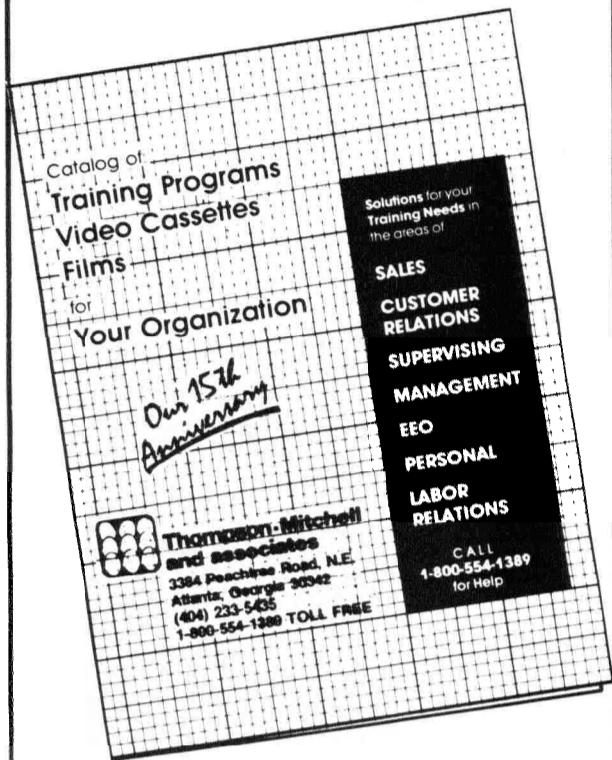


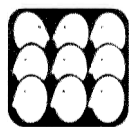
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How to

# Use Films in Training

By JOHN P. FARIS

Films are used in training for a number of reasons. A well selected film can vary the pace of the training day, capture attention, provide comic relief, offer entertainment, drive home a point, illustrate concepts that cannot be readily observed, provide the opportunity to learn from a recognized expert and so on. But a film can never substitute for an instructor. A film may be a useful tool, but only the instructor can tie film content to learning objectives.

There is more to using a film effectively than threading the projector and turning it on. Using films effectively requires selecting the film, planning its use, preparing the audience and following up. Each step must be executed carefully to achieve maximum benefits so that the film serves as more than an entertaining diversion or break.

## Film selection

Before selecting a film, a clear understanding of the film's purpose is needed. Why do you want to use a film? What points do you want to make? Are there other means for making the same point that might be more effective?

Once the purpose is defined, the selection process can begin. Three sources for film selection are films you have seen used before, films others have

recommended and films you have read about in catalogs or promotional material. The best source is the familiar—films you have seen used successfully. Film recommendations are useful, but individual tastes need to be factored into your evaluation of the recommendation. Libraries and catalogs classify films, but these are not always accurate or useful. There is often a significant difference between the description of a film and how it actually shows. Also, some films, such

## Figure 1— Key Steps in Using Films for Training

### Selection

- What purpose is the film to serve?
- How can I find the right film?

### Preparation

- Preview twice
- Take notes
- Develop handouts or other learning aids
- Prepare discussion

### Using Films

- Introduce the film
- Challenge the trainees
- Screen the film
- Start discussion with the challenge
- Review the remainder of the film's main points
- Help the trainees critique the film
- Provide a summary and conclusion
- Use the film's content in trainee evaluation

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as *Twelve Angry Men*, are multiple-use films that can be used successfully in ways that a librarian or promotion writer would not anticipate. Film selection is usually more time consuming than it appears on the surface.

### Preparation

If there is one inviolable rule in using films in training, it is never to screen an unpreviewed film. View the film in advance, take notes and decide if it serves your purpose well. The notes will also be useful later in leading discussions.

It is often necessary to preview the film twice or more to identify subtle points you may miss the first time, or your evaluation of a film might be distorted by your mood, tension level or fatigue at the initial screening. It may be appropriate to prepare supporting handout materials that detail important aspects of the film. Films are usually shown in the dark, move fast and are one-way communication devices. A handout can be an ideal reinforcement tool.

