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Freeing the Prisoners of Boring,
Unproductive Presentations and Training

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Quality Checklist for Presentations, Seminars and Meetings

Here is a list of ideas that have been generated from the [Creative Training Techniques Handbook and Seminar](#)

17 Ways to Get More Into and Out of Your Own Training seminar, that will enable you to deliver a higher quality seminar, workshop or training program.

- 1 Remember to design your training for three groups of people:
 - The person who is coming.
 - The person who is sending someone.
 - The person who is paying.

Only when all three have their needs met will you have an outstanding training program.

- 2 Arrange your participants if you are using four to six at a table by having them number off around the room. In this way, you:

- Eliminate cliques
- Provide people with an opportunity to get to know new people.

- 4 Make your preparations obvious to everyone prior to the program by using:

- Well-designed handouts.
- A good resource manual.
- Registration and check-in staff who are prepared.
- Knowledgeable staff to get your program off to a good start.

- 5 Reduce the distance between you and your audience.

- 6 Remember that every single participant is tuned into one of two "radio stations":

- WII – FM – "What's in it for me?"
- MMFI – AM – "Make me feel more important about myself"

- 7 Use quality transparencies. Use colour. Use type fonts that are easy to read eg Verdana, Arial (avoid too many serif fonts to create them, and have no more than six lines (six words per line) per transparency. Consider using graphics. Be sure that you give people "what" and "why" as well as "how to". Encourage your audience at any time to ask you "How do you do that?" Promise to give them one or two quick "how to's" on each point.

Help people to understand early on that it is very good to volunteer. This can be done by rewarding volunteering at the beginning with some



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small gift, prize or recognition. A prize might include a small 3x5 card containing nine points about listening.

Stop from time to time to summarize what has happened. A good way to do this is to ask people to take two or three minutes to discuss and summarize at their tables. Discuss: "What are the ideas we have learned up to this point?" and "How will we put them into practice?"

Provide positive reinforcement frequently. Thank people for their questions. Thank people for their participation. Thank people for their involvement. Thank people for returning from break on time.

Use curiosity as a motivator. For example, say "John, if you will remember to ask at 11.42, I'll tell you why we don't use the handout in the exact sequence." Or "Mary, if you will remember to ask right after the break, I'll give you two specific reasons why I asked everyone to move their nametags from the left side to the right side."

Establish leadership at the beginning. Have your handout unnumbered and tell people you will be using the handout not only by the title, but also by page number, and ask them to take a moment to number the pages. If everyone does that, it will be one way you will have leadership.

As the seminar leader, personally give people their handouts as they come into the room. This gives you a quick way to meet everyone and also reinforces that you are there to be of service.

Decide in advance one or two things you are willing to promise as a follow-up in exchange for people writing to you two weeks to 30 days later with their feedback about what they have learned and how they've put it into practice.

Remember that nobody likes the expert. Don't tell people what they can discover by asking.

Leave out two or three key words on each page of your handout. People want things which are completed, and having to take notes will help keep their attention.

Share personal experiences. People want to know that you have lived what you are talking about, not just learned what you are talking about.

When you use negative illustrations, use them in the third party. When you use positive illustrations, use them in the first party, For example,

"What kind of problems have you seen people creating because they do not make decisions well?" (negative, third party)



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Use a variety of ways to select table leaders for various group discussions. For example:

Point a finger in the air. When I count to three, point to the person that is most likely to be the next table leader. The person with the most fingers at them will lead.

Right after the break, we will have a new discussion to be lead by your new table leader. If you are wondering who the leader will be, it is the person who stands up last. You are now on break!

I'd like one person to volunteer to do something. Once you've volunteered, I'll tell you what you'll be doing. When each table has a volunteer, indicate that the volunteer will now appoint the next group leader, the person sitting directly to their right (or left).

Take a distinct program break or change about every 20 minutes. Remember, research indicates that adults can understand for up to 90 minutes, but they retain for only 20 minutes. Take a stand-up break or a stretch break. Change from lecture to group activity.

Use recursiveness to reinforce learning. Recursiveness means that you use the thing to demonstrate the thing. Use the overhead to talk about transparencies, show a video on how to create a video, create for example a powerpoint slide using the actual program.

