- Resume the "debate." Have the spokespersons, seated across from each other, give "counter-arguments." As the debate continues (be sure to alternate between sides), encourage other participants to pass notes to their debaters with suggested arguments or rebuttals. Also urge them to cheer or applaud the arguments of their debate team representatives.
- When you think it appropriate, end the debate. Instead of declaring a winner, reconvene the entire class in a single circle. Be sure to "integrate" the group by having participants sit next to people who were on opposite sides. Hold a class-wide discussion on what the participants learned about the issue from the debate experience. Also, ask participants to identify what they thought were the best arguments raised on both sides.

You can also use a debate format that is less formal and moves more quickly:

- Select an issue that has two or more sides.
- Divide the class according to the number of positions you have stated and ask each group to come up with arguments to support its issue. Encourage participants to work with seat partners or small cluster groups.
- Seat groups opposite each other.
- Explain that any participant can begin the debate. After that participant has had an opportunity to present one argument in favor of his or her assigned position, allow a different argument or counter-argument from another group. Continue the discussion, moving quickly back and forth between the groups.
- Conclude the activity by comparing the issues as you see them. Allow for follow-up reaction and discussion.

Bear in mind that you can combine any of these seven discussion formats. For example, you might pose a question, form partners to discuss it, and then obtain whole-group reaction through methods such as open discussion, calling on the next speaker, and panels. By inserting the partner exchange first, you will have more people ready to participate in the whole-group setting. Or begin with response cards, followed by a go-around or subgroups.

PLANNING SHEET
Alter the Discussion Format

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Use response cards.
- ☐ Form subgroups of three or more.
- ☐ Have discussion in pairs.
- ☐ Go around the class and obtain short responses.
- ☐ Have participants call on one another.
- ☐ Create discussion panels.
- ☐ Stage a debate

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TIP 13

Facilitate the Flow of Conversation

Some of the discussion options just presented allow you to sit back and let the participants take charge. Other options require your leadership. In such cases, your role is to facilitate the flow of comments from participants. Although it is not necessary to make an interjection after each person speaks, periodically assisting participants with their contributions can be helpful. Here is a ten-point facilitation menu to select from as you lead group discussions:

1. Paraphrase what someone has said so the participant knows that she or he has been understood and the other participants can hear a concise summary of what has just been said.

"So what you're saying is that we have to be very careful about the words we use because a particular person might be offended by them."

2. Check your understanding against the words of a participant or ask a participant to clarify what she or he is saying.

"Are you saying that this political correctness has gone too far? I'm not sure that I understand exactly what you meant."

3. Compliment an interesting or insightful comment.

"That's a good point. I'm glad you brought it to our attention."

4. Elaborate on a participant's contribution to the discussion with examples or suggest a new way to view the problem.

"Your comments provide an interesting point from a man's perspective. We could also consider how a woman would view the same situation."

5. Energize a discussion by quickening the pace, using humor or, if necessary, prodding the class for more contributions.

"Oh my, we have lots of quiet people in this class! Here's a challenge for you. For the next two minutes, let's see how many words you can think of that are no longer politically acceptable."

6. Disagree (gently) with a participant's comments to stimulate further discussion.

"I can see where you're coming from, but I'm not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience that's different from Jennifer's?"

7. Mediate differences of opinion between participants and relieve any tensions that may be brewing.

"Darryl and Shaun . . . I think you are not really disagreeing with each other, but are just bringing out two different sides of this issue."

8. Pull together ideas, showing their relationship to each other.

"As you can see from the comments of Samantha and Richard, the words we use can offend people. Both of them have given us an example of how they feel excluded by gender-based words."

9. Change the group process by altering the method of participation or prompting the group to evaluate ideas that have been raised during the previous discussion.

"Let's break into smaller groups and see whether you can come up with some suggestions for establishing gender-sensitive word usage.

10. Summarize (and record, if desired) the major views of the class.

"I have noted three major reasons that have come from this discussion as to when words are harmful: (1) they exclude some people, (2) they insult some people, and (3) they are determined only by the majority culture."

Any of these facilitating behaviors can be used alone or in conjunction with the others to help stimulate discussions within your class. As participants become more and more relaxed about contributing their ideas and opinions, you can shift from being a leader to being an occasional facilitator, and perhaps even another person with an opinion. As your role in the conversation diminishes, the participants make the discussion their own.

PLANNING SHEET
Facilitate the Flow of Conversation

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Paraphrase
- ☐ Compliment
- ☐ Energize
- ☐ Mediate
- ☐ Change
- ☐ Check
- ☐ Elaborate
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Pull together
- ☐ Summarize

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STRATEGY 4
URGE PARTICIPANTS TO ASK QUESTIONS

The act of learning begins with a question. The brain starts the work of learning because it has a question about information it is obtaining from the senses (hearing, sight, touch, and taste) that feed it. If the brain could talk, it would say things like: *Where does this information fit? Does it confirm what I already know? Does it challenge what I already know?* If the brain isn't curious about incoming information, it takes the path of least resistance—it attends to something else.

When participants are asking questions, they are in a seeking mode rather than a passive mode. Their brains are activated to obtain answers, rather than merely "logging in." If participants are asked to read some information or view presentation slides and they come to it with few questions, their brains treat the information superficially. If they are trying to find out something, their brains treat the information carefully.

But getting participants to ask questions is easier said than done. Many participants are so used to being told about or shown things that they become consumers rather than seekers of knowledge. As a result, they may have few questions. Furthermore, many trainers are so accustomed to *askin*g participants questions (e.g., "What's an example of that?" "How did you arrive at that answer?") that they forget to inquire whether participants have any questions of their own. As a result, participants often receive little practice asking questions.

That is ironic, because when they were young children, they asked questions all the time. "Why, Mommy, why?" was, perhaps, their first formal question. Even before they could verbalize a question, they were seeking information from everything they did. For example, putting every object into their mouths is the way infants find out how something tastes, if it is hard or soft, or if it will produce milk. Touching everything in sight is a way toddlers explore what's in their world.

Despite their childhood curiosity, you may be highly pessimistic that your participants will ask questions at this point in their lives. If you have invited participants to ask you questions about the material you have been presenting, it is likely that you have been met with silence or have heard questions from only a few participants. Moreover, any questions you have received may have been poorly formed.

Because these realities are so pervasive, I would like to suggest three tips that will help you overcome this resistance and encourage your participants to become more eager inquirers:

Tip 14: Help Participants Get Started

Tip 15: Create the Need for Questions

Tip 16: Let Participants Know You Expect Questions

TIP 14

Help Participants Get Started

Because participants have so little practice in asking questions, they may need a lot of help to get started. Here are some suggestions:

1. Give participants a list of questions as a reference.

Providing questions is a great way to ease participants into question asking. Instead of asking them for potential questions, give your participants a list of questions (two to eight questions) about the topic or material you want them to be inquiring about. Be sure your questions are not too sophisticated. They should sound like questions curious participants (not trainers!) would ask. Ask participants to vote for questions they'd like you to answer. After giving them such a list a few times, your participants should gain some insights into how to raise questions. At that point, switch to asking them to generate their own questions.

2. Ask participants to develop questions with partners.

It's much easier to generate questions from participants if they work with partners first. There are two ways to do this. One way is to give participants some time to think of questions (and write them down) and share the questions with partners. With two possible questions, the pair could choose one of the two to submit, or combine both of them into one question. (If one participant can't think of a question, the partner's question can be submitted.) The second way is to have the participant pairs convene right from the beginning and compose a question together.

3. Teach participants how to ask good questions.

You can help participants generate good questions if they understand and practice how to create some. You might begin by teaching participants how to signal to themselves that something needs clarification. To build this awareness, try two ideas. One is to ask participants to read something with a highlighter pen in hand. Tell them not to highlight text that they already understand. Instead, ask them to highlight text that raises questions for them. Then ask them to go over what they've highlighted and write down phrases that they want to clarify or, if possible, an actual question about the highlighted material. The other idea is to ask participants to keep cards or pieces of paper accessible while they are listening to a lecture or class discussion and to write down any questions that come to mind.

Once participants build conscious awareness of questions, you can then spend some time teaching them to distinguish between low quality and high quality questions. For example, yes/no questions are not as helpful as open-ended questions; specific questions are usually better than broad questions; clear questions are better than confusing questions. One technique is to give them a comparative list of examples. Here is an illustration:

Poor Question	**Better Question**
Is Wal-Mart a good company to work for? (yes/no)	What are the advantages and disadvantages of working at Wal-Mart?
What do you think of executive coaching? (unclear and broad)	What are the benefits of providing executive coaching for our leaders?

You might follow this with a list of poor questions and ask participants to improve them on their own.

4. Model good questions.

You serve as a positive model when you ask your participants probing questions.

One interesting way to do this is to use a technique I call "role reversal questions." Compose questions you would raise about some learning material *if you were a participant.* Create questions that:

- seek to clarify difficult or complex material (e.g., "Would you explain again the way to. . . ?").
- compare the material to other information (e.g., "How is this different from. . . ?").
- challenge your own points of view (e.g., "Why is it necessary to do this? Wouldn't it lead to a lot of confusion?").
- request examples of the ideas being discussed (e.g., "Could you give me an example of. . . ?").
- test the applicability of the material (e.g., "How could I use this idea in real life?").

At the beginning of a question period, announce to the participants that you are going to "be" them, and they collectively are going to "be" you. Proceed to ask your questions.

Be argumentative, humorous, and whatever else it takes to get them to jump into the fray and bombard you with answers. Reversing roles a few times will keep your participants on their toes and prompt them to ask questions on their own.

Another technique is called "Planted Questions." This technique enables you to present information in response to questions that have been "planted" with selected participants. Although you are, in effect, giving a well-prepared presentation, it appears to other participants that you are merely conducting a question-and-answer session.

Choose questions that will guide your presentation. Write three to six questions and sequence them logically. List each on an index card, and write down the cue you will use to signal you want that question asked. Cues you might use include:

- scratching your nose
- taking off your eyeglasses
- snapping your fingers
- yawning

Prior to the presentation, select the participants who will ask the questions. Give each a question card, and explain the cues. Make sure they do not reveal to anyone else that they are "plants." Open the question-and-answer session by announcing the topic and giving your first clue. Call on the first "plant," answer the question, and then continue with the rest of the cues and questions. Next, open the floor to new questions, that is, questions not previously "planted." It is likely that several hands will go up.

PLANNING SHEET
Help Participants Get Started

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Give participants a list of questions as a reference.
- ☐ Ask participants to develop questions with partners.
- ☐ Teach participants how to ask good questions.
- ☐ Model good questions.

My Plan

TIP 15

Create the Need for Questions

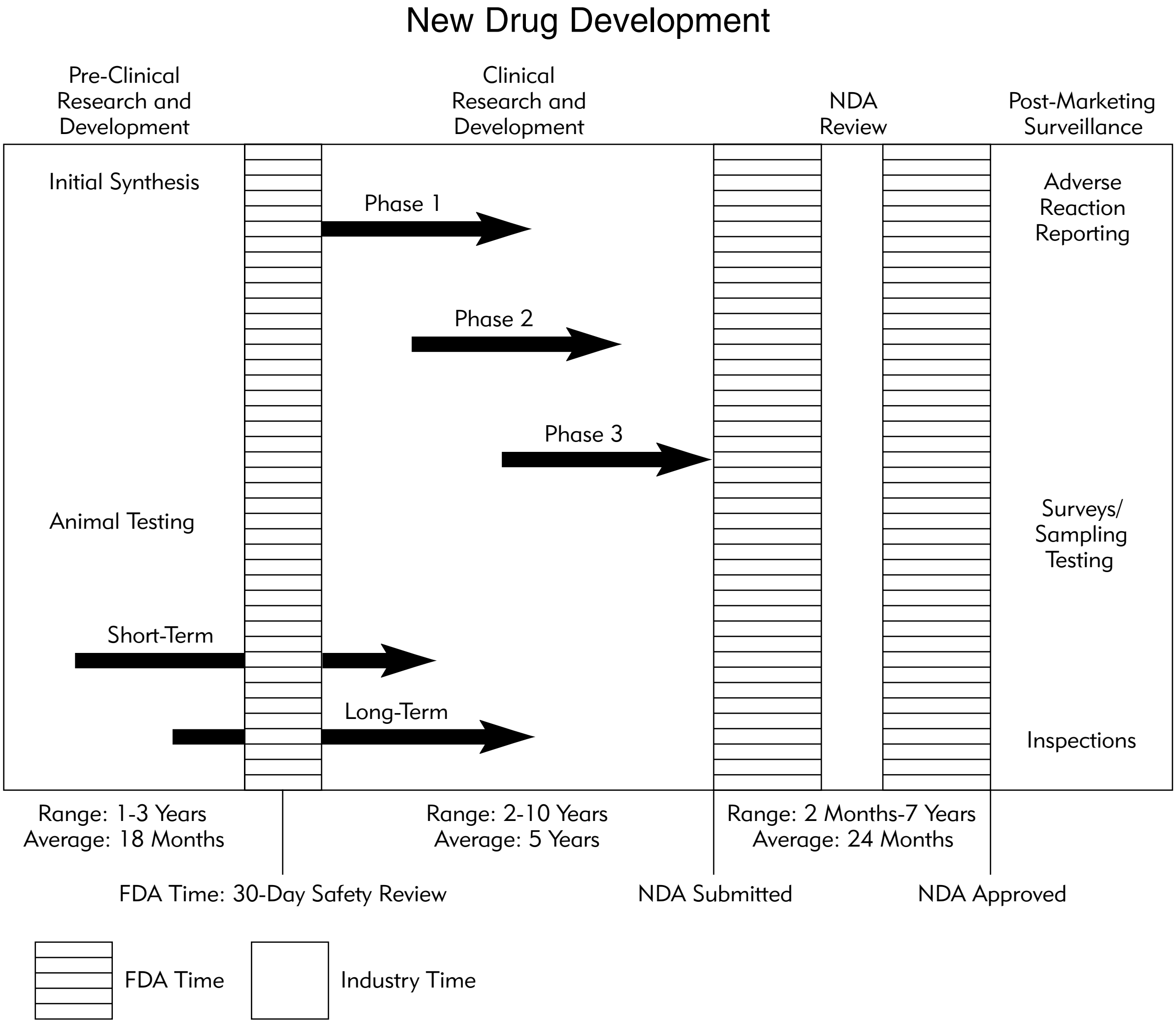
Many trainers stifle question-asking by "covering everything." What I mean is that loading participants with information overloads their brains and leaves them with little energy to discover good questions. As stated previously, when you *cover* too much, participants have little need to *uncover* anything for themselves. Here are some ideas to create the need for questions by covering less.

