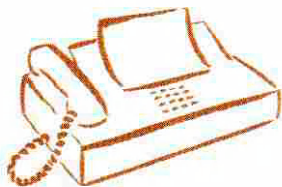


FaxForum Facts



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."

How Self-Directed Are You?

Being self-directed is a key workplace skill. Try this quiz to get a fix on your self-directedness. Naturally it's self-scoring.

1. Have you had a formal, self-directed learning experience on the job?

- Yes
- No

b. If yes, what was your comfort level with it?

- High
- Medium
- Low

c. What contributed to your comfort or discomfort?

2. Do you usually self-direct your own learning on the job?

- Always
- Never
- Sometimes

3. What is your most recent on-the-job self-directed learning project? Please describe.

4. Do you self-direct your own learning off the job?

- Always
- Never
- Sometimes

5. What is your most recent off-the-job self-directed learning project? Please describe.

6. Here is a list of characteristics of highly self-directed learners. Which ones characterize you? Rate yourself on each on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest).

- Self-confident
- Inner-directed
- Reflective
- Achievement motivated
- Accommodating
- Creative holistic thinker
- Not dogmatic

7. Here is a list of skills of individuals with high levels of self-direction. How do your skills match these? Rate yourself on each on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest).

- Strong goal setter
- Good decision maker
- Accurate observer
- Effective listener
- High reading level

8. Is self-directedness related to:

- Age
- Sex
- IQ
- None of the above

Optional:

Name _____

Organization _____

Title _____

Address _____

Telephone # _____

Fax # _____

E-mail _____

This month's FaxForum was submitted by George Piskurich, consultant, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

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

JULY'S QUESTION:

Heard Any Good Jokes Lately?

TRAINERS LOVE ICEBREAKERS and jokes are one of their favorites, according to our survey. One third of respondents open sessions frequently with a joke; a third sometimes do. The only warm-up more popular than a joke is having participants introduce themselves. Some respondents (33 percent) never start a session with a joke. Instead, they may use one of these popular openers: a story (29 percent) or a game (17 percent). No one admitted to using calisthenics, but John Konsellman, a training consultant in Colorado Springs, likes to have people exchange seats or move from the back of the room to the front.

Among the jokesters, most think business humor works best, followed by puns. A few people reported success with shaggy dog stories. Many people said that they make spontaneous jokes related to what's being discussed. "Humor is everywhere. It should not be artificial," wrote one respondent.

Renee Silvers, a training resource engineer with Hewlett-Packard, likes "mindboggling." Here's a favorite. "Since the passage of a new Canon Law on November 9, 1986, can a Roman Catholic man marry his widow's sister?"

Patty Settles, a training specialist in Denver, opens with "I'm from the human resources department. I'm here to help." (Why is that funny?)

Almost everyone has had a joke fall flat. When that happens, many people recover by joking about it. "I heard that joke from someone in the accounting (or legal, or whatever) department." Some people just move on as if nothing happened. Scott Simmerman from Taylors, South Carolina, warns that jokes don't always travel well. One of his favorite cartoons so perplexed an audience in Hong Kong that he asked people to discuss its meaning. The group came up with 30 different interpretations.

Jokes just aren't appropriate in some situations, say 75 percent of the respondents. "Don't tell jokes in diversity training or when you must cover serious topics such as workplace violence," cautions one. "I oppose jokes," says another, "because there's the possibility of offending someone. Joke telling is bad business."

Marilyn Nyman, a communications consultant in Horsham, Pennsylvania, sent us this advice for successful joke telling:

- ▶ Keep your humor believable.
- ▶ Don't tell a story if the punch line

doesn't make a smooth transition to your real subject matter.

- ▶ Tell only G-rated jokes or stories that are appropriate for everyone in the audience.

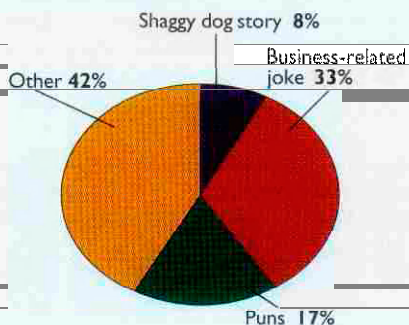
Here's a joke tip from a respondent: Before summarizing say, "As the little dog said when the train ran over its tail, 'It won't be long now.'"

If you need a joke about delegating work, try this one: A poor man rings the doorbell at a mansion. To the wealthy man that answers, he says, "I haven't worked in days. Do you have any odd jobs for some cash?" The rich man says, "You can paint the porch. Here's some paint. When you're finished, I'll come out and evaluate your work." Twenty minutes later, the poor man knocks on the door again. "I'm finished. Would you like to see how I have done so you can pay me?" The rich man looks at his watch and remarks, "That sure was fast. I thought it would take you much longer to paint the porch." To which the poor man replies, "First, I'm pretty good with a paint brush. Second, you don't have a porch, you have a BMW."

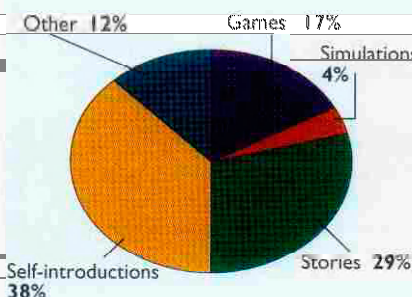
And from a British respondent, this joke: Question: How many surrealist painters does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: Fish. (He admits it's obscure.)

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

WHAT KIND OF JOKE WORKS BEST FOR YOU?



WHICH TECHNIQUE DO YOU USE TO OPEN A TRAINING SESSION?



HAVE YOU EVER HAD A JOKE FALL FLAT?