### Using the film

The role of the film is to supplement and support, not replace the instructor. The trainer, prepared in adequate depth, is the real learning facilitator. Even the best film or film series needs to be placed in perspective and discussed through the facilitating offices of the trainer. To ensure optimal results from the film, the trainer should follow three steps.

■ *Introduce the film.* Provide a synopsis of the film. Don't be afraid to be critical, but do not apologize for it. Merely because it is old does not mean that it is bad. Tell the trainees the purpose of the film, the general order it follows and its strengths and weaknesses. Explain the specific things you want the viewers to notice. This sets expectations, helps viewers pay attention and provides an opportunity for self-administered reinforcement.

Another way of directing viewers' attention is to appeal to the interests of the audience. For example, a favorite training film of mine has several scenes filmed in the city in which I often conduct training. I point out that the background scenes in the film will come from their city, and I want them to tell me the film's shooting location and where the camera was set. This attention getter, which admittedly has nothing to do with the learning point of the film, rivets attention to the screen. If possible, challenge trainees with a statement such as "by the

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end of this film you should be able to tell me if you are an X type or a Y type.”

■ *Screen the film.* Cue the film so that it starts with the first scene. Screening the leader, count down, copyright message and credits in a training session is unprofessional and wastes valuable training time. Stopping the film in the middle to build off its points is acceptable, but more than two interruptions tend to destroy the continuity of the film and become disruptive to the viewers. Speaking over the sound track, however, is ineffective and rude in all but the most unusual cases. When the last scene is completed, turn off the projector. You can run out the tail and rewind later.

■ *Discussing the film.* Once the film is over, give the group a few moments to readjust to the lights and the classroom environment. It is important to start the debriefing discussion now. A film without a discussion can be largely wasted, and this is the time for reinforcement and closure, not after a break. Start the discussion with a reference to the challenge: “So, do you think you are an

X or a Y type?” Then wait for a response or call on a trainee. Ask the respondent why, and help tie responses to the film.

With the discussion of the challenge complete, review the remainder of the film from your notes, writing the major points on a flipchart or blackboard. It may be appropriate to review the illustrations used in the film. Film scenarios can be role-played by trainees, and models in the film can be reproduced on slides or handouts and discussed in depth. Encourage trainees to participate and to search their memories for real-life illustrations of the points made in the film for additional reinforcement and transference of the experience.

Ask the trainees to critique the film. In addition to providing you with feedback regarding viewers’ perceptions and the effectiveness of the film, critiquing also gives trainees practice in critical thinking and evaluation.

The content of the film can be part of any knowledge testing that is being used for evaluation, but be sure to tell the participants about this use of the film in

advance. Many people have been taught through the years that films are free time for which they will not be held accountable. You may have to teach viewers how to learn from a film and how to be an active film watcher and listener.

Finally, summarize the film and its discussion by repeating your reason for using it in the training program, and conclude with an explanation of what trainees should gain from the experience.

## Reminders

Films can be fun and interesting diversions in a long training day, and they can do a good job of presenting important information and demonstrating things that otherwise are difficult to observe. But films are limited in what they can do. They cannot lead classroom discussions, hold students accountable or transfer the illustrations in the film to the here-and-now world of the student. Films cannot substitute for a capable and experienced instructor, but they *can* be an excellent supplement to a well-designed training program led by a prepared facilitator.



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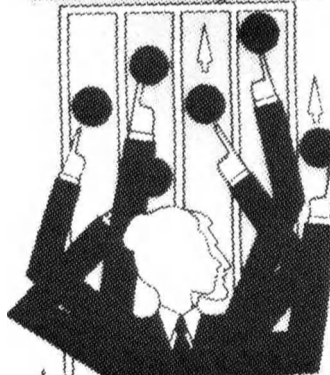
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