1. Ask participants to interpret ambiguous information.

Distribute to participants a handout that provides broad information, but lacks details or explanatory backup. An interesting chart or diagram that illustrates some knowledge is also a good choice. A text that's open to interpretation is another option. The goal is to evoke curiosity.

Ask participants to study the handout with partners. Request that each pair make as much sense of the material as possible and then identify what they do not understand *by marking up the document with questions next to information they do not understand.* Encourage participants to insert as many question marks as they wish. If time permits, form pairs into quartets and allow time for each pair to help the other.

Here is a chart that might raise several questions:



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Reconvene the class and field questions that participants have. In essence, you are teaching through your answers to participant questions rather than through a preset presentation. Or, if you wish, listen to the questions all together and then teach a preset presentation, making special efforts to respond to the questions participants posed. If you feel that participants will be lost trying to study the material entirely on their own, provide some information that orients them or gives them the basic knowledge they need to be able to inquire on their own. Just be careful not to cover too much ground. Then proceed with obtaining their questions.

2. Give participants a job to do that forces them to ask questions.

With this technique, participants are given realistic on-the-job assignments with little prior instruction. Choose the role you want participants to perform. The following are some examples:

I am the. . .

manager	*visitor to ________ [foreign country]*
technical consultant	*human resources specialist*
scientist	*job applicant*
business owner	*floor supervisor*
call center operator	*team sponsor*

Prepare written instructions explaining one or several tasks that might be assigned to that role. For example, a manager might be asked to assess the competencies needed by the employees in her unit. Pair up participants and present an assignment to each pair. Give them a specified period of time to figure out what information they need and what questions they have in order to complete the job. Then provide them with the reference material they need to support them as they attempt to deal with the assignments.

3. Have participants brainstorm questions.

Another technique that encourages question asking is "brainstorming." Typically, brainstorming activities require participants to generate several ideas or solutions. It's also possible to have them brainstorm questions.

Give participants a topic. Some examples are

- sexual harassment guidelines
- new employee orientation

- job rotation
- stakeholder analysis
- mission statements
- security precautions
- virtual teams

Place participants in small groups and ask them to generate as many questions as they can about that topic. You might have them imagine that they are preparing to interview an expert on the topic and must have a list of questions to use. If you wish, you can create a contest in which the group that develops the most questions wins.

After groups present their questions, have participants choose which questions they feel are the best ones and say why.

4. Invite participants to create questions for class discussion.

Give participants the responsibility of leading class discussion. Give them a topic for discussion but leave it up to them to identify discussion questions. Here is an interesting example from a class I conducted on assertive communication in the workplace.

> *Participants were given the statement: "Since people cannot read what's on your mind, tell them." They were then asked to develop up to four questions for class discussion. Working in small groups, they identified some potential questions and then voted on the best ones. The final list of questions were*
>
> - *In what situations does this statement apply?*
> - *Are there some things you should not speak up about?*
> - *Is asserting your own needs in conflict with being a team player?*
> - *What happens if speaking your mind gets you in trouble?*

PLANNING SHEET
Create the Need for Questions

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Ask participants to interpret ambiguous information.
- ☐ Give participants a job to do that forces them to ask questions.
- ☐ Have participants brainstorm questions.
- ☐ Invite participants to create questions for class discussion.

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TIP 16

Let Participants Know You Expect Questions

In multi-session training programs, go beyond merely encouraging your participants to ask questions. Push them to ask questions. Here are some ways to expect questions from them:

1. Begin each class with a question-and-answer session.

Inform your participants that you will set aside a few minutes at the start of your next session to answer questions they have about:

- material covered in the last class session
- pre-class assignments
- reading in preparation for today's class

Urge participants to come to class with questions. Explain to them that asking questions is important to their ability to be effective learners.

The first training session during which you start with a question-and-answer activity will probably not produce widespread participation. Perhaps only a few participants will have questions. Don't be dismayed. Persist. After the second or third time, your participants will begin to believe that you really mean it when you say you expect questions. They will start the practice of thinking before coming to class. As a result, the number of actual questions you receive will increase over time. Continue this activity for as long as you wish.

2. End each class with a question-and-answer session.

Use the same process described above, but invite participant questions at the end of class. Again, be persistent. Over time, participants will start thinking about questions during class. (And wouldn't that be wonderful?)

3. Require participants to submit questions to you.

Consider giving participants an assignment in which they must develop questions about the material you are teaching. Give them clear instructions. For example, you might say: "Before our next class, I want you to email me two to three questions you have about negotiation strategies. I will choose some of the questions for group discussion."

PLANNING SHEET
Let Participants Know You Expect Questions

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Begin each class with a question-and-answer session.
- ☐ End each class with a question-and-answer session.
- ☐ Require participants to submit questions to you.

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STRATEGY 5
LET YOUR PARTICIPANTS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Even if you put participants in small groups for brief periods of time, you probably would find it risky to leave them there for a long time. The risk may be worth it. Your participants can learn as much from each other as they can learn from you. After all, they "speak each other's language." They can also give each other more personal attention than you can give to each of them. Under the right conditions, learning that is collaborative is more active than learning that is trainer-led.

In educational jargon, participants learning from each other is referred to by such terms as "cooperative/collaborative learning," "group learning," "peer tutoring," and "peer teaching." I will use the term "team learning" because it suggests that a team effort is needed for learning results to occur. Participants need to think *we* rather than *me*.

Team learning has many benefits. Participants develop a bond with their learning teammates that may motivate the team to sustain collaborative learning activity through complex, challenging assignments. Further, participants in learning teams are willing to accept greater responsibility for their own development precisely because they have a sense of ownership and social support. Think how often you say to yourself the phrase "my class." Trainers naturally have a sense that they "own" their training session when they say such things as, "I hope my class goes well today," or "in my class, participants are very engaged." When team learning is happening, participants get the feeling that it's *their* class.

Unfortunately, team learning also has its drawbacks. Chief among these is the fact that trainers have less instructional control than when they themselves are front and center. Have any of the following ever happened to you when you have put participants in learning groups for at least 20 to 30 minutes?

- *Confusion*: Participants don't know what to do because they didn't understand or follow the directions.
- *Tangents*: Participants don't stick to the topic and get off task.
- *Unequal participation*: Some participants dominate; some remain quiet.
- *One-way communication*: Participants don't listen to or respond to each other.
- *No division of labor*: Some participants don't pull their own weight; they let the team down, and are not dependable.
- *Superficiality*: The team is done before you know it, breezing through the assignment in the fastest way possible and staying on the surface rather than digging below it.

Chances are you have experienced nearly all of these problems, in both short- and long-term groups. When they happen, participants and trainers alike get turned off to team learning. What can be done?

Here are my tips:

Tip 17: Choose How You Compose Learning Teams

Tip 18: Build Learning Teams Before Giving Them Work

Tip 19: Gradually Immerse Participants in Team Learning

Tip 20: Use a Variety of Team Learning Activities

Tip 21: Invite Participants to Teach Each Other

TIP 17

Choose How You Compose Learning Teams

Who you put with whom is often critical to team learning success. Here are several considerations:

1. Keep the learning unit small.

The first consideration in promoting team learning is the size of the teams. In my experience, productive teams can range from two to six members. Small teams work faster and can manage and coordinate their work with greater ease. Teams that are larger than six members have the advantage of greater knowledge, skill, and perspectives. They can cope with larger projects and can also cover for missing or slack members. But large teams often get bogged down in group process issues that prevent them from moving forward. They are difficult to organize, and it can be especially challenging to pull together the work of a large team. If you still wish to use teams larger than six members, be aware that such teams need more structure, more formal meetings, and clearer roles for each member than small teams.

It's a good idea to vary the size of the teams at different times. Sometimes, use pairs. Other times, use trios, quartets, quintets, or sextets. Remember that you can "snowball" pairs into quartets or trios into groups of six. Your participants will learn more about teamwork if they work in groups of different sizes, and they are also less likely to complain about who is in their groups.

2. Gain the advantages of random assignment.

There are two benefits to forming teams by leaving it up to chance. One benefit is that participants can't gravitate only to the people with whom they are comfortable. (Although self-selected grouping can work out at times, the greater risk is that friends will socialize more than you prefer.) The other benefit is that participants can't exclude one another. Through random assignment, participants usually wind up with some peers whom they don't know well or who may be more or less knowledgeable than they are. It's a very powerful message to say to your participants that, in effect, they are expected to work with anyone and everyone in the class.

The simplest way to assign participants randomly is by "counting off." Count the number of participants as soon as you believe that you have full attendance. Then determine how large your subgroups will be by finding a number that easily divides into your total number of participants. Be careful. For example, if you have twenty-four participants and you want groups with four members, ask participants to count off by 6's (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; etc.). If you count off by 4's, you'll wind up with four groups of six participants. If the total number of participants is not an even number or a number that can be divided evenly, be aware that typically one or more groups will have one fewer member than the others. For example, in a class of twenty-five participants, you have the possibility of five groups of five participants, but, if you want quartets, you will have five groups of four participants and one group of five participants.

There are several other methods of random assignment, such as grouping participants with similar birthdays or first initials, or by randomly giving participants cards, stickers, or dots of varying color or having them pick these items out of a hat.

3. Compose diverse groups.

When you assign participants randomly, there is a likelihood, but no guarantee, that you'll obtain diverse groups (by gender, race, experience level, knowledge, motivation, and so forth). You are more likely to obtain the diversity you may be seeking by deliberately composing the teams yourself. Diverse teams take longer to get started, but often succeed in the long run because of the richness of their resources. There are other reasons to form diverse teams:

- You want to be sure that there is at least one skilled or "responsible" participant in each team.
- You want different points of view.

- You want to make sure that every participant has someone on whom he or she can rely for support. (For example, you can compose teams so that every member has the strong possibility of having one "friend.")

You need to know your class well if you are to use diverse groups effectively. Therefore, it's a strategy that works best after several class sessions. My favorite way to form diverse groups is as follows: Arrange the seating in a training session before the participants arrive into the group configurations you desire (e.g., tables for six participants) and place name tents or name cards on the seats or desktops at each team location. As participants enter the training session, have them "find their seats." Some participants may grumble when they discover that there are assigned seats (especially if they don't like the group they are placed in), but they usually survive if you are unwavering about your decision.

If you cannot arrange assigned seating before class, you will need to ask your participants to change seats once they arrive. A friendly way to pull this off is to tell your participants that you have created teams for today's class (the teams can continue for more than one class session) and that these teams are designated by a letter (e.g., Team A) or by a name (e.g., a U.S. President, an animal, or a car). Then announce the names of the members of each team.

When composing teams for diversity, consider any of these possibilities:

- Put together participants who don't know each other.
- Choose participants who balance each other in terms of learning style and motivation.
- Mix participants by gender, race, age, job status, or other significant categories.
- Integrate participants from different company divisions or functions.

4. Create homogeneous groups.

On occasion, it may be best to form teams by assigning members who share an important attribute. Homogeneous teams tend to organize themselves quickly and obtain immediate results. Such a grouping may also be useful when you have some participants who need extra help. By putting them together in one group, you are then able to give those participants extra assistance and support.

Some types of homogeneous groupings you might use are

- Participants with common interests
- Participants who share a common background, work experience, and so forth
- Participants of similar skills or learning style

You can also employ any of the suggestions for assigning participants to groups that were mentioned with regard to diverse grouping (e.g., place cards).

5. Allow participants to choose their own groups.

For the many reasons I have already alluded to, it is risky to let participants choose their own groups when a sustained team effort is required. However, there are some circumstances when it may be the wise thing to do. For example, you may already have evidence that self-selected groups have been successful when you have had brief periods of group activity in your class. Now you want to launch more serious team learning activities and believe that you can trust participants to group themselves. You may also be willing to go along with participants' wishes to choose their own groups if the friendship groups of the class are somewhat firmly established and you are willing to let things be and see how the situation works out.

If you allow participants to choose their own groups, be careful about:

- keeping the teams to a similar size
- preserving your option to modify the groups if some don't work out or if some participants are excluded
- monitoring excessive socializing

PLANNING SHEET
Choose How You Compose Learning Teams

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Keep the learning unit small.
- ☐ Gain the advantages of random assignment.
- ☐ Compose diverse groups.
- ☐ Create homogeneous groups.
- ☐ Allow participants to choose their own groups.

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TIP 18

Build Learning Teams Before Giving Them Work

Once learning teams have been assigned, it's probably a good idea to have participants experience some initial team building. From everything we know about group development, teams can't *perform* until they have a chance to *form*. This axiom applies big time to learning teams. Participants need the opportunity to get comfortable with each other before they take on the responsibility of doing their own learning. They also need to bond socially and become accustomed to working as a group without the direct guidance of the trainer.

How much time you allocate to the team-building process depends on your personal circumstances. For some trainers, it may be no more than twenty minutes. For others, it may be several hours. In my view, however much time you take will be recovered many times over once you see the difference that some initial team building makes. Let's explore some ways to spend this time wisely.

1. Utilize brief team-building activities.

Numerous structured activities are available that help to form teams. These activities help teams to get to know each other rapidly and build a degree of team cohesion early on.

