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T O D A Y

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The Transformational Trainer

BY KATHERINE EITEL

It's 2:30 PM, but it feels like 6:00 PM. You've been in this seminar since sometime this morning. While it's been full of good information, you're on overload and squirming in your seat.

Can you relate? We all can. And when you try to share your carefully written notes at next week's team meeting, your fellow team members are likely to feel the same way.

It's 4:00 PM, but it feels like 2:00 PM. This day can't possibly be over! Where has the time gone? You were just getting started. That's strange. There was no 300-slide PowerPoint presentation nor a 20-page handout. Yet you've learned great, useable information. You feel empowered and inspired to use it tomorrow. This was definitely one of the best speakers you've heard in years.

Data dump or inspired training? Which one would you rather sit through? If you're like most of us, it is inspired training which results in participant-centered learning. Confucius knew what he was talking about in 451 B.C. when he said, "What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand."

Do you want to breathe life back into your team meetings and training? Then make the shift from dentist/manager/lecturer to team trainer. Take the information and skills you want to relay to your team members and transform training from instructor-led teaching to participant-centered learning.

Bob Pike, an expert in adult learning and training, uses the 90/20/8 rule in his training sessions. No module runs more than 90 minutes, the pace changes every 20 minutes, and he finds ways to involve people in the content every 8 minutes. This is based on Tony Buzan's book, *Use Both Sides of Your Brain*. Buzan finds the average adult can listen with understanding for only 90 minutes and can listen with retention for 20 minutes at a time.

In a two-hour team meeting, you have six 20-minute sections. Following is a simple formula to turn those sections into interactive learning modules that keep your team's interest and help members truly learn rather than just listen.

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Content, Activity, Test (CAT)

Content

“Cut content” may be the more accurate phrase! There is no end to the content you might wish to teach – such as improving phone skills or taking better x-rays, completing chart entries or understanding the practice’s statistics and goals. Your objective is to have the team do more than simply understand and agree. The key is to help members retain, perform, and replicate.

Whatever the content, first break it into small, manageable chunks. For example, if you want to improve phone skills, divide that topic into four sections such as 1) introduction and rapport, 2) identification of patient concerns and needs, 3) offering appropriate solutions, and 4) getting necessary information and resell value. Prepare the content to be taught in these smaller modules.

Activity

In advance, select a participation exercise for each of the four topic sections. After teaching/discussing one of the modules, create an exercise in which the team members can get their hands on the material themselves. For example, you might do an exercise called “Each One Teach One,” in which participants teach their partners their new skills as if they had not heard the lesson before.

For the second topic section, you might have each participant go to the board and add a possible question to ask a patient on the phone, creating a practice list of great questions.

For the third topic section, create a “triad” with three participants in each group. One will act as a patient, one as the team member, and one as an observer. They role-play an easy scenario and rotate. This allows for a triple review, and everyone gets the hot seat once.

For the last topic section, use a “dice roll,” in which participants roll dice and, for every number they roll, recall something they have learned or will commit to doing better.

Through activity, everyone has fun, learns, participates, and is engaged in mind and body.

Test

There are many kinds of testing mechanisms. Offer “fill in the blank” reviews with group-designed questions based on the material, role play exercises, or even tape yourselves. You can even hire a “mystery patient” service. It is in the final piece that you not only test the learning of the participants, but, more importantly, the effectiveness of the trainer. If your group continues to struggle and fail at passing the test, you should look hard at your ability to train and relay information.

We can all recall at least one teacher in our lives who had a tremendous impact on our learning. Most likely, that teacher was different from the rest. She somehow made the material come alive



“Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theater.”

Gail Godwin

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and helped and encouraged you to continue to struggle until you finally succeeded.

Help your team (students) get their hands on the material more often and more quickly. Stop doing the data dump and help the material come alive for them. Encourage them through the struggle of learning something new. If you want inspired learning, don't simply look to your students to become better learners, become a more inspired trainer and teacher. You'll find you're all looking forward to those staff meetings! τ



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