



## Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

**Topic:** Well Schooled Meetings

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### Welcome

September spells back to school and this issue of Tips for Innovative Meetings deals with training meetings. If you are ready to hit the delete button because you don't deal with training meetings, please **STOP!**

I believe there are some flashes of inspiration and ideas for you too. I prefer to think about training as a process of learning. And I think all meetings have a learning element in them. From Webster comes these definitions:

**Training** - *To form by instruction, discipline or drill*

**Learning** - *To come to be able and to realize*

Adults in meetings don't want to be trained; they want to learn!

Whether you are specifically "training" or not, surely you are interested in having people retain and "realize" your message. Don't we all want people to leave meetings with new skills, new attitudes, and new information?

Help people learn. **Pop Quiz:** Three days after a training session, how much of the information will a typical attendee have retained?

If you guessed 50%, you should read on. If you guessed 30% you should read this issue. (Answer appears in the first section.)

And if anyone has any suggestions for dealing with middle school and middle-school children (girls!!), send them my way. On the homefront, I have been busy adjusting to a new school schedule, new homework load, etc. that accompanies the change from elementary school to middle school. This is my excuse for why this issue is a bit late. What will happen to my work habits when my daughter starts dating...

Sue

[Sue Tinnish](#)

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### Table of Contents

1. Life Long Learning
2. Simulate to Stimulate
3. Choices and Options

4. What Fun and Games Buys You
5. Adults in the Classroom
6. Training Homework
7. Lessons Worth Repeating
8. Extra Credit Freebies
9. T.I.M.E. Gone By

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## Life Long Learning is Needed

A key strategy for increasing employee retention and their satisfaction level is to focus on their development.

Employee development focuses on:

1. Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Abilities

(Source: Human Capital Magazine, July/August 2003)

In a "Work Trends" study conducted by Rutgers University, among workers who have received training from their employees, 91% said that the training helped them be more productive at work.

The more Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes (KSA's) are linked to the current organization's needs and goals, the easier it will be to create more satisfied employees who are also more productive.

The question was, "Three days after a training session, how much of the information will a typical attendee have retained?" And the **answer to the Pop Quiz is 10%**. With such a disastrous results, my response is that innovative measures are crucial to make training meetings more valuable to both the individual and the organization.

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## Simulate to Stimulate

Training meetings, like other meetings, suffer from an over-abuse of PowerPoint slides and lecture oriented teaching.

A case study, reported in Trainingmag.com in August 2003, drives home the point. At Kimberly-Clark, the company found that after repeated efforts to teach employees with PowerPoint and meetings, many employees still didn't understand the material. Others got it, but couldn't remember the information three months after they'd learned about.

With limited time and budget, Michael Fisher, Kimberly-Clark's director of organizational effectiveness, created a training event that was part simulation/part game/part video presentations.

The training was about supply chain management. The information was presented visually on a discovery map. Then in small teams, members received roles in a fictional company that was bringing a product to market and they were guided through the

pitfalls of supply chain management. At the end of this role-play employees discovered that a competitor had beaten them to market with a similar product.

This first session served as a springboard to a second discovery map, which guided employees through a discussion about the future of Kimberly-Clark's supply chain. Teams earned points for finding information on the map, and the winning team received key chains or other company logo items. Then employees watched a video message from the CEO and their sector presidents.

In the call-to-action segment of the training, participants suggested ways to eliminate waste and redundancies in Kimberly-Clark's supply chain management to the tune of \$275 million in cost savings.

After the sessions, employees said they finally understood how Kimberly-Clark's supply chain really worked.

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### Choices and Options

The Kimberly-Clark example utilized a combination of techniques. Within these choices, you will have options from the simple to the complex.

