

Subject: Tips For Training The Trainer

To All:

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TRAINING THE TRAINER
A Dozen Do's for Daily Discussions,

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I had an alternate title for this article: Safety Talks and BS Walks! (BS stands for Bored Student—What did you think it meant?!) It's true, though, isn't it? It seems that more often than not, the moment a safety trainer stands up to speak, the trainee yawns. So what's a trainer to do?

12 Ways to Stifle the Yawns

How do you run a safety meeting that will keep your trainees' attention? There are many answers to that question. Here are just a dozen.

1. **Keep It On Time.** Everyone's time is important. If the meeting doesn't start and end on time, people will start showing up late and may not attend at all. Respect their time and they'll (hopefully) respect yours by paying attention.
2. **Keep It Short.** The longer the meeting lasts, the less effective it becomes. People have short attention spans. Remember the "KISS" method—keep it short and simple. (Yes, there is another version, but we're being polite here.)
3. **Keep It Focused.** Don't ramble. Stay "on message." Just say what matters most—the message.
4. **Keep It Topical.** Make sure that the topics are directly applicable to the daily/weekly operation/tasks. Make sure that the meeting relates to the job and what's going on. Adult learners of all stripes need to have their training apply to their work—and I mean directly apply. Make sure that your lesson or example is on the same tools, same tasks, same sites, same jobs and same situations workers face. Get the idea?
5. **Keep It Timely.** Remember the point I made that the topic you're training on must directly apply? Boy, I hope so—it was number 4 above. Well, this is the corollary to it: Adult learners need to have their training be

of an immediate need, not for future needs. Make sure that you're covering only things that are happening (or are about to or just did happen). Adults don't want training about matters that don't matter.

6. Keep It Fresh. Don't do the same stuff repeatedly. Either cover new items or cover old items in new ways. You know the old cliché that doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results is an example of insanity? It applies to safety training. If you provide the same old training expecting safety performance to improve, you're nuts.

7. Keep It Organized. Take a page from the Boy Scouts and be prepared. Don't leave things to the last minute or people will pick up on that and your presentation will lose its perceived value. If you "wing it" your trainees might "take wing" and fly away. Again, it comes down to respect—respect for them, respect for you and respect for the subject matter. Disorganized = disrespect.

8. Keep It Open. Ready for another cliché? Minds are like parachutes: They only work when they're open. Be open to attendees' input before, during and after the meeting. Adult learners want to be directly involved with setting the agenda—so let them be! When they're involved in the training, they're engaged in it. And that's what you want.

- Before training, they can help you craft the important message(s).
- During training, they can help with validation of the hazards and solutions.
- After training, they're the ones that always want to discuss something with you about the training.

9. Keep It Flexible. Let attendees ask questions. If the group suddenly wants to change the topic and it's a relevant topic to site safety and health—go for it! Their expression of a preference shows that they're engaged in the training and that's what you want. Failure by you to address relevant sincere questions is to risk alienating trainees, shutting down discussions and giving them a distaste for the training and for health and safety. Do you really need any more reasons?

10. Keep It Diverse. People get tired of regularity. Change something about the meeting so people will look forward to it. Change the venue, change the set up, change the topic, change the trainer, change the teaching method, change the message, heck change the whole blessed thing (I bet you thought I'd say the whole enchilada or the whole nine yards, didn't you?).

11. Keep It Safe and Healthy. Don't engage in any unsafe or unhealthy behaviors during the meeting. At best, you'll be sending a mixed message; but more likely you will lose any respect your trainees had for the training, and you could get hurt or ill. My Dad used to tell me, "Do as I say, not as I do." You know what? I did as he did. We learn by watching others. How about a great quote? "Your actions thunder so loudly, I can hardly hear what you're saying." Henry David Thoreau.

12. Keep It Lively. Don't be a talking head—do something. Demonstrate the safe behavior, get them involved and moving. Adults learn best when doing things. They also will pay better attention if there's a "show"—so give them one. A good trainer is 1/3 teacher, 1/3 coach and 1/3 entertainer.

13. Keep It Well Fed. People love to be fed. Consider bringing or providing some refreshments. Good food = good training! I hate it when I get to a class and the client has not provided the obligatory coffee and donuts for the students! And instead of donuts, maybe try something healthy like yogurts, fresh fruit and whole grain bagels.

Conclusion

Well, I hope that you've enjoyed my baker's dozen of do's. There are many other do's (I have a list of 135 do's and a similar number of don'ts, but maybe that'll have to wait for another article). If you have any that you'd like to share, I'd welcome hearing from you. Be healthy, be safe and good training all! Jonathan (aka "Trainerman")

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