Here are three examples:

Predictions

In each group, give participants three to five questions that a person might ask about him- or herself, such as "What kind of [music, art, sports, games, people] do I like?" " What is my favorite [ice cream, novel, TV program, leisure activity]?" "What is my opinion about [hip-hop, God, our President, working in teams]?" Ask each participant to take a turn asking such questions of other members of the learning team. After team members guess the answer(s) to each question, have the participant in question inform the others what is true for him or her.

Group Résumé

Ask each team to compose a group résumé. Give the groups newsprint and markers to display their résumés. The résumés should include any data that sells the group as a whole. Included can be information about members' skills, accomplishments, work experience, education, and hobbies. Invite each group to present its résumé to the rest of the class.

Ball Warp

Give each team a ball and have them form a standing circle. Ask team members to toss the ball to each other so that each person receives the ball only once and that the person who starts the sequence cannot toss the ball to a person to his or her immediate right or left. (This last direction requires a group of at least four participants.) For example, in a group of five, person 1 can toss to person 3, who tosses to person 5, who tosses to person 2, who tosses to person 4. Once the sequence has been completed, challenge the group to repeat it faster and faster. If you wish, tell them that the ball does not have to be tossed, but it must be touched by only one person at a time and it must exchanged in the same order. The challenge can lead to many creative ideas, and groups can increase the speed of the process to the point of taking only one second!

2. Give participants a brief taste of team learning.

It's important for participants to experience learning from each other without the direction of a trainer, not only to develop an image of what is expected later on, but also to have some immediate success. Here are some ways to accomplish this:

- Give teams one simple, but provocative question to answer (e.g., "What is the leading reason a talented person would stay in an organization?").

- Give teams a quotation to discuss (e.g., "If you never budge, don't expect a push").
- Give teams one short task to accomplish together (e.g., solve a simple accounting problem).
- Give teams a brief game (e.g., create a tower that is sturdy, tall, and attractive).

You can also use this time to give your participants a demonstration of how an effective learning team functions. If you can, make a brief video that shows an effective learning team in action. Or invite a small group of participants to role play an effective team. During their role-playing demonstration, either join the group and model successful facilitation behaviors or coach the group as they struggle to perform a team learning task.

3. Invite teams to discuss ground rules and responsibilities.

Talking about ground rules helps long-term learning teams to concretize how they must function in order to reach their goals. You can ask teams to brainstorm potential ground rules or provide them with a checklist such as the following:

Our Ground Rules

Below are ground rules that are helpful to learning teams. Check the ones most important to you.

- ☐ Start on time with everyone present.
- ☐ Get to know members who are "different" from you.
- ☐ Let others finish without interrupting them.
- ☐ Be brief and to the point.
- ☐ Be prepared.
- ☐ Give everyone a chance to speak.
- ☐ Share the workload.

If long-term teams are going to be effective, some crucial jobs have to be done. If no one does them, the teams will drift aimlessly without achieving much. To make this point, you might want to share a well-circulated story:

> *A team had four members called Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.*

Then ask teams to consider assigning themselves (preferably on a rotating basis) some of these important jobs:

- Facilitator: facilitates learning team sessions
- Timekeeper: allocates and monitors time needed and spent
- Secretary or note-taker: keeps a record of ideas, conclusions, and achievements
- Checker: makes sure all members are doing what they are supposed to do
- Investigator: finds things out and brings information back to the team

PLANNING SHEET
Build Learning Teams Before Giving Them Work

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Utilize brief team-building activities.
- ☐ Give participants a brief taste of team learning.
- ☐ Invite teams to discuss ground rules and responsibilities.

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TIP 19

Gradually Immerse Participants in Team Learning

Many trainers conduct their classes in traditional ways and then, all of a sudden, put participants into groups and burden them with lengthy, complex assignments and projects (e.g., a research or development project). Sometimes things go well; but all too often, it's a disaster. That won't happen to you if you gradually immerse your participants in team learning. Heed the following advice:

1. Structure the first learning tasks for success.

An early round of well-structured twenty- to thirty-minute team learning activities will get participants used to the process and are less likely to bring out poor group dynamics. For example, you might ask participants to do any of the following:

- Discuss a case study and propose a solution.
- Read and clarify a short text or a well-bulleted handout.
- Complete a simple marketing plan together.
- Compose a brief mission statement together.
- Answer a brief number of questions.
- Brainstorm a list of creative ideas.

It's also a good idea to provide enough background information so that your participants can handle any of these tasks successfully.

You also will promote early success if you are specific about your expectations. If you leave it up to participants how to go about their work, they may not be ready to function well on their own. Therefore, it's a good idea to request a desired result. For example, don't just ask participants to "discuss" a short text. Have them produce one question about the text. Don't just ask participants to answer a set of questions verbally. Have them write out their answers.

Finally, it is important early on to monitor the quality of the team's work. Review the learning tasks you initially give them so that participants obtain a clear idea what a quality outcome looks like. Take the time to show them examples of successful work.

2. Up the challenge level of the next round of team learning activities.

As your participants become more accustomed to team learning, give them longer and more challenging assignments. However, keep your expectations quite specific. They are not yet ready to learn in teams on their own. Hold them accountable for specific outcomes, such as a progress report, a completed project, and so forth.

At the same time, promote self-responsibility and group ownership by introducing the experience of "group processing." Teams that go about their business without ever reflecting on how well they are doing eventually flounder. Ask learning teams to discuss their progress in order to build the kind of awareness that keeps the team from going off the deep end. Point out that all teams have problems and that, if these are not brought to the surface, they won't go away.

Use any of the following processes:

- Helpful versus unhelpful: What behaviors have we used thus far that are helpful? What behaviors are unhelpful?
- In hindsight: If we had a chance to do that over again, what should we do?
- What's going right or wrong? What's going right in the team? What's going wrong?
- Stop, start, continue: What should we stop doing? Start doing? Continue doing?

Although learning teams still require supervision at this stage, begin to lessen the time you spend monitoring what's happening in teams. Leave them unobserved for stretches of time and even consider leaving the room as a sign that you trust their ability to learn on their own.

3. Empower experienced learning teams to work without your close supervision.

As learning teams become oriented to team learning and show signs of taking responsibility for their own learning, you can begin to give them tasks that are less structured. For example, you might provide a list of questions that teams investigate through reading, interviewing, and observing between class sessions. Here are some questions I gave to learning teams in a course on team development:

- Types of teams: What types of teams exist in the workplace? How are they structured?
- Goal setting: How should teams set and clarify goals?
- Tools: What group process tools exist for generating ideas, diagnosing problems, strategizing, planning projects, and making decisions?
- Conflict management: What strategies exist for managing conflict in teams?
- Role division: What roles are needed in teams? What leadership and facilitation skills are critical? How do teams share responsibility and promote individual accountability?
- Team development: What stages do teams go through, and what helps them move from stage to stage?

The teams were given a total of six hours to meet, both in and outside of class, to investigate these questions. They were provided with plenty of resources to gather information, but how they organized themselves and how they reported their findings were largely left up to them.

Another way to empower the teams is to ask them to do some collaborative problem solving, as in the following example:

- As a group, figure out how to do a process map of the current ordering process in your organization. Then develop a new process and map it.

Consider also giving learning teams the responsibility of preparing and teaching a presentation to the rest of the class. In a course on creativity, for example, three teams were each given one of the following assignments:

- Teach others four different kinds of brainstorming techniques.
- Teach others about "reframing" and "perspective shifting."
- Teach others how to use "mind mapping" to create novel solutions.

PLANNING SHEET
Gradually Immerse Participants in Team Learning

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Structure the first learning tasks for success.
- ☐ Up the challenge level of the next round of team learning activities.
- ☐ Empower experienced learning teams to work without your close supervision.

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TIP 20

Use a Variety of Team Learning Activities

A wide variety of activities exists that you can give to learning teams. If you utilize some of those, you will find that your participants will look forward to the experience of working in such teams. Let's look at some options.

1. Have participants search for information.

Give teams some questions and provide learning material that contains the answers. Have them find the answers.

This method can be likened to an open book test. Teams search for information (normally covered by the trainer) that answers questions posed to them. This method is especially helpful in livening up dry material. Follow this process:

- Create a group of questions for which the answers can be found in resource material you have made available for participants. Such material might include the following:
  - handouts
  - documents
  - textbooks
  - reference guides
  - search engines/websites
  - artifacts
  - equipment

- Hand out the questions about the topic.
- Form participants into small teams and have them search for the answers. A friendly competition can be set up to encourage participation.
- Reconvene the group and review answers. Expand on the answers to enlarge the scope of learning.

2. Promote group power.

Let participants experience that several heads are better than one. Give them a thought-provoking question to answer individually. They then share their answers with each other and produce a group answer.

Give participants one or more questions that require reflection and thinking.

Here are some examples:

- How does body language affect the impact of the words one utters?
- What is “leadership”?
- What’s the best way to recognize employees for superior performance?
- Why do people withhold feedback from co-workers?

Ask participants to answer the questions individually. After all participants have completed their answers, create small groups and ask them to share their answers with each other. Ask the groups to create a new answer to each question, improving on each individual’s response.

When all groups have written new answers, compare the answers of each group to the others in the class.

3. Create study groups.

Give teams some learning material and ask them to explain it to one another.

This method gives participants the responsibility to study learning material and to clarify its content as a group without the trainer’s presence. The assignment needs to be specific enough that the resulting study session will be effective and the group able to be self-managing. Follow this process:

- Give participants a short, well-formatted handout covering presentation material, a brief text, or an interesting chart or diagram. Ask them to review it silently. The study group will work best when the material is moderately challenging or open to various interpretations.
- Form subgroups and give them quiet spaces in which to conduct their study sessions.
- Provide clear instructions that guide participants to study and explicate the material carefully. Include directions such as the following:
  - *Clarify* the content.
  - *Create* examples, illustrations, or applications of the information or ideas.
  - *Identify* points that are confusing or with which you disagree.
  - *Argue* with the text; develop an opposing point of view.
  - *Assess* how well you understand the material.
- Assign jobs such as facilitator, timekeeper, recorder, or spokesperson to subgroup members.
- Reconvene the entire group and do one or more of the following:
  - Review the material together.
  - Quiz participants.
  - Obtain questions.
  - Ask participants to assess how well they understand the material.
  - Provide an application exercise for participants to solve.

4. Hold learning tournaments.

Give teams material to master in preparation for inter-team competition.

This technique combines a study group with team competition. It can be used to promote the learning of a wide variety of facts, concepts, and even skills. Follow this process:

- Divide participants into teams with two to six members each. Make sure the teams have an equal number of members. (If this can't be done, you will have to average each team's score.)
- Provide the teams with material to study together, such as a brief article or an interesting chart or diagram.
- Develop several questions that test comprehension of the learning material. Use formats that make self-scoring easy, such as multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true/false, or terms to define.
- Give a portion of the questions to participants. Refer to this as Round 1 of the learning tournament. *Each participant must answer the questions individually.*
- After the participants have answered the questions, provide the answers and ask participants to count the number of questions they answered correctly. Then have them pool their scores with every other member of their team to obtain a team score. Announce the scores of each team.
- Ask the teams to study again for the second round of the tournament. Then ask more questions as part of Round 2. Have teams once again pool their scores and add them to their Round 1 scores.
- You can have as many rounds as you like, but be sure to allow the teams a study session between rounds.

PLANNING SHEET
Use a Variety of Team Learning Activities

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Have participants search for information.
- ☐ Promote group power.
- ☐ Create study groups.
- ☐ Hold learning tournaments.

My Plan

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TIP 21

Invite Participants to Teach Each Other

Aristotle declared: "Teaching is the highest art of understanding." When participants are allowed to teach each other, both the participants who teach and the participants who learn benefit. Here are some ways to promote peer teaching.

1. Jigsaw the learning.

Jigsaw learning is a creative form of peer teaching. It is an exciting alternative whenever there is material to be learned that can be segmented or "chunked" and when no single segment must be taught before the others. Each participant learns something that, when combined with the material learned by others, forms a coherent body of knowledge.

Choose learning material that can be broken into segments. A segment can be as short as one sentence or as long as several pages. (If the material is lengthy, ask participants to read their assignments before the session.) Examples of appropriate material include the following:

- a multi-point handout
- a text that has different sections or subheadings
- a list of definitions
- a group of magazine-length articles or other kinds of short reading material

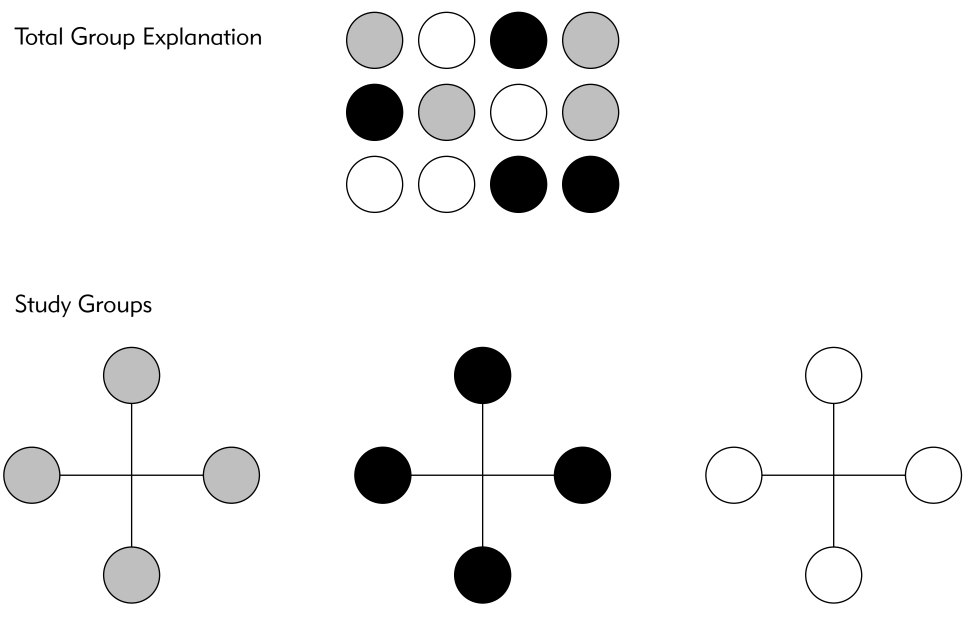
Count the number of learning segments and the number of participants. In an equitable manner, give out different assignments to different subgroups.

