

FaxForum Facts



We want to know what you, our readers, think about the major issues in your field and the ways in which we at *Training & Development* can better address them.

FaxForum isn't meant to be scientific. It's a sampling of opinion—a finger in the wind. Each month, we publish the responses to previous FaxForums, plus some informal analysis and commentary, on the back of this page. But right now, you can influence the content of upcoming FaxForums.

Please take a moment to jot down any questions you'd like to see answered in FaxForum. _____

Thank you.

How To Respond

Fax the completed page to Ryann Ellis at 703/683-9203. Or mail to "FaxForum," *Training & Development*, ASTD, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. ASTD Online subscribers can reply electronically; "FaxForum" is in the "Using ASTD Online" directory, under "Polls and Questionnaires."

HEARD ANY GOOD JOKES LATELY?

Two cannibals were eating a clown. One said to the other "This tastes funny." Made you smile, right? Some trainers like to stockpile jokes to use when opening a training session or a presentation. Are you one of them?

- 1.** Do you open your training sessions with a joke?
 Frequently
 Sometimes
 Never
- 2.** What kind of humor works best for you?
 Shaggy dog stories
 Business-related jokes
 Puns
 Celebrity jokes
 Other (specify) _____

- 7.** Do you use any of the following techniques to open a training session?
 Games
 Simulations
 Stories
 Calisthenics
 Participants introduce themselves
 other (specify) _____

- 3.** Have you ever had a joke fall flat?
 Yes No

- 4.** How did you recover?

- 5.** Do you remember jokes you've heard?
 Yes No

- 6.** What's your favorite icebreaker joke? (If it's too long to fit this space, please put it on a separate page.)

- 8.** Are there situations when humor is not appropriate in a training session or presentation?
 Yes No
 If yes, please explain _____

Say goodnight, Gracie.

Optional:

Name _____
Organization _____
Title _____
Address _____
Telephone # _____
Fax # _____

Turn the Page for the Results of the April Survey...

APRIL'S QUESTION:

DO YOU GET ENOUGH TRAINING?

WE ALL KNOW about the proverbial shoemaker whose family goes shoeless and assume this analogy holds true for many professions. But unless some of you trainers out there didn't fess up, it appears you do practice what you preach.

Ninety-five percent of you indicated you've taken some kind of training within the past year. In fact, it's easy to conclude that you love to be trained because all of you rated yourself either a willing learner or an eager participant (and in some cases both).

Exactly what you received training on this past year varies. Course topics included management development, diversity, time management, creative training techniques, and, of course, computer skills. You also vary in how you like your training delivered, with classroom style and one-on-one coaching both garnering 24 percent of the votes. Following a close third was self-directed learning with 20 percent. Lower still was computer-based training at 16 percent.

Most of you checked several of the listed delivery modes. One respondent explained "I like a mix of techniques—lecture for knowledge and hands-on for real-life application," also adding, "I get bored sitting in a classroom for extended periods."

You were all over the map when asked how often you use a formal process or tool to assess your values, purpose, or goals. (See graph.) One conscientious person says he rewrites his resume each quarter to determine his marketability. Then he wisely added, "If my marketability has not im-

proved since the last rewrite, perhaps my value to my company has not increased."

When you do choose a particular process for a self-assessment, you most often turn to either an assessment tool or to a trusted friend, colleague, or partner (33 percent each). One respondent said he prefers to avoid "tools" per se; instead, he takes a self-reflective, inward approach and lets "circumstances at, or near at hand, provoke thoughts and insights."

The most provocative question we asked you, though, was "Do trainers make good trainees?" And boy did we get an earful. For starters, you're pretty close to divided on this issue, with 50 percent saying yes and 40 percent saying no. (Ten percent of you waffled with a "depends.")

Those of you who think trainers make good trainees tend to share the opinion of Diane Ullius, president of Word Tamers, Arlington, Virginia, "We know the importance of 'suspending disbelief,' and we know how demand-

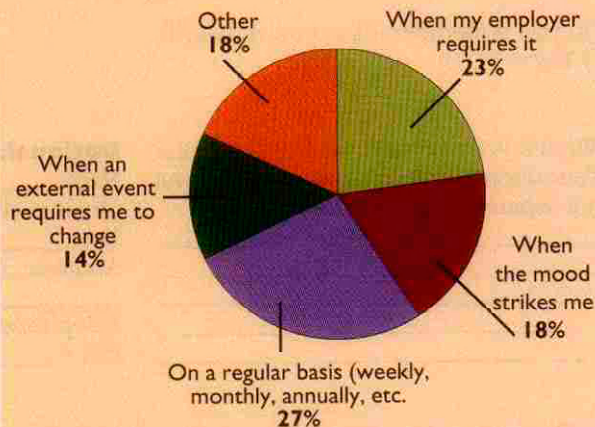
ing the work is." Another empathetic respondent said, "We expect input when we train, so I like to provide it when I'm a trainee." This same respondent also added that her appraising eye does look for other ways the material could have been presented.

It's that critical—or appraising—eye, though, that many of you said gets in the way of being a good trainee. Craig Lake with Comp Health, Salt Lake City, Utah, says that most trainers spend too much time critiquing the presenter or the material, and many try to control the class, doing "all that stuff that we don't like participants to do when we run the class."

Carol D Whisnant with Arizona Public Service Company, Phoenix, Arizona, is even more to the point: "Some trainers think that no one can teach them anything." He shares his experiences with his train-the-trainer program: "The subject matter experts from the line organizations are ideal students. They are eager to learn a new skill, they see the value in the training, they participate, and they perform well during and after training. The full-time instructors are the students from hell. They are conceited, not eager to learn, do not see the value, participate only when absolutely necessary, and do not necessarily perform well during or after training."

Taking a more middle-of-the-road approach on this question is Gerald Mueller with Pacific Office Automation, Portland, Oregon. "If a trainer knows the subject matter already, he or she may be a critic, kibitzer, or a disrupter by overly challenging the instructor." Perhaps, then, the wafflers are right after all; it just depends.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE A FORMAL PROCESS OR TOOL TO ASSESS YOUR VALUES, PURPOSE, OR GOALS?



Please visit ASTD's new Web site at <http://www.astd.org>