- **Games/Exercises**  
Games can be icebreakers or creativity exercises. There are customized board games that teach people specific skills, like financial fundamentals or management. Games can also be video/computer delivered.
- **Simulations**  
At the simplest level a role-play is a simulation. Other simulations are more complex where people assume roles in literal situations (you will be running a company) or more metaphorical situations (you are part of a team climbing a mountain).
- **Informal learning**  
Depending upon the course, the people you meet and work with during a training course can be just as valuable as the information. Fortune Magazine reported that if you ask any GE person about the value of attending Crotonville, the company's fabled leadership institute, the answer always is "The people I met were more important than the courses I took." This example underscores the importance of time for breaks, informal networking, and small group work.
- **Fun**  
A cursory glance may suggest it's all just fun. But the fun can create a positive learning state. Moreover, the element of fun can disguise multiple approaches to different learning styles.

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### What Fun and Games Buys You

Fun and games do work.

The ancient Chinese proverb explains why.

***I hear and I forget  
I see and I remember  
I do and I understand***

These techniques (role plays, simulations, games) fall into a category known as experiential learning or accelerated learning. Oftentimes, people will also call it discovery learning.

The premise is simple: People get engaged and involved so that they internalize and absorb the real learning. They are discovering it for themselves.

Accelerated learning recognizes that different people learn differently. To appeal to a variety of learners, accelerated learning proposes that the dry lecture approach is replaced with a multitude of learning methods and reinforcement techniques. The key is variety, enjoyment and involving the participant.

Dave Meier, director of the Center for Accelerated Learning, promotes accelerated learning as a way to reduce design time and enhance learning time. The ancient Greeks' notions of learning included experience, feedback, and mental engagement. It's only recently that the academic and corporate world has rejected the traditional approach of read-lecture-test in favor of accelerated learning.

Companies like Kimberly-Clark and Rolls Royce are enjoying the benefits of accelerated learning. Harvard Business School uses simulations in their MBA program, executive level and courses in corporate universities.

You can read more about accelerated learning in [The Accelerated Learning Handbook: A Creative Guide to Designing and Delivering Faster, More Effective Training Programs](#) by Dave Meier.

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## **Adults in the Classroom**

Children are sponges. They don't carry pre-conceived knowledge with them. They ask a lot of questions.

Adults are different.

Here are some principles of adult learning. Adults learn best when:

- Material is job relevant
- Material is presented in integrated concepts
- Material is oriented to solving a problem
- Material is visual as well as aural
- They receive positive feedback and reinforcement
- Their experience is valued and recognized
- They have the ability to challenge and be challenged

These principles shape the need for interactive, involving, multi-sensory training

meetings.

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## Training Homework

What would starting school be like without buying new supplies? What would Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events be like without tips?

Here is your homework for innovative training meetings:

1. **Find out about the audience.** Know the company, know the objectives for the training and understand what the audience already knows. You can ask a small group of people before the meeting or survey the attendees during the meeting to get to the true objectives.
2. **Place responsibility on the learner.** Participants play a role in their own learning. They must be open, focused and willing. Start off training sessions with the message that they carry some responsibility for their own learning.
3. **Be aware of generational, cultural and gender differences** in your audience. Generally, it is best to prepare so that you appeal to all learning styles (visual, auditory and kinesthetic). However, if you audience will be heavily weighted with people of a specific generation, culture or gender, make certain that your presenters know this and prepare appropriately.
4. **Use imaginative seating arrangements.** Don't simply rely on classroom or theater style seating. The physical arrangement of the room is powerful and sends a message to participants.
5. **Use color, music, physical activity and other sensory elements** to trigger learning. A comprehensive book on this subject is [Brain-Based Learning](#) by Eric Jensen. He touches on lighting, color, hydration and other elements that affect learning. Also, specifically related to music, use [Training With a Beat: The Teaching Power of Music](#) as a resource. If you are interested in exploring the relationship between movement and memory, Carla Hannaford's book, [Smart Moves: Why Learning Is Not All in Your Head](#) is your best resource.
6. **Start right out of the box.** Create ways to trigger learning. People often arrive early for sessions, so offer them something meaningful to fill that time. For example, use puzzles or word searches, place table tents with questions written on them, or post articles around the room. Here is another resource for you: [Shake, Rattle and Roll! Using the Ordinary to Make Your Training Extraordinary](#) by Sharon L. Bowman
7. **Allow time for absorption.** People's attention span maxes out at 20 minutes. Break up the material with Q and A with the audience, small group activities, reflection, or an actual break
8. **Bring them back.** Breaks are important but can also be a trouble spot if people don't return back on time. Suggestions: Have everyone synchronize their watches, start back at an odd time -- 10:21 rather than 10:20. Or offer people a raffle ticket if they return back from break on time. At the end of the day raffle off a few prizes. Another trick: Before the break, encourage the leader to save one tidbit ("Oh, I almost forgot the best thing. I will tell you when you return from break.") till after the break.
9. **Allow time for sharing.** Akin to the idea that you really know material well when you can teach it, allow people to share in pairs (diads), groups of three (triads), or small groups what they have learned. I have borrowed many ideas from [50 Creative Training Closers: Innovative Ways to End Your Training with IMPACT!](#)