For example, imagine a class of twelve participants. Assume that you can divide learning materials into three segments or "chunks." You might then be able to form quartets, assigning each group either segment 1, 2, or 3. Then ask each quartet or "study group" to read, discuss, and learn the material assigned to them. (If you wish, you can form pairs or "study buddies" first and then combine the pairs into quartets.)

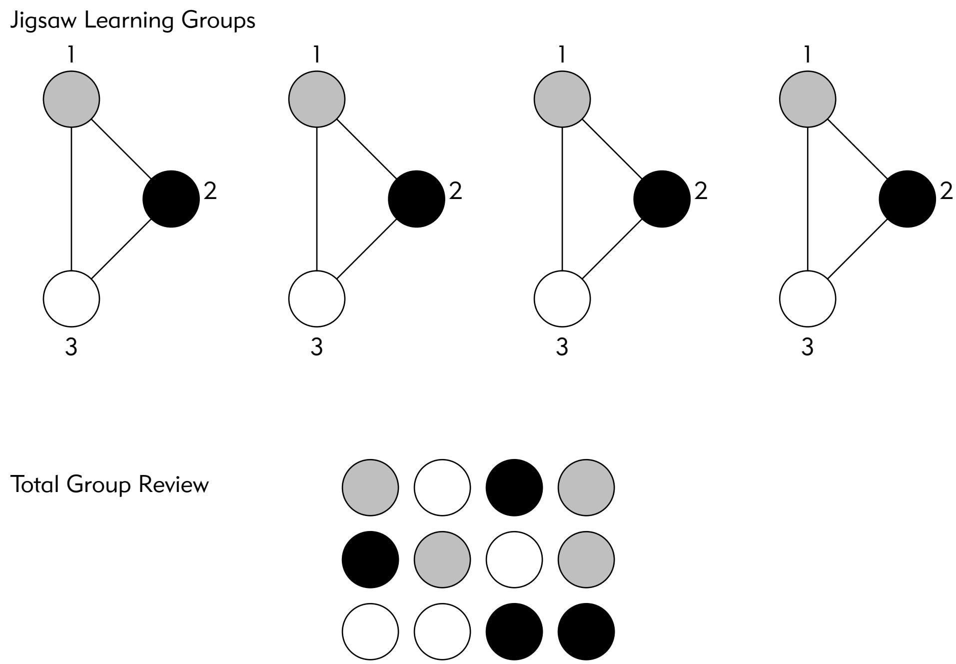
After the study period, form "jigsaw learning" groups. Such groups contain a representative from each study group in the class. In the example just given, the members of each quartet could count off 1, 2, 3, 4. Form jigsaw learning groups of participants who have the same number. The result will be four trios. In each trio will be one person who has studied segment 1, one who has studied segment 2, and one who has studied segment 3. Ask the members of the jigsaw learning groups to teach one another what they have learned. Or give these groups a set of questions, a problem to solve, or any other assignment that depends on the pooled knowledge of its members to complete. Reconvene the full class for review and to answer remaining questions to ensure accurate understanding.

This sequence looks like the following:

Jigsaw Learning Example



Jigsaw Learning Example, Cont'd



Jigsaw learning also works well with learning skills. Provide resources, such as instruction sheets, that allow participants to master a skill. Group together participants who are learning the same skill until they all can master it. Then form jigsaw groups in which each member teaches the skill he or she has learned to the other group members.

2. Give participants the opportunity to answer each other's questions.

Hand out an index card to each participant. Ask participants to write down either a question they have about the learning material being studied in the class (e.g., a reading assignment) or a specific topic they would like discussed in class.

Collect the cards, shuffle them, and distribute one to each participant. Ask each participant to read silently the question or topic on his or her card and think of a response. Invite a volunteer who is willing to read his or her card out loud and give a response. After a response is given, ask the others in the class to add to what the volunteer has contributed. Continue as long as there are volunteers.

3. Have a small group of participants teach the entire class.

Divide the class into subgroups. Create as many subgroups as you have topics to be taught. Give each group some information, a concept, or a skill to teach others. Here are some sample topics:

- Presentation skills
- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- Operating a fork-lift
- Computer programming

Ask each group to design a way to present or teach its topic to the rest of the class. Advise them to avoid lecturing or reading a report. Urge them to make the learning experience for participants as active as possible.

Make some of the following suggestions:

- Provide visual aids.
- Develop a demonstration skit (where appropriate).
- Use examples and/or analogies to make teaching points.
- Involve participants through discussion, quiz games, writing tasks, role playing, mental imagery, or case study.
- Allow for questions.

For example, trainer Nancy Hudson asked her social work trainees to develop presentations on four major issues of *aging*. Four subgroups were formed and chose the following formats for peer teaching:

- *The Aging Process*: a true/false quiz game on facts of aging
- *Physical Aspects of Aging*: a simulation of typical aspects of aging (e.g.,arthritis, decreased hearing, blurred vision)
- *Stereotypes of Aging*: a writing task in which class members write about society's perceptions of the elderly
- *Loss of Independence*: a role-play exercise involving an adult child discussing issues of transition with the parents of that individual

Allow sufficient time for planning and preparation (either in class or outside of class). Then have the groups give their presentations. (As an option, have participants teach or tutor others individually or in small groups instead of group teaching.)

4. Create poster sessions.

This alternative presentation method is an excellent way to inform briefly, capture the imagination, and invite an exchange of ideas among participants. This technique is also a novel and graphic way of enabling participants to express their perceptions and feelings about the topic you are currently discussing in a non-threatening environment.

Ask every participant to select a topic related to the general class topic or unit being discussed or studied. Request that participants prepare a visual display of their concept on poster board, bulletin board, etc. (You will determine the size.) The poster display should be self-explanatory, that is, observers would easily understand the idea without any further written or oral explanation. However, participants may choose to prepare a one-page handout to accompany the poster that offers more detail and serves as further reference material. Encourage the use of presentation slides to supplement or replace the poster session.

PLANNING SHEET
Invite Participants to Teach Each Other

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Jigsaw the learning.
- ☐ Give participants the opportunity to answer each other's questions.
- ☐ Have a small group of participants teach the entire class.
- ☐ Create poster sessions.

My Plan

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STRATEGY 6
ENHANCE LEARNING BY EXPERIENCING AND DOING

Jean Piaget, the renowned developmental psychologist, taught us that children learn concretely, but become capable of abstract thought as they enter adolescence and adulthood. Unfortunately, many trainers have taken this change in mental capacity to mean that concrete learning experiences can now be curtailed.

Learning by experiencing and doing should continue throughout a person's lifespan. For example, participants will understand project management concepts through actually managing a project. They can understand the dynamics of the stock market through managing an imaginary portfolio. They can understand the problems faced by visually impaired people through participating in a simulation of blindness. The need for concrete experience doesn't diminish, but, with the capacity for abstract thinking, participants can now go from the experience to much higher order understandings.

Experiential learning not only enhances the understanding of concepts, but is also the gateway to skill development. Whenever you want participants to develop skills (for example, writing business memos, creating spreadsheets, operating a machine, interviewing job candidates), it's imperative to go beyond showing them how to do it. They must do it themselves, not just once but often, at first with your guidance and then on their own.

Let's explore some key tips for promoting learning by experiencing and doing. They are

Tip 22: Create Experiences That Simulate or Match Reality

Tip 23: Ask Participants to Reflect on the Experience

Tip 24: Avoid "Monkey See, Monkey Do"

Tip 25: Use Role Play to Develop Verbal Skills

TIP 22

Create Experiences That Simulate or Match Reality

The starting point of experiential learning is the actual experience in which you want to immerse your participants. There are several challenges in their actual creation. The most notable are

- Time may be limited.
- For practical reasons, you can't provide the "real thing."
- Participants may be apprehensive.

Here are some suggestions:

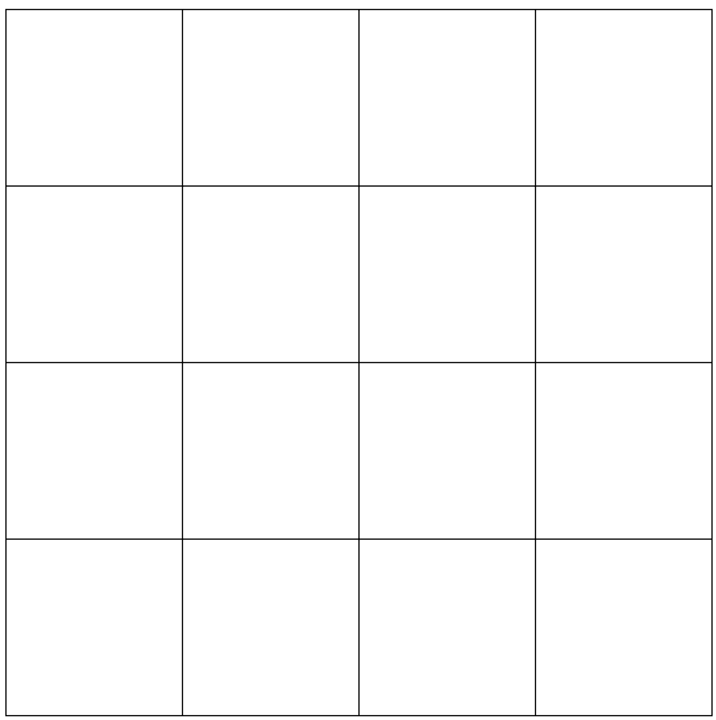
1. Jolt your participants with a brief, but surprising experience.

Create quick dramatic activities that surprise participants about something they normally take for granted or about which they hold untested assumptions. These "jolts" are great segues into serious conversations. Consider two ways to "jolt" participants. One is to ask participants to do something and observe the result and discuss its implications. (For example, asking a participant to cross his arms and then re-cross them the opposite way will seem uncomfortable, even though about half the audience will find the "re-cross" to be perfectly comfortable.) A second way is to ask participants to watch you say, show, or do something for which the result is unexpected. (For example, you can demonstrate how communication breaks down by showing that a simple word like "run" can be used to mean over ten different actions.) After the jolt, invite participants to react to it. Be careful not to act as if you are leading them to a predetermined insight or conclusion. Even if you feel that the jolt has a clear presentation or message, find out what your participants think first. They may "jolt" you!

2. Conduct games and exercises that are loaded with experiential learning.

The best games and exercises allow participants to experience more than one "aha." The classic exercise called "Broken Squares" is a good case in point. Participants are placed in groups of five members. Each member is given an envelope containing between two and four shapes. The job of each individual is to form a six-inch square, a task that cannot be accomplished unless participants give each other some of their shapes. The hitch is that no one can speak during the exercise or point to any shapes he or she wants from other group members. In the ensuing minutes, many things typically occur that block the group from success. The brilliance of the exercise is that it is not simply about cooperation and sharing. Participants come face-to-face with feelings of impatience, frustration, and pessimism that mimic emotions that most people feel in team situations.

Another excellent example, using squares, of an impactful experiential exercise is "Count the Squares." In this exercise, participants are shown a large square divided evenly into sixteen cells (themselves squares) and asked: How many squares are there?



Most people respond with the answer sixteen, but a few shout out "seventeen" because they include both the one large square and the sixteen small squares. Eventually, participants realize that you can divide the large square into four quadrants and obtain four more "squares." Then, it hits some people that you can adjust the way you find quadrants (2×2 cells) and identify five more "squares." Finally, people see that there are four "squares" containing nine cells each (3×3 cells). This process can lead to many interesting learning points:

- There's more than meets the eye.
- Our assumptions block our view of things.
- Some people see things that others do not.
- Big problems have lots of small parts.
- Such points can be related to topics such as feedback, problem solving, team work, and more.

Broken squares and count the squares are but two of hundreds of games and exercises available to trainers. The key is to select those that are rich in experiential learning and provide a variety of discussion opportunities.

3. Have participants act it out.

Sometimes, no matter how clear an explanation is or how descriptive visual aids are, certain concepts and procedures are not understood. One way to help clarify the material is to ask some participants to act out the concepts or walk through the procedures you are trying to explain. Some examples include the following:

- An order entry system
- A manufacturing process
- Converting data into a graph
- A marketing technique
- The construction of a database

Use any of the following methods to act something out:

- Invite some participants to come to the front of the room and have each physically simulate an aspect of the concept or procedure.
- Create large cards that name the parts of a procedure or concept. Distribute the cards to some participants. Ask the participants with cards to arrange themselves so that the steps of the procedure are correctly sequenced.
- Develop a role play in which participants dramatize the concept or procedure.
- Ask participants to volunteer to demonstrate a procedure that involves several people.
- Build a model of a process or procedure.
- Have participants physically manipulate components of a process or system.
- Videotape a group of people illustrating the concept or procedure and show it to the participants.
- Ask participants to create a way to act out a concept or procedure without your guidance.

4. Have participants experience "being in someone else's shoes."

You can give your participants an understanding and sensitivity to people or situations that are unfamiliar to them. One of the best ways to accomplish this goal is to create an activity that simulates that unfamiliar person or situation. Begin by choosing a type of person or situation that you want participants to learn about. You may elect to have participants experience what it is like to be any of the following:

- in the "minority"
- in a different age group

- from a different culture
- a person with special problems or challenges
- in a demanding job

Then create a way to simulate that person or situation. Among the ways to do this are the following:

- Have participants dress in the attire of that person or situation. Or have them handle the equipment, props, accessories, or other belongings of that person or situation or engage in a typical activity.
- Place participants in situations in which they are required to respond in the role or character they have been given.
- Impersonate an individual and ask the participants to interview you and find out about your experiences, views, and feelings.
- Use an analogy to build a simulation. Create a scenario familiar to participants that sheds light on an unfamiliar situation. (You might, for instance, ask all participants in your class who are left-handed to portray people who are culturally different from the rest of the participants.)

