

TRAINING 101

You may be new to the training crew, but your trainees want no excuses—they expect expert instruction. To help you deliver training at its best, here are tips and techniques from the pros . . .

Get a Good Group Response

By JEANIE MARSHALL

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1 Arrange your room for interaction.

Round tables take the emphasis off the trainer and promote participant interaction. Tables set up to form a square or chairs set in a circle establish equality between participants and trainer and promote group discussion. U shapes, too, promote interaction, but establish the trainer as authority.

2 Use flipcharts.

On a flipchart, write questions to be answered or sentences to be completed. They can pertain to attitude, learning goals, content or even trivia. As participants enter the training room, ask them to respond directly on the flipchart. This activity is an ideal ice breaker. It can also be used during the training to emphasize the importance of active involvement.

3 Allow time for getting acquainted.

This helps build a climate of trust and makes it easier for participants to relax and respond.

4 Prepare a program book or handouts.

Design your handouts in ways that promote note-taking and distribute them before you begin speaking. Writing involves the learners. You do them no favors by saying, "You don't need to take notes; I'll give you handouts on everything later."

5 Start with a self-scoring assessment.

Phrase the questions simply enough to involve all your participants. If possible, also design the assessment to give you useful information about the learners.

6 Ask a question everyone can answer.

Early in the program, ask each participant to respond to a question or comment. It may be a get-acquainted question such as, "What is the most important learning goal you have for this workshop?" or one related to the specific content area, such as, "How do you expect your subordinates to react to this new procedure?"

Silence is far from golden in a workshop designed for response. Keep your trainees tuned in and talkative with these simple, successful techniques.

7 Ask questions that can be answered by a show of hands.

A simple, nonthreatening method for getting response is to ask questions of the whole group. Each series of questions should enable everyone to answer at least once. Ask, for example, "How many of you have been managers or supervisors for fewer than six months? More than six months? More than two years?"

8 Count to ten.

When posing a question to the group, count silently to ten before restating the question, answering it, asking a second question or moving on. When you demand speedy responses, some learners will feel inadequate and discouraged about participating. By allowing more time, you show that you value all types of involvement—silent and thoughtful as well as vocal and immediate.

9 Allow thinking time.

When stating a problem or asking a question, ask the participants to jot down a few notes before anyone responds. This gives those who are slower in responding an opportunity to go through the thinking process, even if they don't actually speak. It also allows deeper thinking, leading to less obvious responses.

10 Ask what, not if.

The automatic "Any questions?" is best replaced by "What questions do you have?" Better still, state, "Please take a few moments to think about what I said and see what questions you have."

11 Use buzz groups.

Divide the participants into groups of four or five and ask a provocative question. While you personally will not hear from everyone, each participant will have the chance to speak. When you regroup, try to call on a member of each buzz group so that each participant feels represented.

12 Listen.

Your body language, facial expressions and words reveal how much you are listening. Show you are interested in every answer.

13 Don't get stuck.

Stay too long on one activity and participants will lose enthusiasm. They'll do the same with a too-long lecture. Spice-up and vary your training techniques; you'll keep your group's attention and you'll get a bigger, better response.

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