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Keep 'Em Engaged & Attentive: Having Effective Interactivity in Every Program

Why Add Interactivity?

- To effectively use adult learning principles.
 - Adults are autonomous & self-directed.
 - Must actively involve adults in learning process
 - Adults learn best under moderate stress
 - They are goal-oriented, relevancy oriented, practical.
- Experiential experience is most effective at making information relevant to participant.
- Allows you to involve many different learning styles.
- Is a way of managing the energy in the room (as well as your own energy).
- Since the way people play games is the same way they respond to situations in real life that have similar emotional triggers, it helps to encourage participants to explore their thoughts, emotions and actions during the game. This helps them better understand how they are in the “real world.”
- Gives people from different departments and management levels a chance to know each other.
- Is a way to give everyone a voice.

Preparation..... The Importance of Program Design

- Have objectives for each activity. Ask yourself, “Why put this game/activity in?” “Why here?” “What follow-up questions might be relevant?”
- **CAUTION**: Don’t get stuck in expecting a particular outcome or answer.
- If using an *ICEBREAKER*, make it relevant. Remember that adults are goal oriented.
- You don’t need every participant to be actively involved in every activity. Spectators can be as involved as players. Think of how involved you feel watching sports, movies or live theater.
- Be aware of the status issues that will be present. Will management be part of the program? If so, will they participate or are they there just to observe? Will participants want to sit with those they always sit with?
- Use duos, triads and other smaller group interactions. This is especially crucial with a large group.
- Mix up the kinds of interactivity in the program.
- If possible, use pre program survey to help participants feel involved. Online examples of free survey templates: [www. zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com), www.surveymonkey.com
- An effective room arrangement for interactivity is horseshoe rounds (round table with folks all sitting facing front).
- Develop your own personal tool kit ---- Include activities, props, markers, debrief questions, responses to interrupters.
- Increase your knowledge about interactive training techniques, adult learning, facilitation skills and group process (EX: Teams are said to be in one of four stages known as forming, norming , storming, performing. Each stage has its own characteristics

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WHERE ARE YOU STUCK?

Managing the Session

- As session leader/facilitator you bring KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, and YOURSELF into the session.
- Get people used to seeing you as an “involver.” Have things for folks to do as they come in. Examples: Word puzzles, modeling clay, pipe cleaners, Legos, markers to make name tents interesting.
- Consider demonstrating the activity with a volunteer before assigning it to the group.
- Make connections from activity to real life situation. Use what comes up in the activity to spark inquiry and discussion. Keep cycling discussion to relevant issues. (See debrief questions.)
- Don’t wait until the very end of a longer program to have participants draw inferences or conclusions. At break time or lunch time, have people take a minute or two to reflect on something that was relevant, useful or insightful. This can be done individually, in small groups or around a table.

Dealing with Disrupters

- Situation is similar to a heckler in a comedy club, presenting a challenge to your authority. Can be overt (ex: Experts trying to prove you wrong.) or covert (ex: Resisters who “don’t wanna participate.”)
- Your most effective approach is to be objective, bold AND polite.
- If you feel things are getting out of control, take a 5-minute break. Tell participants to sit in different seats when they come back.
- Think of yourself as a traffic cop.
- “Parking Lot” is a facilitation concept that is helpful to keep moving forward without dismissing participants’ opinions. Use a sheet of flipchart paper titled PARKING LOT onto which ideas that are out of the scope of the session are collected. If time permits, address them. If not,

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turn them over to the client (maybe it can become the basis of your next presentation for them.). Set up “parking lot” idea at start of session.

Types of Disrupters (and possible interventions)

One study found that 95% of disrupters feel unheard or not listened to; 3% can't stop and 2% have a destructive life script.

Interrupters: Jump in quickly and say something like "Hold on a minute, let him speak for himself."

Experts- Acknowledge their point. Agree to disagree. Try, "That's your opinion, and there may be other valid points of view."

Dominants- “We’d like to get some other perspectives.”

Ramblers- “Can I ask you to give us the essence of your idea.”

Introverts- Ask something like, “Sally, anything you want to add?”

Resisters- During the break, ask why the lack of participation.

Use rest of group as sounding board. If someone is complaining, “this is not important to us,” ask, “What do others think

Key Debrief Questions

1. Did the game work? Were you successful? What made the game successful? What kept it from being successful, in your eyes?
2. What's important to the group- the rules or the flow of process?
3. Would you share with us what went through your mind at that moment?
(Not for judgment but for objective viewing)
4. What brought you to that conclusion?
5. What was _____ (adjective) about it? Ex: What was surprising? What was it that bothered you?
6. Did anyone else feel that way?
7. How do you know that? What's your evidence? (if you're surmising about someone else's response or reaction).
8. What does that give?
9. What is the relevance/ do you see the relevance to your work (or life). How does this mirror your situation (or behavior)?
10. What insights did you gain? What did you learn about yourself?
11. What, if anything, will you do differently as a result of this insight?

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Resources

Adult Learning

<http://adulthood.about.com/cs/learningtheory/>

<http://www.newhorizons.org/lifelong/workplace/billington.htm>

Activities, Ideas & Fun Stuff

<http://www.effectivemeetings.com/teams/participation/participation.asp>

<http://www.trainerswarehouse.com/>

<http://www.thelearningweb.net/games-training-games.html>

<http://www.training-games.com/>

<http://www.training-games.com/newsletter/NewsletterIssue17.html>

<http://www.thiagi.com/freebies-and-goodies.html>

<http://www.bobpikegroup.com>

Books

Active Training: A Handbook of Techniques, Designs, Case Examples, and Tips by Mel Silberman & Carol Auerbach

Training to Imagine: Practical Improvisational Techniques to Enhance Creativity, Teamwork, Leadership and Learning by Kat Koppett

Playing Along: Group Learning Activities Borrowed from Improvisation Theater by Izzy Gesell

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