An example of being in someone else's shoes is "Instant Aging." This simulation is designed to sensitize participants to sensory deprivation and the normal process of aging. Participants are given eyeglasses smeared with Vaseline®, dried peas to put in their shoes, cotton for their ears, and latex gloves for their hands. Each participant is then asked to take out a pencil and paper and write down his or her name, address, telephone number, any medication currently being taken, and any known allergies. Next, the participants are told to take a walk outside the training session, first opening the door and then finding their way around. The simulation involves further directions concerning the specific details of the tasks participants are asked to perform and how they are to take turns assisting each other.

5. Arrange for participants to experience the "real deal."

Have participants experience something just as it is or as close to "the real deal" as possible. Here are examples:

- Going on a field trip that involves doing (not just observing)
- Conducting an experiment
- Producing a document
- Temporarily working alongside or replacing a person on a job
- Visiting an environment unfamiliar to participants

PLANNING SHEET
Create Experiences That Simulate or Match Reality

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Jolt your participants with a brief, but surprising experience.
- ☐ Conduct games and exercises that are loaded with experiential learning.
- ☐ Have participants act it out.
- ☐ Have participants experience "being in someone else's shoes."
- ☐ Arrange for participants to experience the "real deal."

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TIP 23

Ask Participants to Reflect on the Experience

Experience is not the "best teacher." Reflected experience is. Don't depend on the experience itself to lead to significant learning. Participants can get so caught up in the experience that it remains unexamined and its meaning is lost.

Participants will get the most from any experience if you hold these three discussions.

1. Ask participants to discuss what happened to them during the experience.

Participants can quickly forget what happened during an experience. Here are some questions to ask that help them recall what happened and that bring certain aspects of the experience into awareness:

- What did you do? (e.g., "What did you do during the broken squares exercise?")
- What did you observe? Think about? (e.g., "What did you notice when left-handed participants were participating in the exercise?")
- What feelings did you have during the experience? (e.g., "Did you like being the head nurse for the day?)

Use any of the discussion options suggested in Strategy 3 (see p. 49) to generate responses.

2. Ask participants to think about what lessons the experience taught them.

Here is where their abstract thinking skills come into play. Have participants make deductions from what happened, what they observed, and what they felt. Use reflection questions such as:

- What did you learn about. . . ? (e.g., "What makes a team effective?")
- What did you already know that you relearned from this experience? (e.g., "From this exercise, what are some of the reasons why people hold stereotypes?")
- What benefits did you get from the experience? (e.g., "How did the experience of assisting a blind person for one afternoon sensitize you to the problems that blind people have and to the skills they must develop as compensation for their lack of sight?")
- (if it is a simulation or role play) How does the experience relate to the real world? (e.g., "How real was this simulation on managing workplace negativity for you?")
- Make a list of the "lessons learned."

3. Ask participants if they want to do anything differently in the future.

This step is the application phase. Now that the experience has ended and it has been thoroughly analyzed, do your participants want to do anything new or different?

Ask them questions such as:

- What do you want to do differently next time? (e.g., when you meet a person whose English is difficult to understand)
- What else can we do about. . .? (e.g., poor performers)

- How will this experience affect you when. . . ? (e.g., you return to work)
- What steps can you take to apply what you learned about. . . ? (e.g., the “improve phase” of Six Sigma)

You might want to ask participants to write their answers to such questions, then invite those who are willing to share their answers with others to do so.

PLANNING SHEET
Ask Participants to Reflect on the Experience

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Ask participants to discuss what happened to them during the experience.
- ☐ Ask participants to think about what lessons the experience taught them.
- ☐ Ask participants if they want to do anything differently in the future.

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TIP 24

Avoid "Monkey See, Monkey Do"

Learning by doing is critical to developing skills. For example, your participants can watch you demonstrate how to operate equipment or how to sell a new product, but unless they do it themselves, they will not develop the skill and retain it over time.

While most trainers agree with the proposition that participants must do it themselves, they often encourage a form of doing that is more like imitation than anything that requires thinking. Let me explain why.

Some skills involve only a single step. For example, "dragging" over a paragraph on a computer screen allows you to select that text for a number of modifications (e.g., replacing, cutting, copying, and so forth). If a computer trainer shows a participant how to do that action and the participant immediately repeats what the trainer does, the participant is, in effect, imitating the trainer or, as I would put it, "seeing what the monkey is doing, and then doing it." Learning by imitation is very short-lived. Unless the participant repeats the behavior over and over again, day in and day out, he or she will not automatically retain the skill, even if the skill is not difficult. What seems easy to do after a brief demonstration precedes it is now lost among a myriad of other skills a participant has been taught in the interim. The "monkey" is out of sight and, hence, "out of mind." Any trainer will recognize this moment whenever a participant no longer remembers how to do something you just showed him or her a day ago. The participant could perform the skill yesterday, but since then, many mental events have occurred, and what was once known is now lost. If the trainer shows the participant once again what to do, the participant may be able to do the skill correctly, yet still not remember it for long.

Moreover, many skills require several steps. Learning how to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is an example. It's not one action, but several in sequence. Since the initial learning of a skill necessitates a step-by-step process, trainers often take participants one step at a time until the action is completed. Once the sequence is complete, the participant achieves the final result. But, again, for how long? What may have occurred is that the participant can perform if prompted step-by-step, but cannot perform if he or she has to do the entire sequence by himself or herself.

Here are some suggestions for avoiding "monkey see, monkey do."

1. Show, but not tell.

The classic way to teach a skill is to do a "show and tell" demonstration before asking participants to try it themselves. A more "active" approach is to demonstrate a skill, but with little or no explanation. Instead of telling participants what you are doing, you are asking them to observe carefully the demonstration and tell you what you did. This strategy encourages participants to be mentally alert.

Decide on a skill you want participants to learn. Ask the participants to watch you perform the skill. Just do it, with little or no explanation or commentary about what and why you are doing what you do. (Telling the participants what you are doing will lessen their mental alertness.) Give the participants a visual glimpse of the "big picture" (or the entire skill if it involves several steps). Do not expect retention. At this point, you are merely establishing readiness for learning. Then form the participants into pairs. Demonstrate the first part of the skill, with little or no explanation or commentary. *Ask pairs to discuss with each other what they observed you doing*. Obtain a volunteer to explain what you did. If the participants have difficulty following the procedure, demonstrate again. Acknowledge correct observations. Have the pairs practice with each other the first part of the skill. When it is mastered, proceed with a silent demonstration of the remaining steps, following each part with paired practice. At the end, have participants perform the entire sequence from beginning to end.

If you have the opportunity to teach one participant a skill, you can also use the "show but not tell" approach, but be sure to make the participant comfortable by asking questions such as: "What did you see me do?" "What else did I do?" "Would you like me to show you again?"

2. Up the challenge level.

Once participants can perform a skill on their own with your assistance, challenge them to redo the skill all by themselves (from beginning to end if it involves more than one step). If you have given them any learning aid that shows them what to do, ask them to put the aid away and try the skill without it.

This is an ideal time to pair up participants as "practice partners." Invite participants to demonstrate to their partners how to perform the skill in question. Using practice pairs, participants feel challenged but not threatened by having to perform under the watchful eye of the trainer or of the entire class.

You can also invite participants who can perform a skill to serve as peer tutors for participants who are still struggling. Be sure that the tutor does not seek to show off rather than assist. Remind tutors that the participants they are helping must be able to do the skill by themselves. Merely showing fellow participants what to do or correcting their performance will not get the job done.

You might also up the challenge by requiring participants to perform a skill after a period of time has intervened and the skill might be forgotten. For example, after helping participants in a business writing class to apply one grammatical rule, you might go on and help them learn several other rules. The challenge you can provide is to have them use a rule they learned a while back without any reminders from you.

PLANNING SHEET
Avoid "Monkey See, Monkey Do"

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Show, but not tell
- ☐ Up the challenge level

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TIP 25

Use Role Play to Develop Verbal Skills

Some of the skills you want participants to develop require verbal expression. Examples include:

- presenting
- facilitating
- negotiating
- coaching
- selling
- interviewing
- active listening
- managing anger

The best tool for developing these verbal skills is role playing. Role-playing activities allow participants to observe, practice, and obtain feedback. The problem is that participants typically dislike role playing. The number one reason is that it makes them uncomfortable. They fear being embarrassed in front of others as they attempt to deal with the situation in which they are placed. The number two reason is that role playing feels contrived or artificial to many participants. It's simply not the same as a real-life situation. Because of these objections, it's very difficult to win them over to role playing. Many participants are content to watch, but not perform.

Here are some ways to overcome these obstacles.

1. Begin by having participants coach you in a role play.

Use a technique I call "Non-Threatening Role Playing." It reduces the threat of role playing by placing the trainer in the lead role and involving the class in providing the responses and setting the scenario's direction. Create a role play in which you will demonstrate desired behaviors, such as handling a person who is angry.

Inform the class that you will play the leading role in the role play. The participants' job is to help you deal with the situation. In a role play in which there must be interaction with another person (e.g., managing an angry person), obtain a participant volunteer to role play that other person in the situation. If you wish, give that participant an opening script to read to help him or her get into the role. Start the role play but stop at frequent intervals and ask the class to give you feedback and direction as the scenario progresses. Don't hesitate to ask participants to provide specific "lines" for you to utilize. For example, at a specific point, say: "What should I say next?" Listen to suggestions from the audience and try one of them out. Continue the role play so that participants increasingly coach you on how to handle the situation. This gives them skill practice while you do the actual role playing for them.

2. Make role playing safe by doing it in pairs.

Pair participants and give them a role-playing scenario to act out together. Arrange enough private space so that participant pairs can role play simultaneously. There is no guarantee that every pair will take the assignment seriously, but more will than will not. If you wish, create trios instead of pairs. Have one person serve as an observer as the other two participants role play. You can "round robin" through the trio so that each participant gets an opportunity to role play twice and observe once. It is impossible to monitor and provide guidance to each pair or trio if role playing is happening simultaneously among more than one set of pairs or trios, but at least participants will be getting their feet wet. After simultaneous role playing, you can invite willing participants to perform in front of the entire class, now that they have had time to practice. At this time, you can act as a skill coach, giving pointers and demonstrating new behaviors.

3. Use scripts.

If you want a way to show participants effective skills and yet make them feel safe, give them scripts to read that contain successful ways to handle situations. At first, they can simply read the scripts, with different participants playing different characters. (You can also have participants read scripts in pairs.) As the participants learn effective approaches, challenge them to put the scripts away and try the situation without them. Or you can invite participants to create a skit of their own. Doing so gives them the opportunity to practice before performing.

4. Introduce whole class role playing by rotating parts.

Once participants are "on stage" before their peers, the pressure builds. A way to ease participants into this is to rotate the actors rapidly. For example, assume that you have a participant who is asked to handle a 911 call. You might portray the caller (or obtain a volunteer from the group). Then enlist other participants to assume the role of the 911 operator. The first "operator" can be given a brief time to handle the call, and then another participant can take over for him or her. You can involve several participants in this role play, none of whom have to be "on stage" very long.

5. Challenge participants to perform and receive feedback.

The most threatening but challenging forum in which participants can develop their verbal skills is to perform an entire scene by themselves and then receive feedback about their performance. There are many ways to engage participants in this challenge.

- Create subgroups of participants and have them perform in a small, private, and, one can hope, supportive setting.
- If possible, allow participants to select the time when they are sufficiently confident to perform before the group.
- Begin the feedback session by inviting a participant to assess his or her own performance. Usually, a participant will be aware of some

deficiencies, and it's easier for him or her to say them than to hear them from peers.

Avoid wide-open participant feedback. Ask participants for comments on the positives first. Instead of asking for "negatives," ask for "suggestions" about how a person might improve. At all times, do what you need to do to protect each participant's self-esteem.

PLANNING SHEET
Use Role Play to Develop Verbal Skills

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Begin by having participants coach you in a role play.
- ☐ Make role playing safe by doing it in pairs.
- ☐ Use scripts.
- ☐ Introduce whole class role playing by rotating parts.
- ☐ Challenge participants to perform and receive feedback.

My Plan

STRATEGY 7
BLEND IN TECHNOLOGY WISELY

With widespread availability of computers, the development of new software, and the growth of the Internet, training does not have to be confined any longer to the classroom. Through the advent of computer-based training, participants can learn without an instructor and without the need to follow a single method and a single pace. Furthermore, the use of computers has the potential to engage participants in high-level, active learning. Because they can find information faster and utilize software that enables them to do many things with it, participants are freed up to engage in critical thinking, analysis, and application.

Of course, the use of technology in training can be handled wisely or unwisely. Some computer-based programs, for example, still turn participants into passive learners and low-level thinkers. Others seek to entertain but not to educate. Still others isolate participants from the support of peers.

Regardless of your circumstances, how you blend in technology will determine whether or not active learning, as we have been exploring it throughout this book, will be sustained. Each trainer's situation is unique. Perhaps your organization has few technology resources. On the other hand, perhaps your organization has its own intranet. Whatever your circumstances, I hope that the strategies in this chapter will be helpful to you in making wise decisions.

