chpt. 7
Presentation Skills



# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO TRAINING DELIVERY



## A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

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CHAPTER 7

# DEMONSTRATING EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS

## SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Take a moment to review the competency and associated performances that will be covered in this chapter. Consider your current level of proficiency in the competency as a whole as well as each performance and check the items where you feel you need to improve. As you read the chapter, concentrate on those areas most in need of development.

**Competency:**

- ❒ Demonstrate effective presentation skills.

**Associated Performances:**

- ❒ Use the voice effectively.
- ❒ Use eye contact effectively.
- ❒ Use gestures, silence, movement, posture, space, and props effectively.
- ❒ Organize content effectively.
- ❒ Use anecdotes, stories, analogies, and humor effectively.
- ❒ Judge the effectiveness of a presentation.

While Chapter Six introduced communication skills, this chapter focuses on presentation skills—sometimes called *platform skills*. Presentation skills add excitement, variety, and drama to training delivery. This chapter covers the following topics:

- The importance of effective presentation skills.
- The use of voice, eye contact, nonverbal behaviors, and props during delivery to stimulate interest and facilitate learning.
- Organizing content to enable smooth and seamless transitions.
- Using anecdotes, stories, analogies, and humor effectively.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS

Effective presentation skills help you speak in a more entertaining way. In fact, you can benefit from using the presentation techniques perfected by actors, magicians, and other professional entertainers. These skills, when used appropriately, can motivate learners and add excitement to training. They can make training sessions more dynamic and powerful, thereby increasing the chance that learners will remember—and apply on the job—what they learned in training.

What happens when your presentation skills are ineffective? To find out the answer to that question, reflect on the following critical incident, which dramatically demonstrates the impact of poor presentation skills:

**Trainers Are Still Learners**

*"The worst experience I had was as a participant. The presenter had a dry, boring presence, total data dump of information, no involvement of the participants, no handouts, and a hot room after lunch. The participants were executives and trainers. It taught me a lot of valuable lessons about what not to do as a trainer."*

The trainer described in this situation had not developed effective presentation skills. Fortunately, the writer of this incident received some benefit from the experience by learning what presentation behaviors to avoid.

## USING VOICE EFFECTIVELY

*Using voice effectively* refers to how enthusiastically you speak (emotional range), how loudly you speak (volume), how quickly you speak (rate), and how you pronounce what you say (inflection). Using your voice effectively is critically important to the effectiveness of how well you deliver training in group settings. This section covers these and other important aspects of voice and provides some tips for using your voice effectively to enhance your presentation and thereby foster participant learning. Using your voice also includes the studied use of silence and pauses.

## CONVEYING ENTHUSIASM

You have undoubtedly heard the saying that "enthusiasm is contagious." That adage clearly applies to your training delivery. If you speak in a monotone and appear unenthusiastic about the material you are delivering, the effect on learners is detrimental. Learners may visibly begin to drift off, or they will struggle to keep their eyes open.

In contrast, when you show excitement and interest in your material, you bring an otherwise dry topic to life. You can show enthusiasm in many ways. For instance, you can use varied tones when you speak, make sweeping gestures, move about the room, make frequent eye contact, smile, and show genuine interest in your material and your learners. When you are enthusiastic, you capture the interest and attention of learners. Participants, when engaged, lean forward, reciprocate eye contact, and provide other verbal and nonverbal signals to show they are involved. When people are fully stimulated, they are likely to learn more because they are focused on you and your message.

## VOLUME, RATE, TEMPO, AND INFLECTION

One of your goals is to ensure that all participants in your training session can hear you. Your voice should thus be neither too loud nor too soft. When your voice is too soft, learners miss key points—or eventually give up—because listening is just too difficult. Likewise, when your voice is too loud, it can intimidate learners and cause discomfort. Of course, your challenge in speaking at just the right volume is compounded when the size of the group is large or the physical distance between you and your participants increases. Throughout your delivery you can change how loudly you speak to achieve specific purposes. For example, lowering the volume of voice can capture participants' interest and cause them to concentrate on what you are saying. Likewise, you can raise your voice to emphasize important points or seize sudden attention.

### RATE OF SPEECH AND TEMPO

*Rate* refers to the speed at which you speak. When the rate of your speech is too rapid, several problems can arise. If you speak too fast, learners find that distracting and difficult to follow. Important points are missed because learners, while attempting to comprehend earlier parts of the message, miss subsequent parts. Just as rapid speech can be problematic, you will also have problems if you speak too slowly. Learners find a slow rate of speech tedious to follow and tune the speaker out—or become distracted by something else.