Use variety in your room set-up. If you have a two day program, you may want to use banquet rounds one day and herringbone 6 feet x 30 inch tables the next day. You can still have groups, but you have varied the room so it creates a change of pace. Or, if you have 20 people or less, you might use a U-shape one day and banquet rounds the next day.

Be sure to provide adequate breaks. This may mean not only taking a mid-morning break, a lunch break, and a mid-afternoon break, but also shorter stand-up breaks. Also rotate the groups in order to provide a change of pace break.



Training TIP of the Month

Igniting Social Learning

A great deal of learning takes place by talking to one another—exchanging emotions and feelings, discussion, brainstorming, and problem-solving. In fact, the natural tendency for both adults and children in a learning environment free of threat is to talk in class. Participants can be valuable resources for each other—generating ideas, offering assistance or encouragement, and providing feedback. Some presenters demand that participants "pay attention" to the person at the front of the room at all times; however, today we realize that learning takes many shapes. Sometimes it's quiet, other times noisy; sometimes participants learn best by themselves, other times with a group. The most important thing is this: Do not discourage participants from asking each other for help. This chapter focuses on strategies for creating a presentation environment that encourages interaction among participants and downplays the old fashion value of always listening attentively to the platform speaker.

Creating Teams of Two

One way to encourage participant interaction and group cooperation is to incorporate team activities and assignments into your presentation. Generally, a good guideline is that social learning is worth at least 25 percent of your total training time. A variety of ways exist to establish quick pairings that mix up partners.

Brain Connection

The Human Brain Is a Social Brain

The brain develops better in concert with others. Our brain cannot be good at everything; therefore, it selects over time that which will ensure its survival. The human brain has evolved to use language as our primary means for communication. This may partly explain why groups, teams, and cooperative learning benefit our understanding and application of new concepts—they require us to communicate with each other. Through this process, learning seems to be enhanced. We can certainly learn without others around, but in this situation we'd never learn to be part of a family or community.

After the teams have completed their task, which is commonly a pair and share, remind them to thank each other (or celebrate) before having a seat. This keeps the atmosphere light and polite.

The 5-Step, 15-Minute Teambuilder

The old way of presenting—stand and deliver—was simple. Obedient participants sat quietly in their lined up rows of seats while the presenter stood in front of the room and lectured. Today's presentation environment is very different. It is busy, interactive, and flexible. And participants may be "in front" as much as the presenter. Why the change? Two reasons: We now realize the brain's need for social learning; and we understand more about learning styles and multiple intelligences which are maximized in interactive environments. The following steps break down the essential building blocks and time involvement (based on a group of 3 to 4) for creating cooperative teams:

1.Orchestrate Composition of Teams (approx. 4 minutes)

In composing teams, consider what criteria you want to include (i.e., group size, cultural diversity, experience, age, gender, recreational interests, horoscope signs, etc.) You may want your teams to be homogenous or diverse, novel or serious, or departmental or general depending on the purpose of the activity. If

the training is restricted to a single organization, your criteria may include department, skill area, years on the job, classification, etc. You might have participants classify themselves and label their nametags (i.e., CS=Customer Service, HR= Human Resources, T=Technical, P=Production, etc.) If it is appropriate to the purpose of the activity, explain to the group what your criteria is. Have everyone stand and mix with others as they look for a group based on the criteria you've presented. Once basic teams have been formed, ask if everyone has a team and if any team needs to make a trade to get the criteria met. When a team's composition is set, have them sit down.

If you wish to create random teams, you can adapt the pairing approaches at the beginning of this chapter. (i.e., "Find three others who are your same height.") Another approach is to put the names of nursery rhymes, music groups, or movie titles, etc. in a hat. If you want five teams of four, then you'll need five titles listed four times each on a scrap of paper to be stirred up in the hat. Each participant draws out a title to determine their group. (i.e., All *Itsy-Bitsy Spider* members begin singing the song to find each other.) Or, if teams are movie titles, you might have all *Titanic* members stand by the door. The variations on this approach are as varied as your imagination.

