

# IDEAS THAT WORK

If you would like to share a working "idea" with other members of the profession, please submit it to: *Training and Development Journal*, P.O. Box 5307, Madison, WI 53705.

---

---

## "LET'S GUILLOTINE THE HEAD TABLE"

---

---

I read recently of a meeting planner who hired a group of actors from the Boston Shakespeare Company — solely to brighten up "the tedious introduction of head-table guests." The idea called for the actors to circulate among the audience and then introduce the head table VIPs, in entertaining substitution for the traditional ceremonious rhetoric of "and now to your left and my right, let's welcome

another distinguished person. . . ."

I suppose that's a good idea. But I'd like to suggest another: Let's do away with the head table altogether!

I believe anyone ever stuck up there, above the multitude, isolated between strangers, with a tablecloth and miles of space between them and the babel below, will agree.

The "head table" (I don't even like the term because it implies something special) is particularly onerous to the chosen ones who are to deliver "the speeches" which may or may not justify their position on the dais.

I find myself uncomfortably spending as little time "up there" as possible. I don't want to eat, because I'm *working*, getting pumped up for all those folks who are hoping I'll have something worthwhile to say. What I don't want to do is play with my Chicken Kiev or invent polite small talk with one or two other honored individuals who are forced to share the same restlessness caused by being on display.

Far better to be *with the people*, where you can sense the vibes and interests of the audience you are part of (or want to be). Your dinner partner down there won't mind if you just sip some coffee and leave to get yourself ready to give "the speech". . . .

When did the dreaded head table first appear in history? Was it with the Monarchy? The Romans? The First Head Cavepeople?

It doesn't matter much, does it? The fact is that we perpetuate the tradition today because "we've always done it" . . . "it's expected" . . . "it's formal custom." But the bottom-line result is a symbol that "those people are above you" — and *that* notion is out of date, out of touch, boring, and dumb.

Isn't it time to return to the main floor — where the people are? Obligatory introductions can always be handled by the MC — calling on guests to arise from their chairs. ("Wow, those people are at my table — and they're important!")

Isn't it time to celebrate Participatory Democracy in our formal meetings — for everyone? The audience? The speakers? The VIPs?

The idea is long overdue. Together, let's guillotine the head table! — *Kevin O'Sullivan, ASTD*

---

---

## "THE PAUSE THAT TEACHES"

---

---

"For something that is absolutely free," says one media developer, "the *pause* is vastly underused." Naturally, any slide presentation designed for large audiences will not require periodic pauses for review, testing or task completion. But, in so many applications, the "pause" can contribute appreciably to the overall effectiveness of a training program.

The results of a study reported in *Business Week* on retention as a measure of training effectiveness speak highly of systems that incorporate a programmable "pause" capability.

### *Trainers Learn Only:*

16% of what they read

20% of what they see

30% of what they are told

50% of what they see and are told

70% of what they see, are told and respond to

90% when they also do a specific directed function

If you're not doing so already, why not program pauses into your next presentation? The number of programmed pauses can be unlimited as can the length of each pause. — *Charles Bessler Co.*

## EARN YOUR DEGREE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

As a midcareer professional, you might be closer to obtaining your advanced degree than you expect — and you don't necessarily have to attend formal classes to complete courses of study.

Graduate programs leading to degrees at the American International Open University (AIOU), St. Louis, give credit for experience and company training and allow transfer of credits for courses satisfactorily completed elsewhere. No on-campus residency is required.

Individuals enrolled at AIOU work with an Advisory Committee of experts from academia and the profession to design an individualized Learning Plan tailored to meet your personal and career goals. Assisting your competency-based professional development is our goal. You may begin any time. For more information write:

American International Open University, 7710 Carondelet Avenue, Suite 505, St. Louis, Missouri 63105.

Circle No. 478 on Reader Service Card