*Tempo* involves the rhythm of speech. Tempo should be even and, as with rate of speech, not be distracting due to uneven or erratic rhythm. Try to find a tempo that is appropriate to the learners. Self-awareness of rate and tempo may be difficult, so you might want to ask a colleague or the learners themselves how you are doing, and make adjustments as indicated.

## MINIMIZING DISTRACTING VOCALIZATIONS AND VERBAL EXPRESSIONS

*Vocalizations* are utterances that are distracting if they are used too frequently. Common distracting vocalizations include the use of "ah" when speaking. (Note that such distracting vocalizations vary by language, and "ah" is one "filler" used in English.) This utterance often appears as a filler and is used between sentences or when people gather their thoughts. It can become habitual and even unconscious.

You can identify distracting vocalizations by asking another person to listen for them and even count how frequently they appear. In addition to tracking their frequency, you may find it helpful to ask other people to pinpoint when they are used, such as when you change thoughts or transition to another topic. This knowledge can help you avoid them because you are aware of the times they happen. Another strategy is to videotape a training session and review it, concentrating on which vocalizations occur, how often, and when. Use the checklist appearing in Exhibit 7–1 to monitor vocalizations and distracting expressions.

### SUBSTITUTING SILENCE

Once you become aware of any distracting speech mannerisms that you are guilty of using, you should work to correct them. One way is to learn how to be comfortable with silence. In situations when you might normally say "ah"—such as when transitioning between sentences—you can use silence to fill that transition. That can be uncomfortable for you at first because you may have used vocalizations to minimize the frequency and length of pauses. When silence is substituted for the distracting utterances, it can become somewhat unpleasant until you realize that the

**Exhibit 7–1**
**Vocalization checklist.**

*Directions*: Use this checklist to track the frequency and type of various distracting vocalizations and verbal expressions exhibited by the trainer during delivery.

Name: ____________________ Observer: ________________________

Start: ______ Finish: _______ Date: ____________________________

| Vocalizations or expressions | Frequency | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| "Ahh" | | |
| "Like" | | |
| "Okay" | | |
| "As it were" | | |
| "If you will" | | |
| "Basically" | | |
| "Well" | | |
| Others: | | |

pauses are typically brief, that silence and pauses are normal, and that they are a distinct improvement over using distracting fillers.

### OTHER DISTRACTING EXPRESSIONS

"Ah" is a nonlanguage vocalization, because the sound itself has no meaning. But language vocalizations can become distracting during presentations, too. Verbal expressions include such phrases and words as "you know," "like," or "okay." They can grow annoying when used too frequently. Such expressions are often an unconscious part of the trainer's vocabulary and, as in the case of vocalizations, must be brought to the attention of the person using them. Often, both vocalizations and verbal expressions are part of everyday speech patterns. Awareness of the expression is the first step toward eliminating it.

Ask someone to point out each time the undesirable expression is used during your daily (nontraining) conversation. Each time you use the phrase, the other person should be instructed to interrupt you and point it out. Doing that can help you begin to be aware of—and eventually minimize—its use. At first this approach may seem ridiculous, but the more timely the feedback, the more likely you are to reduce the negative behavior. Obviously, such practices should only be done at appropriate times and with discretion. The following vignette illustrates the efforts of a trainer, Mallory, to eliminate distracting vocalizations from her delivery.

> Mallory worked for a small technology firm as a management development specialist. After her training sessions, she passed out an evaluation sheet asking for feedback on her performance. She noted that several learners remarked on her use of distracting vocalizations including "ah," "look," and "at any rate." Unaware of this, she was determined to eliminate this behavior. Mallory enlisted the help of two of her more trusted colleagues, asking them to listen to her communication and point out these vocalizations as they occurred. She was astonished at the frequency with which they interrupted her. Her heightened awareness helped her to gradually eliminate this behavior. Over time, Mallory caught herself before she uttered these words and was eventually able to extinguish them from her vocabulary by simply remaining silent or by substituting appropriate dialogue.