2. Facilitate a Get-To-Know-You Time (approx. 3 minutes)

Until the magic and bonding of synergy occurs, a group of people is simply a group of people. Getting to know each other is critical to the development of teams. To accomplish this, have each group determine a timekeeper and establish the signals they will use to keep the group within their time limits; then, instruct the timekeepers to give each person 30 seconds of uninterrupted time to share something about themselves that is not work-related (i.e., family, school, hobbies, sports, etc.) For example, someone might say, "I was born in Prague, I have a dog named Sofia, and my passion is gardening." After a person speaks, everyone claps, but no questions are asked until everyone has completed their introduction. The remaining time can be used for participants to ask follow-up questions or to chat among themselves.

3. Identify Team Leaders (approx. 2 minutes)

Never appoint team leaders; rather, have team leaders self select. To facilitate this process, instruct groups to go around the circle and have each participant share why they do, or don't, want to be the team leader. If two people want to lead, have them share the leadership responsibilities.

4. Develop Team Spirit (approx. 3 minutes)

Team spirit can be generated from a name, a challenge, a cheer, or a ritual. Give each group 60 seconds to pick a team name. Then, give them 90 seconds to create a wild cheer that lasts 5 seconds or less. Use your imagination for even more spirit-building ideas. It's critical to allow and encourage rituals and noise. If you suppress this energy, it'll disappear fast, and it's essential for teambuilding. Keep the energy high, use sound effects, and enlist the support of other teams to celebrate another team's success.

5. Identify Team Goals (approx. 3 minutes)

If groups are going to be working together on a long-term project or for more than a brief activity together, they will benefit from having a common purpose or team goals. Give them a framework for goal-setting. For example, their goals need to be positive, specific, measurable, and agreed upon by the whole group. Have teams record and post their two to four top goals on a flip-chart pad. Ask team leaders to announce the goals to the larger group.

Once you've established the foundation described above, many activities can

help groups become a team. The key elements are common purpose, clear pathways, sufficient resources, and a realistic time-frame.

Quick Picks and Instant Groups

In a brief presentation, you don't have time for extended democratic processes. In this instance, you'll need to assign tasks and roles quickly. To keep the group moving at a good clip, simply announce your decision to the group in a matter-of-fact and fun way: "The person who will (do the task, start up, etc.) will be the one who..."

- Is wearing the most (or least) amount of jewelry
- Has the longest (or shortest) hair
- Is sitting closest to the door (or window, etc.)
- Has the curliest hair
- Is the team leader for the day
- Has the most (or least amount of buttons)
- Has the shiniest shoes
- Is wearing the most white (or blue, black, etc.)

Of course, there are many permutations this strategy can take. For example, you can say to your group, "Please indicate the person in your group with the curliest hair." Once the audience has picked that person (and has had a good laugh), simply say, "Now, the person to their left is the one who will begin." This adds a bit of surprise element and removes the stigma of being selected. This strategy is best for selecting roles to be played by individuals within small groups; the larger the group, the more potential there is for threat or embarrassment of individuals. Other possible quickie approaches to forming groups include the following:

Numbering

Have everyone number off. Use whatever sequence of numbers you want to achieve your desired group size. For example, if you have 50 participants and you want groups of 5, have participants number off from one to ten. Then ask all ones to group up, all twos, etc. An easy way to accomplish this is to have participants hold their hands up signifying their number and to put their hands down once they've found everyone in their group.

Pets

Break into groups based on the type of pets participants have. If the group size is too large, for example, in the case of dogs or cats, break the categories down further (i.e., dogs over 25 lbs. and dogs under 25 lbs. or solid color cats or tabby cats).

Birthday

Break groups up by birth months. This will generally give you 12 groups, although the sizes may vary quite a bit.

House Numbers

Have participants hold up the number on their fingers of the first digit of their house number (or last digit of their phone number) and find others who are holding up the same number.

Name

Have participants find others whose first or last name starts with the same letter as theirs (name tags suggested).

Clothing

Have participants find others who are wearing the same primary color they are. Top presenters help foster strong collaboration skills and group trust in many ways. Beyond facilitating a variety of team activities, keep your promises, be