10. **Build the bridge back to reality.** Allow time for people to build an action plan between what they have learned and how they will apply in on the job. Tom McDonald, President of Dr. Tom McDonald & Associations, suggests using these questions - "What will I do now?" "What are the risks if I don't?" Whether it is in evaluations and/or action planning, create a bridge between what they learned and experienced and how they will use the new knowledge.

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## Lessons Worth Repeating

Ford Motor Company was working to improve customer service. What activities do most people dread? The dentist, public speaking and, YES, taking their car to the dealer for service.

So Ford underwent an extensive training program called "On the Lane".

But, importantly, what Ford recognized is that **holding a training program, even an extensive program is not enough.**

With almost 5000 dealerships in the US, how would Ford insure that the training "stuck" with people after they were back in their own environment each of which possesses a different spin on the importance of "customer service"?

The problem is typical in dealer management organizations (and in my experience in other organizations): Person goes for training, person returns trained, but there isn't any reinforcement for the lessons and what is learned is quickly forgotten.

So Ford built in a refund of the cost of the class to the dealers if their service standards improved.

I drive an Audi, so I can't speak to actual changes at Ford Dealerships. However, the important lesson is that they integrated the training experience into the entire culture.

A training meeting won't be effective, won't deliver ROI or deliver on the objectives if it is a one-time only event. To be effective, people must work in an environment where what they learned is reinforced and valued.

Derrick Barton, Chief Talent Officer for the Center for Talent Retention, advocates these solutions to support training:

1. **Create a coaching network** to harness the power of experiences employees. Employees should work with their manager to identify 3 individuals who can provide coaching and feedback to build capabilities after the training.
2. **Talk it Up!** After the training, employees should share with their managers peers and team members what they learned, what new skills were developed and what on-the-job plans they have to improve their results.
3. **Work Workout.** Outline the "so what" of the training experience. What are they

going to do more of, less of, or differently when back on the job?

(Human Capital Magazine, 2003)

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### Extra Credit and Freebies

#### FREEBIES:

Training is challenged with the many of the same predicaments as meetings. How do you measure the impact?

The classic model was offered by Donald Kirkpatrick and focuses on four levels:

- Reaction
- Learning
- Behavior
- Business Results

My October 2000 back issue on Evaluations explores the Kirkpatrick model in more detail. I could write more on many aspects of this topic including learning styles, experiential learning, and ROI. If you want to explore some aspect in more detail, challenge me to see if I know more. Just call or write anytime.

Jack Phillips takes training evaluation to the next level in his book called [Return on Investment in Training and Performance Improvement Programs](#). He proposes a fifth level where true Return on Investment (ROI) is measured.

**More FREEBIES** What's a learning vacation? The option may appeal to you personally or as an option for your organization. Click here [Learning vacation](#) or send an email to [stinnish@ameritech.net](mailto:stinnish@ameritech.net) to get more information on this option.

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### T.I.M.E. Gone By

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May 2000: **Teambuilding** and (Freebie) New York Times Reprint On Teambuilding

June 2000: **Green Meetings** and (Freebie) Resource List Of Exercises

July 2000: **Values** and (Freebie) Meeting Analysis

August 2000: **Minimum/Minimal Meetings** and (Freebie) Web Winners

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