## USING MICROPHONES

Microphones are appropriate to use when there is a greater than normal physical distance separating you from your participants, such as in large rooms or in large groups. Today's microphones can be quite sophisticated. Most common are wireless clip-on microphones, wireless hand microphones, wired hand microphones, podium microphones, pole microphones, and boom microphones. A clip-on goes on your tie or lapel; wireless hand mikes fit in your hand; wired hand microphones fit in your hand but have a trailing cord; podium microphones sit on a podium; pole microphones are positioned on a stand; and boom microphones are suspended above the speaker.

Each microphone has distinct advantages and disadvantages. Wireless clip-on microphones permit freedom of movement. There are no unsightly wires that can lead to the graceless vision of a presenter tripping over cords. Unfortunately, wireless clip-ons may be turned on and forgotten by the unwary—with the result that people could hear what you say to a colleague when you leave the room briefly.

Wireless handheld microphones are well known because they are frequently used by talk show hosts and newscasters doing person-on-the-street interviews. Such microphones are more limiting than lapel microphones because they must be held properly to capture your voice. That, of course, affects your ability to use expressive gestures, hold objects such as props, or even drink water from a pitcher. Handheld microphones with cords limit your movement and may invite distractions as you pay attention to the cord instead of participants.

Mounted microphones, like those found on podiums or on microphone stands, are fixed in one place. That makes it easy to manage them, since they are not as easily lost (or stolen) as wireless lapel microphones. But they limit your movement and, when you do move, limit the participants' ability to hear you.

Boom microphones are rarely used in group training. But they are commonly used in television productions so that viewers do not have to be distracted by watching microphones traded around. You may have occasion to use boom microphones when your training session is videotaped or when you are using distance learning methodologies such as videoconferencing, so you should be aware that they are useful only when you are positioned directly under them. That may mean that you have to look up occasionally to find out where the microphone is, and you will need a boom operator to make sure that you are standing sitting in the right place.

## TESTING MICROPHONES

Always test a microphone and the speaker system before using them. Make sure that, like audiovisual support, you have audio support in case microphones or speaker systems do not work. Note the positioning of speakers so that you will see where the audience is supposed to sit. If you plan to shift seating arrangements, plan ahead about what that might mean for people trying to hear you.

### MAINTAINING LEARNER INVOLVEMENT

Maintaining learner involvement is a key issue when using microphones. Generally, you are the primary user of the microphone. When learners speak without a microphone, not everyone will be able to hear what they said. In these cases you should repeat or paraphrase the question or comment being made. For example, if you are wearing a clip-on microphone during a conference presentation and someone asks a question, you should say something like, "That was a good question. For those who did not hear, the question was..." followed by a repeated or paraphrased version of the original question. Doing that ensures that everyone knows what was said.

Of course, you could also have several microphones positioned around the room for use by the participants. That technique is used in conferences, televised talk shows, or town meetings. When people from the audience have a question or comment, they are handed a cordless hand-held microphone or move to a nearby microphone. With this method everyone can hear the question directly from the learner at an audible volume.

### BECOMING COMFORTABLE WITH MICROPHONES

You may find it uncomfortable and awkward the first time you use a microphone. Further, when you experience screeching feedback or improper volume, you (and your learners) can become rattled. The impact of that on your presentation—and on participant learning—can be devastating. However, with practice and with the assistance of a competent audio technician, you can learn to use microphones effectively. The benefits outweigh the disadvantages, because microphones will help your learners hear you and each other.

## USING EYE CONTACT EFFECTIVELY

This section focuses on using eye contact to enhance presentation effectiveness. During presentations you should attempt to make direct eye contact with each learner in the audience. Eye contact engages learners in your presentation and gives one-on-one attention to learners in a group setting. Making eye contact, in effect, draws each learner into the process.

Avoid making eye contact with only some learners and not others to avoid being perceived as showing favoritism or exclusion. Obviously, eye contact with all learners becomes difficult, if not impossible, with large audiences. During conference presentations, for example, there could easily be an audience of several hundred or even several thousand listeners.

Try to make eye contact on a regular basis throughout the presentation. Be aware of the duration of the eye contact you make to ensure that it is neither too short nor too long. Brief eye contact can give the impression that you consider some learners less important than others. Extended eye contact turns into staring and can be awkward for learners.

### Purposes and Meanings of Eye Contact

Eye contact serves many purposes. You can use it to check for learner understanding and willingness to participate. Learners refusing to make eye contact may be signaling that they do not understand the material. In such cases, you may need to revisit a point or clarify an issue. Learners may also avoid eye contact when they are uncomfortable or feel that responding may lead to embarrassment. In contrast, fully involved learners will try to make eye contact with the trainer to signal a willingness to make a comment, volunteer for an activity, ask a question, or respond to a question. Always scan the room, looking for signs of participants who want to speak.