Before presenting these strategies, a few basic points are in order. The use of technology in training is commonly referred to as *e-learning*. e-Learning has different forms. *Self-paced* e-learning typically involves independent activity by the participant. Guided by a set of instructions and with access to text, audio data, and video data, the independent participant can be engaged in self-study. In this mode, the individual determines the speed and sometimes the sequence of progress through a designed program contained on a CD-ROM or available on the Web. *Instructor-led* e-learning, on the other hand, employs the active guidance of a leader. It tends to be delivered live and online (for example, as a webinar) rather than in a delayed mode with messages posted to a threaded discussion. More often than not, other participants are experiencing the training at the same time and form a virtual classroom group. Both forms of e-learning, self-paced and instructor-led, will be referenced in the strategies that follow. Three strategies will be highlighted:

Tip 26: Transform Active Classroom Strategies into e-Learning

Tip 27: Use e-Learning to Supplement Classroom Learning

Tip 28: Use Classroom Sessions to Supplement e-Learning Activities

TIP 26

Transform Active Classroom Strategies into e-Learning

Most of the strategies discussed in this book can be adapted to e-learning, both in self-study or virtual classroom formats. Via computer, participants can be given interactive lectures, case studies, games and simulations, team learning projects, and role plays. Here are some suggestions to make sure the e-learning is active:

1. Make information transmission "brain-friendly."

One of the advantages of e-learning is that learners can acquire information at their own pace. It's important, however, that the information dispensed be understandable and retainable. For example, a major bank is seeking a way to use e-learning to help their employees learn the basics of credit transactions, investment banking, and other essential services. They recognize the need to avoid creating a kind of electronic page turner in which participants are dumped with a lot of text-based information that is easily forgotten.

Every tip that helps the learner to use his or her brain effectively as an information processing tool, discussed in Strategy Two, applies to the presentation of electronic information. Consider any of the following suggestions:

- Build brain interest and curiosity by beginning a self-study course or a virtual classroom with an opening question, a lead-off story or visual, or a case problem.
- Maximize understanding and retention by presenting major points up-front, providing user-friendly examples, employing analogies, and importing visuals.

- Intersperse activities such as quizzes, spot challenges, and brief exercises to keep learners mentally alert.
- Reinforce learning with requests to recap major points, consider ways to apply the material, or solve a final case problem.

2. Foster peer discussion, learning, and teaching.

With the use of email and the advent of chat rooms, discussion boards, and electronic breakout groups, there are many opportunities for collaborative e-learning. Here are some possibilities:

- Have threaded discussions of provocative questions, case studies, and brainstorming tasks.
- Create virtual teams that work together to search for information, clarify challenging data, answer discussion questions, and solve problems.
- Jigsaw (divide) the learning material and invite participants to explain what they have learned to others or pool their knowledge and skill in completing an assignment that requires collaboration.
- Involve individual participants in preparing electronic presentations that teach others what they have personally researched.

3. Promote experiential activity.

Most people assume that the opportunities for experiential activity are limited in the world of e-learning. That may have been true in the past, but is no longer the case. Here are some exciting options:

- Search for websites that contain electronic game templates such as crossword puzzles, web-based action mazes, quiz shows, and so forth.
- Utilize electronic business simulations that involve participants in everything from product development, project management, and sales to distribution.
- Create online role-play activities. There are guides available on the Web to adopt, moderate, and design role-playing experiences.

Needless to say, electronic resources come and go. At the time you may be reading this, some of the following websites may no longer exist, but hopefully, the list below will yield some fruit:

www.nasaga.org	www.thiagi.com
www.halfbakedsoftware.com	www.emforum.org
www.chatzy.com	www3.fablusi.com
www.forio.com	www.ozmioz.com

PLANNING SHEET
Transform Active Classroom Strategies into e-Learning

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Make information transmission “brain-friendly.”
- ☐ Foster peer discussion, learning, and teaching.
- ☐ Promote experiential activity.

My Plan

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TIP 27

Use e-Learning to Supplement Classroom Learning

When training delivered in traditional classrooms is desirable and feasible, there is no reason to eliminate the use of e-learning activity entirely. e-Learning can be employed in a variety of ways to bolster classroom training and make it more productive. Let's see some of the possibilities:

1. Create electronic pre-work assignments.

A lot of time can be consumed during a training session with information or activities that could have been completed before participants arrive. In addition, giving participants something to do before coming to class can involve them before the session actually starts. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask participants to complete an instrument or survey sent to them by email or accessed from a website. Have them bring their responses to the class.
- Provide a case problem to ponder before class.
- Pre-test participants to assess their current knowledge and skill levels.
- Require participants who need it to prepare for the training with a tutorial program that brings their knowledge or skill to the level of the class.
- Send electronic job aids prior to classroom sessions.
- Invite participants to download a training video that orients them to the training topic.

- Attach a pre-reading assignment to an email informing participants about the training session.

2. Reduce information dump.

Trainers often put participants on overload by attempting to cover too much information in class. Participants become glassy-eyed and tune out. Rather than present every piece of information during class, cover the essentials and point participants to the details you don't have time to cover. For example, I have designed a classroom training session on the effective use of behavior reinforcement by managers. The classroom time is used to explain the basic principle that reinforcing positive behaviors is more effective than decreasing negative behaviors. I then present some reasons why most managers have difficulty with focusing on the positive rather than the negative, followed by a small sample of suggestions to help them move from a negative focus to a positive one. Participants are then emailed a more detailed list of recommendations for their review so that they can choose a strategy that they will try out back on the job.

3. Reinforce or extend classroom instruction.

e-Learning can serve as a vital way to reinforce classroom instruction. Here are some examples:

- In a classroom-based customer service training program, participants are sent an online assessment tool to test their skill level following the class, as well as an email reminder of techniques to use when dealing with difficult customers.
- After a class on business writing, participants are sent a post-class writing assignment to be completed and reviewed with a mentor.
- Within a classroom session, participants are engaged in exercises requiring them to use a database in order to complete a software testing task. Because the task involves a real-life work scenario, participants have success using a database back on the job.
- There's never enough time in class to practice sales skills. A role-play environment is created on a website where participants can practice additional scenarios not used in class.

PLANNING SHEET
Use e-Learning to Supplement Classroom Learning

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Create electronic pre-work assignments.
- ☐ Reduce information dump.
- ☐ Reinforce or extend classroom instruction.

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TIP 28

Use Classroom Sessions to Supplement e-Learning Activities

e-Learning is often the preferred way to deliver training when participants do not work at the same location or when time off from the job is limited. The convenience of e-learning training solutions, however, should not be a reason to use them exclusively. Classroom sessions can do a lot to bolster the effectiveness of e-learning activities. Here are some ways:

1. Use class time to introduce a new topic or skill.

Assume you want participants to be trained on a topic largely through computer-based self-study. The participants, however, may find it difficult to get started. They may lack sufficient motivation to learn on their own or they may need the hands-on guidance and push of a live instructor. Scheduling an introductory classroom session to jump-start the training program may be a wise move.

The same logic can be used when the training involves virtual group interaction. Meeting your fellow participants in person might be necessary to develop the team cohesion that will sustain virtual collaboration.

A live, face-to-face introductory session may also be a good way to discuss your expectations for self-study or virtual classroom learning. Participants may be unclear about how they are supposed to function as independent learners or as virtual participants. Their concerns may also be fuzzy. The presence of a live trainer may help them clarify what is expected of them and how they can perform successfully.

2. Sustain ongoing involvement in e-learning activity.

Just as a face-to-face meeting may help to kick off an e-learning program, it might be used to sustain involvement in the middle. This is particularly true when the e-learning component stretches over a long period of time. Meeting once or twice live with fellow participants can recharge participants who thrive on social interaction and miss the stimulation of face-to-face discussion.

3. Use class sessions as a time to apply the information and skills learned online.

When participants are expected to master a large amount of information or a host of skills through self-study, it may be desirable to schedule class sessions in which they apply what they have learned in group problem-solving activities. These live activities serve as a reinforcement. They also give participants an opportunity to test their knowledge and skills against other participants. Finally, it's a great way to celebrate with others the learning that has been accomplished individually.

PLANNING SHEET
Use Classroom Sessions to Supplement e-Learning Activities

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Use class time to introduce a new topic or skill.
- ☐ Sustain ongoing involvement in e-learning activity.
- ☐ Use class sessions as a time to apply the information and skills learned online.

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STRATEGY 8
MAKE THE END UNFORGETTABLE

Many training programs run out of steam at the end. In some cases, participants are marking time until the close is near. In other cases, trainers are valiantly trying to cover what they haven't gotten to before time runs out. How unfortunate! What happens at the end needs to be "unforgettable." You want participants to remember what they've learned. You also want participants to feel that what they learned has been special.

When you are preparing for the end, there are four areas to consider.

- How will participants review what you have taught them?
- How will participants assess what they have learned?
- How will participants consider what they will do about what they have learned?
- How will participants celebrate their accomplishments?

Let's explore ways to accomplish these goals. They include:

Tip 29: Get Participants to Review What's Been Learned

Tip 30: Ask Participants to Evaluate Their Accomplishments

Tip 31: Have Participants Plan for the Future

Tip 32: Let Participants Celebrate the End

TIP 29

Get Participants to Review What's Been Learned

Reviewing is a valuable learning activity and can take many forms, from fun games to challenging assignments. Here are some options:

1. Utilize the format of a television quiz show.

Adapt a TV quiz program such as "Jeopardy," "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," or "Wheel of Fortune." It is not necessary to follow the show's format rigidly. Make accommodations that serve your needs. For example, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" is basically a series of multiple-choice questions, graduated in difficulty. It is played by one contestant until that person fails to answer a question or quits the game. In a training program, you could do the following:

- Prepare a set of multiple-choice questions on your material that ranges from easy to very difficult. Use any number of questions, as long as the most difficult one is awarded $1 million, if answered correctly. For example, you might have fourteen questions, designated as $100, $200, $300, $500, $1,000, $2,000, $4,000, $8,000, $16,000, $32,000, $64,000, $250,000, $500,000, and $1,000,000 in value.
- Divide your participants into teams and have each team select a captain.
- Give teams a number, beginning with 1.
- Explain the following rules:

  Team 1 will be asked the easiest question. The team is allowed only ten seconds to answer. The "final answer" must be stated by the team captain. If he or she is *correct, the team is awarded the designated amount (e.g., $100). The next team in numerical order will then be asked the next question in order of difficulty and will be awarded its designated amount (e.g., $200), if correctly answered. When every team has had a turn to answer a question, the game returns to team 1. If, at any time, a team answers incorrectly, the captain from any of the remaining teams that stands up first can win bonus points for his or her team by providing the correct answer.*

- For the most difficult questions, a team can be given up to one minute to present its "final answer."
- For the $1,000,000 question, each team will submit its answer on a card. Every team that gets it right will receive the ultimate reward.
- Conduct the review game. After each question is successfully answered, elaborate on the question's significance to the group's learning goals.
- Request each team to report its total winnings.

2. Create a review activity based on a popular game.

You can also adapt the format of a popular game as the basis for class review. Here are some possibilities:

- *Crossword puzzles.* Construct a simple crossword puzzle. Create clues for the horizontal and vertical items using definitions, categories, examples, opposites, fill-in-the-blanks, and so forth.
- *Cards*. Use the format of any card game, such as *Poker, Go Fish, Solitaire*, and *Crazy Eights,* to engage participants. Participants can obtain desirable cards by giving correct answers, ideas, or solutions to problems. Card games can also be used to classify things (fats, carbs, proteins) or enumerate the order of things (the sequence used to renew your computer's desktop).
- *Anagrams.* Have participants form a word or phrase by rearranging the letters of another word or phrase (e.g., *trenur no estinmvent* to *return on investment*).
- *Baseball.* Create questions that are worth "singles, doubles, triples, and home runs." Have teams create a lineup of participants. Consider the

possibility of each team "pitching" its own questions to the opposing team.

- *Scrabble.* Invite participants to form words relating to your subject matter. You can have them select letters from an actual Scrabble game, or you can provide a word or phrase in which they must use each of its letters to create a new word or phrase.
- *Pictionary.* Create small groups and have one participant begin. The starting "picturist" selects a word card from a deck of words (e.g., key software concepts or functions) and has five seconds to examine the word to be played. The timer is then turned and the picturist begins sketching picture clues for the team. The picturist may not use verbal or physical communication to teammates during the round. Sketching and guessing continue until the word is identified or time is up.
- *Football.* Create questions to obtain "first downs," "field goals," and "touchdowns" (with "extra points"). The team on "defense" can select or devise the questions that the team on "offense" must answer in order to make progress down the field and score points.
- *Dice.* Roll one die to determine questions to be answered (graded in difficulty from 1 to 6) or to specify the quantity of ideas or answers a team must provide (six strategies to do Web searches). Roll two dice to determine how many spots a team can advance toward a goal after completing a task or answering a question.
- *Darts.* Create questions that have different point value. Invite participants to throw darts to obtain the opportunity to answer these questions.
- *Bingo/Tic-Tac-Toe.* Loads of possibilities here, from a name game in which a student's name is selected from a hat to a quiz game in which answers are provided on a game sheet. In the latter case, participants have the opportunity to "cover" answers by supplying the question they respond to.

3. Use a jigsaw design to create a comprehensive review.

When you want to challenge your participants, you can create a more comprehensive activity. One of my favorites involves the use of a jigsaw (see pp. 113–115).

- Devise a list of questions, problems, key concepts, and so forth that apply to the entire unit or course you want participants to review. For example, you might list twenty questions that cover a program on statistical analysis.
- Create subgroups of participants and assign each subgroup a part of the list. For example, you can create four groups of five participants who each receive five questions from the list of twenty questions on the training topic.
- Ask each subgroup to answer the questions, solve the problems, or define the concepts assigned to it. (Decide whether you want your participants to do this process with or without using reference material.)
- Redistribute each subgroup so that there is at least one representative from each of the original groups in the new subgroups (called "jigsaw groups") you have just created. For example, if there were four groups of five participants assigned to a portion of twenty questions, have each of those groups count off from 1 to 5. This creates five groups of four participants. In each of the five groups will be one participant who has worked on the answers to 25 percent of the questions. By their sharing the answers with each other, the entire list of twenty questions will be reviewed.

4. Invite participants to summarize the entire unit or course.

Explain to participants that your providing a summary of what you have taught would be contrary to the principle of active learning. Instead, tell them to summarize the unit or course. Divide participants into subgroups of two to four members. Ask each subgroup to create its own summary. Encourage the subgroups to create an outline, a mind-map, or any other device that will enable them to communicate the summary to others. Use any of the following questions to guide the participants:

- What were the major topics we examined?
- What have been some of the key points?

- What experiences have you had in this training? What did you get out of them?
- What ideas and suggestions are you taking away from this unit/course?

Invite the subgroups to share their summaries.

5. Ask participants to perform a variety of skills.

If you have been teaching participants skills that can be performed, challenge them to a performance review. Here are some examples:

- Participants display their sales skills in a series of skits.
- Participants are given a research problem that requires using all the graphing skills they have been taught.
- Participants are asked to perform in a role play that incorporates all of the interview skills they have practiced.
- Participants are given a piece of equipment to repair that involves several skills they have acquired.

Give participants time to prepare for their performance or challenge them to perform without prior preparation. Even if participants feel some pressure, try to relax them by labeling the performance as their "pre-Broadway" tryout, final rehearsal, or practice recital. Encourage participants to applaud each other's performances.

PLANNING SHEET
Get Participants to Review What's Been Learned

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Utilize the format of a television quiz program.
- ☐ Create a review activity based on a popular game.
- ☐ Use a jigsaw design to create a comprehensive review.
- ☐ Invite participants to summarize the entire unit or course.
- ☐ Ask participants to perform a variety of skills.

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TIP 30

Ask Participants to Evaluate Their Accomplishments

The end of a training program is a time for reflection. What have I learned? What do I now believe? What are my skills? What do I need to improve?

Allowing time for self-assessment gives participants the opportunity to examine what the training has meant to them. The suggestions that follow are structured ways to promote this kind of self-assessment.

1. Have participants rate themselves.

Prepare a survey in which participants rate themselves on items that reflect the learning they have acquired. You can ask them to evaluate such things as:

- the skills they have mastered (e.g., how well they can give presentations)
- the information they've acquired (e.g., how informed they are about future industry-wide trends)
- the concepts they have understood (e.g., how well they understand the concept of multi-linear causality)
- new or expanded areas of interest (e.g., how interested they are in doing value stream mapping)

Make the survey user-friendly by using simple devices such as:

- checklists (e.g., "Check the skill areas below in which you have improved.")
- rating scales (e.g., "Rate your understanding of each concept as poor, fair, good, or excellent.")
- sentence completions (e.g., "One topic I think about a lot is. . . .")

- short answers (e.g., "What's the topic about which you've increased your knowledge the most?")

It's important that participants be honest with themselves. They will be if you make the survey something they complete only for themselves. At the same time, consider having participants share those responses they want to reveal with partners or in a small group of participants.

2. Have participants identify what they have learned.

By the end of a unit or course, after much time has elapsed, your participants' awareness of what they have learned may be low. You can counteract that by asking your participants to take the time to consider what they are taking away from the class. These may include any of the following:

- new knowledge
- new skills
- improvement in . . . (e.g., assertive behavior)
- confidence in . . . (e.g., facilitating group discussion)

A fun way to do this is to create small groups and invite them to place their own entries on a list entitled: "What We Are Taking Away." Have each group display its list. Ask participants to walk by each list and invite each person to place a check mark next to "takeaways" on the lists (other than on his or her own) that he or she is also taking away. Survey the results, noting the most popular "takeaways." Also mention any that are unusual and unexpected.

3. Invite participants to assess how they have changed.

One of the most effective ways to design a unit or course of study is to have participants compare their views about the training topic at the beginning and to reassess these views at the end. You can help your participants do this by asking them at the start of a training program questions such as:

- What makes a . . . effective (e.g., facilitator)?
- What is the value of . . . (e.g., market forecasts)?

- What advice would you give yourself to be . . . (e.g., a better supervisor)?
- What solutions could you devise in dealing with . . . (e.g., how to keep spending in check)?

Use any one of the following formats:

- group discussion
- a questionnaire
- an opening debate
- a written statement

At the end of a unit or course of study, ask participants to express their views once again. Ask participants whether their views have remained the same or have shifted. Discuss the factors that created shifts in viewpoints.

Another approach is to ask participants to assess what they have gained from the class. It places them in the position of someone who "owns" his or her own learning expectations rather than someone who merely goes along for the ride. Ask participants at the beginning of a class to write down what they hope to get out of the class. Here are some ways to structure this exercise:

- Ask participants to list their own learning goals for the class.
- Ask participants to list what they have previously found difficult or uninteresting about the training topic.
- Ask participants to list ways in which they might be able to use what they will learn.

Set aside some time periodically to allow participants to read their initial statements and consider what value the class has had for them thus far. At the end of the program, ask participants to assess whether their investment of time and effort in the class has been worthwhile in light of their initial hopes. Obtain feedback from participants.

PLANNING SHEET
Ask Participants to Evaluate Their Accomplishments

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Have participants rate themselves.
- ☐ Have participants identify what they have learned.
- ☐ Invite participants to assess how they have changed.

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TIP 31

Have Participants Plan for the Future

At the conclusion of any program that has featured active training, participants will naturally ask, “Now what?” The success of active training is really measured by how that question is answered, that is, how what has been learned in the class affects what participants will do in the future. The suggestions that follow are designed to promote future planning. Some are fairly quick techniques you can use when time is limited. Others require more time and commitment, but lead to even better results.

1. Invite participants to consider how to continue learning on their own.

Point out your hope that participants’ learning doesn’t stop simply because the class is over. Suggest to participants that there are many ways for them to continue learning on their own. Indicate that one way to do this is to brainstorm their own list of ideas to “keep on learning.”

Create subgroups. Have each subgroup brainstorm ideas. Here are some all-purpose suggestions:

- Look for subject-related articles in newspapers, magazines, and so forth.
- Take another course in the same subject area.
- Create a future reading list.
- Reread books and review notes taken in class.
- Teach something you’ve learned to someone else.
- Get a job or take an assignment that uses the skills you have learned.

Reconvene the class and ask each subgroup to share its best ideas. (If you feel that this process would be too difficult for your participants to do on their own, you can prepare, in advance, a list of suggestions for the participants. Ask them to check those they feel would be suitable for them.)

2. Ask participants to give themselves learning reminders.

You can have participants create reminders to use what they have learned. They can even place these reminders on signs that they can attach to any surface (refrigerator, door, desk, etc.).

Invite participants to think about one or more of the following:

- One thing they have learned in the class ("Good coaches flex their style to their learners.")
- A key thought or piece of advice they will keep in mind to guide them in the future ("Delegate when my people are capable and ready.")
- An action step they will take in the future ("Preview what you read before you read it.")
- A question to ponder ("What is my goal?")

Urge participants to express themselves as concisely as possible. Have them brainstorm possibilities before making their selections. Encourage them to obtain reactions to their ideas from others. They might want to base their signs on well-known car bumper stickers, such as "Honk if you . . . " or advertising slogans, such as ". . . . . No book can match it."

Give out index cards and have participants write down reminders. Gather the cards and pass them around the group. Have each participant select three ideas from other members of the class that will serve them well.

3. Encourage participants to create plans of action.

Your participants might be more likely to follow up the learning experiences they have had with concrete actions if you invite them to make contracts with themselves. One simple approach is to ask participants to write themselves letters indicating what steps they intend to take to use what they have learned or to continue to learn more about the subject on their own. Suggest that they could begin the letter with the words "I hereby resolve." Inform them that the letters are confidential. Ask them to place them in envelopes, address them to themselves, and seal the envelopes. You can promise to mail the envelopes at a later point. Or invite participants to write you emails containing their intentions. You can reply at a later point with copies of their messages and a friendly note: "How is everything going?"

Another approach is to ask participants to fill out a follow-up form at the end of the program containing statements as to how they plan to apply what they have learned or continue learning more about the subject. Here is a sample form.

FUTURE PLANNING FORM

Describe how you plan to apply this course and tell when and how you plan to apply it. Be specific.

A. Situation: ______________________________

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My plan to apply: ______________________________

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B. Situation: ______________________________

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My plan to apply: ______________________________

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Describe what you want to do to continue learning about [insert subject].

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When the forms are completed, inform the participants that their future planning sheets will be sent to them in three to four weeks. At that time, these follow-up instructions can be provided.

> *Please review your future planning sheet. Place the letter A next to those plans you have been able to apply successfully. Place the letter B next to those plans on which you are still working. Place the letter C next to those plans you have not been able to do anything about. Explain what obstacles prevented your application.*

PLANNING SHEET
Have Participants Plan for the Future

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Invite participants to consider how to continue learning on their own.
- ☐ Ask participants to give themselves learning reminders.
- ☐ Encourage participants to create plans of action.

My Plan

TIP 32

Let Participants Celebrate the End

Participants should feel in a celebratory mood when they have completed the end of a training program. They have worked hard and accomplished a lot together. There are a variety of ways to mark the end.

1. Have participants reminisce about the learning activities they have experienced.

Reminiscing enables participants to join together at the end of a training program and celebrate what they have experienced together. A fun way to achieve this is to create a large display of the title of the training program. Merge the words in the title if there is more than one. For example, "business ethics" becomes *businessethics*. Give participants marking pens. Explain how words can be created in *Scrabble* fashion, using the displayed title as a base. Review the information that words can be created:

- horizontally or vertically
- beginning with, ending with, and incorporating any available letters

Remind participants, however, that two words cannot merge with each other. There must be a space between them. Permit proper names as words. Set a time limit and invite participants to create as many key words as they can that are associated with the subject matter or the learning experiences that have taken place. Suggest that they divide up the labor so that some participants are recording while others are searching for new words. Call time and have the participants count up the words and then applaud the stunning visual record of their experience with one another! If the group size is unwieldy for this activity, divide the class into subgroups so that each can create a *Scrabble* board. Display the results together and tally the *total* number of words produced by the entire class. You can also simplify the activity by writing the course title or subject matter vertically and asking participants to write (horizontally) a verb, adjective, or noun that they associate with the title and that begins with each letter.

Another way to reminisce is to give participants blank sheets of paper and tell them that it is time for their "final exam." Keep them in suspense about the exam. Tell them that their task is to write down, in order, the topics or learning activities they have experienced in the class. After each participant has finished (or given up!), generate a class-wide list. Make adjustments until a correct list is obtained. With the list in view, ask participants to reminisce about these experiences, recalling moments of fun, cooperation, and insight. Facilitate the discussion so that the exchange of memories brings a strong emotional closure to the class.

If you wish, provide a list of the topics/activities for participants. Start the reminiscing discussion immediately. Rather than focusing on activities, focus the exercise on "moments to remember." Leave this phrase open to interpretation. This may create a laughter-filled and perhaps nostalgic review of the class.

2. Congratulate participants on their accomplishments.

The training program you have completed may have involved a great deal of participant effort and success. The end is a time for giving recognition for a job well done. Here are some ways to express congratulations:

- Provide a "certificate of achievement" for each participant.
- Have participants line up and give the person in front of them a "pat on the back" or a "high five."
- Have participants create cards that express appreciation and gratitude for each other's teamwork.
- Create a giant mural that lists the class's accomplishments, both in words and in visual symbols.
- Treat the class to pizza, ice cream, or some other popular food.

- Devise a musical tribute to participants (e.g., using the theme song "We Are the Champions").

3. Give participants an opportunity to say "good-bye."

In many classes, participants develop feelings of closeness toward their peers. This is especially true if the participants have taken part in active learning activities. They need to say "good-bye" to each other and express their appreciation for the support and encouragement given each other during the class. There are many ways to help facilitate these final sentiments. Here are my favorites.

Use a skein of yard to connect participants literally and symbolically. Ask everyone to stand and form a circle. Start the process by stating briefly what you have experienced as a result of facilitating the class. Holding the end of the yarn, toss the skein to a participant on the other side of the circle. Ask that person to state briefly what he or she has experienced as a result of participating in the class. Then ask that person to hold onto the yarn and toss the skein to another participant.

Have each participant take a turn at receiving the skein, sharing reflections, and tossing the yarn on, continuing to hold onto his or her piece. The resulting visual is a web of yarn connecting every member of the group.

Some of the comments that might be expressed include:

- I'm glad I got to know people on a personal level.
- I feel that I can be open and honest with everyone here.
- I had fun in this class.
- I'm going to think of ways to practice what I learned here.
- You have been a great group!

Complete the activity by stating that the class began as a collection of individuals willing to connect and learn from each other. Cut the yarn with scissors so that each person, although departing as an individual, takes a piece of the other participants along. Thank participants for the interest, ideas, time, and effort.

My other favorite is to assemble participants for a class photograph. It's best to create at least three rows, one row sitting on the floor, one row sitting in chairs, and one row standing behind the chairs. As you are about to take the picture, express your own final sentiments. Stress how much active training depends on the support and involvement of participants. Thank participants for playing such a large part in the success of the class. Then invite one participant at a time to leave the group and become the "photographer." (Optional: Have each participant merely come up and view what a final picture of the class would look like.)

If the class is not too large, ask each participant to share his or her final thoughts with the group. Ask the group to applaud the participant for his or her contributions to the group.

Promise to send the class picture to participants. With a digital camera, all you need is an email address! Your participants can receive their mementos right away.

PLANNING SHEET
Let Participants Celebrate the End

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique (check one or more):

- ☐ Have participants reminisce about the learning activities they have experienced.
- ☐ Congratulate participants on their accomplishments.
- ☐ Give participants an opportunity to say ”good-bye.”

My Plan

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Final Advice

At the beginning of this book, I promised to share with you eight strategies to spark learning in your training sessions. To review, they are

Strategy 1: Engage Your Participants from the Start

Strategy 2: Be a Brain-Friendly Presenter

Strategy 3: Encourage Lively and Focused Discussion

Strategy 4: Urge Participants to Ask Questions

Strategy 5: Let Your Participants Learn from Each Other

Strategy 6: Enhance Learning by Experiencing and Doing

Strategy 7: Blend In Technology Wisely

Strategy 8: Make the End Unforgettable

I hope you are inspired to apply these training strategies with your participants. I recognize, however, that inspiration doesn't ensure action. So I would like to end with some final advice on "training the active training way."

Focus on Outcomes, Not on Content

All too often, training is designed around the information, concepts, or skills that appear to be central to the topic at hand. For example, if the topic is team work, a training design might cover subtopics such as the team concept, goal setting, roles and responsibilities, managing conflict, problem solving, and decision making. As a result, separate modules might be developed for each topic. On paper, it seems that the design covers the topic of team work well, but what happens in the actual experience of the participants? Most will find that they "toured" the topic. They went from subtopic to subtopic, much like a sightseer goes from city to city or country to country, taking in the tour guide's patter, but often forgetting where they were a few days ago. At best, participants walk away feeling "been there, done that."

Training "the active training way" focuses on outcomes rather than content. The training is designed to achieve a result instead of covering a topic. Thus, a training on team work will be concerned with outcomes, such as the following candidates:

- Participants will assess how they contribute, as individuals, to their team's success and determine what they can do to make a stronger contribution.
- Participants will experience a variety of team problem-solving approaches and decide how to apply them to their own team situation.
- Participants will identify arenas of collaboration within their organization that are not currently happening and strategize how to take those initiatives.

My suggestion is to look at your current training sessions and ask yourself whether they are focused on content or on outcomes. If it's the former, start asking yourself this question: "What do I want participants to do with the training they are getting?"

When you make this shift in focus, you will really appreciate the eight strategies explored in this book and start to use them consistently. For example, you will want to involve your participants from the beginning (with icebreakers) to the end (with closing activities) of the training program, because they are the key to your success. As I wrote in the introduction to this book, what you tell and show your participants ultimately doesn't count. What they take away is paramount. It makes no difference how eloquent you are or how elegant your presentation slides appear. What's vital is how well they understand what you've taught and how motivated they are to apply it. When the training is focused on specific targets, the participants must take more active responsibility for the outcome. Having been trained "the active training way," they are more likely to do so.

Assess Your Training Situation

Once you know where you're going, give hard thought to how you're going to get there. As you consider the eight strategies in this book, assess how they may or may not contribute to the process of achieving success in your own situation.

In each instance, ask yourself these questions:

1. *Who are the participants?* Are they used to active learning? If they are accustomed to lecture and slides, I would advise you to go slowly. Keep activities short and highly structured. Use pairs rather than small groups. Ask one debriefing question, not several. Use non-threatening role-playing techniques. Keep the challenge level moderate.
2. *What is your comfort level?* When you train actively, you don't have the same level of control that a traditional presenter enjoys. You give away a lot of control to the participants. If you don't feel confident that you can take such as risk, transfer control in small doses. Retain a presentation focus, experimenting with a few of the easier techniques to make your instruction brain-friendly. Hold off letting participants learn from and teach each other until you feel ready to take the plunge. When you do, be sure to follow up with an instructor-led summary and review.
3. *How much time do you have?* If time is limited, don't waste it on social icebreakers, but do consider a learning icebreaker. Whether your training program is one or several days long or is distributed over several weeks, realize that you cannot sustain involvement being "front and center" most of the time. In this context, team learning activities are an important break in the process and help participants to "own" the success of the program. Add experiential activity to the mix.
4. *What can be done outside of the classroom?* Consider whether questionnaires or inventories can be completed before class. Can a case study be presented prior to class? Can a reading that provides more detailed information be assigned after the session? Can an e-learning activity be used to supplement the training? Can a discussion utilize email, chat rooms, and the like?

Seize the Opportunity

Throughout this book, I have highlighted the theme that you can make a difference in your training if you take the eight strategies to heart. You have the opportunity to rise above the usual norms prevalent in too many organizations today. Far too often, trainers tolerate practices that shut down rather than open up learning. By your applying the strategies I have provided in this book, there is a strong likelihood that your participants will become the active learners who are needed in a rapidly changing world.

There is some risk, but the potential rewards are worth it. You can make a difference if you are willing to

- Want it
- Learn it
- Try it
- Live it

Wanting It

Ask yourself whether you are truly happy with the current state of learning in your training sessions. Do you want to accept the status quo, with participants passive and their learning short-lived? It would be great if there were a magic wand that would dust (or inoculate) every one of us with the courage to take the risks necessary to rise above the norm. But it doesn't exist. Are you willing to show some courage?

Learning It

It's one thing to be motivated to take action. It's another matter to do so intelligently. I hope you have learned or relearned some useful ideas from this book. You'll also find many other sources of training wisdom. Exposing yourself to new approaches is necessary to your development as a trainer who brings out the best in participants.

Trying It

We are often reluctant to change our habits because we don't know what will happen if we do. View your attempts to apply the strategies in this book as a "personal experiment in change." Choose one strategy at a time and stay with it for a while. Try it on for size, and see whether it fits you. Don't be afraid to tell your participants that you are experimenting and want their feedback. Such a move gives you permission to use a new idea and invites them to be your partners in finding approaches that work.

Living It

If any of your experiments in change bring success, you're likely to continue practicing them for a while. However, the bumps and bruises of life intervene, and we are all prone to relapse. Recognize those barriers that get the best of your resolve, and think about what you need to do to overcome them. Perhaps you need to obtain some support from others. Maybe you need to go back to what motivated you in the first place to start the journey of change. They say, "Nobody likes a change except a wet baby!" Prove them wrong.

Enjoy your journeys in training the active training way.

About the Author

Mel Silberman is president of Active Training (www.activetraining.com and 800–924–8157) in Princeton, New Jersey, a company that offers active-training seminars for educational, corporate, government, and human-service organizations worldwide. He is known internationally as a pioneer in training and performance improvement. As professor of adult and organizational development at Temple University, Mel has won two awards for his distinguished teaching. He shares his original and practical ideas through numerous books. They include: *Active Training, The Best of Active Training, 101 Ways to Make Training Active,* and *The 60-Minute Active Training Series.*

Mel's training skills, psychological insights, and engaging personality have made him a popular keynoter and workshop leader at conferences of ASTD, ISPI, and NASAGA. Mel is also the editor of *The ASTD Training and Performance Sourcebook* and *The ASTD Leadership and Organization Development Sourcebook,* annual collections of tools for trainers and consultants.

Among his recent clients have been BMW, Linens 'N Things, Consolidated Edison, the United States Senate, Becton Dickinson, Pharmacia, Girl Scouts of the USA, Comcast, MGM Grand, Stern College of Business, Stockholm School of Economics, Manchester (UK) Business School, and the International Teachers of Business Management Program.

Pfeiffer Publications Guide

This guide is designed to familiarize you with the various types of Pfeiffer publications. The formats section describes the various types of products that we publish; the methodologies section describes the many different ways that content might be provided within a product. We also provide a list of the topic areas in which we publish.

FORMATS

In addition to its extensive book-publishing program, Pfeiffer offers content in an array of formats, from fieldbooks for the practitioner to complete, ready-to-use training packages that support group learning.

FIELDBOOK Designed to provide information and guidance to practitioners in the midst of action. Most fieldbooks are companions to another, sometimes earlier, work, from which its ideas are derived; the fieldbook makes practical what was theoretical in the original text. Fieldbooks can certainly be read from cover to cover. More likely, though, you'll find yourself bouncing around following a particular theme, or dipping in as the mood, and the situation, dictate.

HANDBOOK A contributed volume of work on a single topic, comprising an eclectic mix of ideas, case studies, and best practices sourced by practitioners and experts in the field.

An editor or team of editors usually is appointed to seek out contributors and to evaluate content for relevance to the topic. Think of a handbook not as a ready-to-eat meal, but as a cookbook of ingredients that enables you to create the most fitting experience for the occasion.

RESOURCE Materials designed to support group learning. They come in many forms: a complete, ready-to-use exercise (such as a game); a comprehensive resource on one topic (such as conflict management) containing a variety of methods and approaches; or a collection of like-minded activities (such as icebreakers) on multiple subjects and situations.

TRAINING PACKAGE An entire, ready-to-use learning program that focuses on a particular topic or skill. All packages comprise a guide for the facilitator/trainer and a workbook for the participants. Some packages are supported with additional media—such as video—or learning aids, instruments, or other devices to help participants understand concepts or practice and develop skills.

- *Facilitator/trainer's guide* Contains an introduction to the program, advice on how to organize and facilitate the learning event, and step-by-step instructor notes. The guide also contains copies of presentation materials—handouts, presentations, and overhead designs, for example—used in the program.

- *Participant's workbook* Contains exercises and reading materials that support the learning goal and serves as a valuable reference and support guide for participants in the weeks and months that follow the learning event. Typically, each participant will require his or her own workbook.

ELECTRONIC CD-ROMs and web-based products transform static Pfeiffer content into dynamic, interactive experiences. Designed to take advantage of the searchability, automation, and ease-of-use that technology provides, our e-products bring convenience and immediate accessibility to your workspace.

METHODOLOGIES

CASE STUDY A presentation, in narrative form, of an actual event that has occurred inside an organization. Case studies are not prescriptive, nor are they used to prove a point; they are designed to develop critical analysis and decision-making skills. A case study has a specific time frame, specifies a sequence of events, is narrative in structure, and contains a plot structure—an issue (what should be/have been done?). Use case studies when the goal is to enable participants to apply previously learned theories to the circumstances in the case, decide what is pertinent, identify the real issues, decide what should have been done, and develop a plan of action.

ENERGIZER A short activity that develops readiness for the next session or learning event. Energizers are most commonly used after a break or lunch to stimulate or refocus the group. Many involve some form of physical activity, so they are a useful way to counter post-lunch lethargy. Other uses include transitioning from one topic to another, where "mental" distancing is important.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY (ELA) A facilitator-led intervention that moves participants through the learning cycle from experience to application (also known as a Structured Experience). ELAs are carefully thought-out designs in which there is a definite learning purpose and intended outcome. Each step—everything that participants do during the activity—facilitates the accomplishment of the stated goal. Each ELA includes complete instructions for facilitating the intervention and a clear statement of goals, suggested group size and timing, materials required, an explanation of the process, and, where appropriate, possible variations to the activity. (For more detail on Experiential Learning Activities, see the Introduction to the *Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals*, 1999 edition, Pfeiffer, San Francisco.)

GAME A group activity that has the purpose of fostering team spirit and togetherness in addition to the achievement of a pre-stated goal. Usually contrived—undertaking a desert expedition, for example—this type of learning method offers an engaging means for participants to demonstrate and practice business and interpersonal skills. Games are effective for team building and personal development mainly because the goal is subordinate to the process—the means through which participants reach decisions, collaborate, communicate, and generate trust and understanding. Games often engage teams in "friendly" competition.

ICEBREAKER A (usually) short activity designed to help participants overcome initial anxiety in a training session and/or to acquaint the participants with one another. An icebreaker can be a fun activity or can be tied to specific topics or training goals. While a useful tool in itself, the icebreaker comes into its own in situations where tension or resistance exists within a group.

INSTRUMENT A device used to assess, appraise, evaluate, describe, classify, and summarize various aspects of human behavior. The term used to describe an instrument depends primarily on its format and purpose. These terms include survey, questionnaire, inventory, diagnostic, survey, and poll. Some uses of instruments include providing instrumental feedback to group members, studying here-and-now processes or functioning within a group, manipulating group composition, and evaluating outcomes of training and other interventions.

Instruments are popular in the training and HR field because, in general, more growth can occur if an individual is provided with a method for focusing specifically on his or her own behavior. Instruments also are used to obtain information that will serve as a basis for change and to assist in workforce planning efforts.

Paper-and-pencil tests still dominate the instrument landscape with a typical package comprising a facilitator's guide, which offers advice on administering the instrument and interpreting the collected data, and an initial set of instruments. Additional instruments are available separately. Pfeiffer, though, is investing heavily in e-instruments. Electronic instrumentation provides effortless distribution and, for larger groups particularly, offers advantages over paper-and-pencil tests in the time it takes to analyze data and provide feedback.

LECTURETTE A short talk that provides an explanation of a principle, model, or process that is pertinent to the participants' current learning needs. A lecturette is intended to establish a common language bond between the trainer and the participants by providing a mutual frame of reference. Use a lecturette as an introduction to a group activity or event, as an interjection during an event, or as a handout.

MODEL A graphic depiction of a system or process and the relationship among its elements. Models provide a frame of reference and something more tangible, and more easily remembered, than a verbal explanation. They also give participants something to "go on," enabling them to track their own progress as they experience the dynamics, processes, and relationships being depicted in the model.

ROLE PLAY A technique in which people assume a role in a situation/scenario: a customer service rep in an angry-customer exchange, for example. The way in which the role is approached is then discussed and feedback is offered. The role play is often repeated using a different approach and/or incorporating changes made based on feedback received. In other words, role playing is a spontaneous interaction involving realistic behavior under artificial (and safe) conditions.

SIMULATION A methodology for understanding the interrelationships among components of a system or process. Simulations differ from games in that they test or use a model that depicts or mirrors some aspect of reality in form, if not necessarily in content. Learning occurs by studying the effects of change on one or more factors of the model. Simulations are commonly used to test hypotheses about what happens in a system—often referred to as "what if?" analysis—or to examine best-case/worst-case scenarios.

THEORY A presentation of an idea from a conjectural perspective. Theories are useful because they encourage us to examine behavior and phenomena through a different lens.

TOPICS

The twin goals of providing effective and practical solutions for workforce training and organization development and meeting the educational needs of training and human resource professionals shape Pfeiffer's publishing program. Core topics include the following:

Leadership & Management
Communication & Presentation
Coaching & Mentoring
Training & Development
e-Learning
Teams & Collaboration
OD & Strategic Planning
Human Resources
Consulting

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