How do you know if you are using eye contact effectively? One way is to ask learners directly by including a question about eye contact on participant evaluation forms or conducting written surveys. The survey appearing in Exhibit 7–2, for instance, can be used to solicit feedback from learners regarding your eye contact.

## Using Nonverbals Effectively

Nonverbal behaviors can complement or enhance your presentation delivery. This section describes how you can make effective use of gestures, movement, silence, posture, and distance in your presentations.

### Gestures and Movement

Gestures support or can even take the place of spoken language. When using gestures, you should always be sure they are appropriate.

## Exhibit 7–2
## Survey of eye contact usage.

*Directions*: As a trainer, I am always attempting to improve my delivery skills. One area that I am working on is eye contact. Please answer the following questions as feedback for my development efforts. Thank you!

**1.** How frequently did the trainer make eye contact with you?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never made eye contact with me | Seldom made eye contact with me | Made adequate eye contact with me | Made too much eye contact with me | Stared at me |

Complete the following sentence:

**2.** When the trainer made eye contact with me, I felt…

**3.** What other comments do you have about the trainer's performance?

Appropriate gestures add meaning and enhance your message. Inappropriate gestures can become distracting by taking attention away from the message and placing it on the gesture.

To illustrate, imagine a training situation where the trainer frequently runs his fingers through his hair. While this seems like an innocent gesture, if it is noticed by the learners and becomes a distraction to them, then it may prevent them from paying attention to the message. In the same way, not using any gestures can be equally problematic. Imagine a trainer who rigidly stands in the same place and never moves her arms. That would look unnatural and would create a distraction.

Why might someone use distracting gestures and movement? The most common reason is *stage fright*. Novice trainers, like stage actors making their first appearances, may be fearful of public speaking. Their main goal is to deliver the message. That can lead to distracting mannerisms and posture. Novice trainers are well advised to stand with their arms at their sides or behind their backs, avoid leaning on objects such as desks or podiums, and stand with their legs firmly on the floor.

Doug Malouf, an expert trainer with DTS International in Sydney, Australia, offers the following advice to new trainers who want to combat stage fright: "Practice, rehearse, and drill. In one study, people were asked to rank their fears in order. Sixty-eight percent said death was number one; 32 percent said public speaking was number one. That means that one-third would rather die than speak. Many trainers feel the same way. The only way to overcome such fear is to practice and rehearse. You never lose the fear, you learn to control it."[1]

### MATCH GESTURES TO THE MESSAGE

One key to your success as a presenter is to match the gestures to your message. Look at Exhibit 7–3, which describes some common gestures and their possible meanings. Use that exhibit to select gestures for your presentations. You may also use it to improve how well you interpret the gestures of your participants.

## SILENCE

You can enhance your presentation by using silence strategically. Use silence before or after making important points, following a question, or at other times during delivery. Silence can arouse learner interest and curiosity. When learners become aware that you are silent, they wonder why. When learners focus their attention on you, you can

**Exhibit 7–3**
**Common gestures and their possible meanings.**

| Gestures | Possible Meanings |
|---|---|
| Nodding head | Demonstrates agreement or acknowledgment of positive behavior. |
| Pointing at an object | Draws attention to the object. |
| Raising hands | Emphasizes importance or depth of feeling about the topic or issue. |
| Facial expressions | Demonstrates a variety of emotions and feelings such as confusion, anger, concern, or happiness. |
| Touch | Shows concern, friendship, or acceptance. |
| Pointing at a learner | Singles out a learner for selection or reference. |
| Leaning forward | Conveys active listening. |
| Distracting gestures, such as running fingers through hair | Demonstrates anxiety, frustration, nervousness, or tension. |

In the space below, list some of the common gestures that you use. What messages are you sending through these gestures?

deliver the key learning point with full impact because you have their undivided attention.

To illustrate just how powerful silence can be, assume that you make the statement "this is a very important point" and then pause. This deliberate moment of silence stimulates interest and allows the learners to focus their attention on you and your message.

### WHEN TO USE SILENCE AND PAUSES

Pausing briefly after a key learning point is another way you can use silence to enhance your presentation. Immediately following an important learning point you can become silent to permit the gravity of the point to sink in. Silence also provides the learners with adequate time to reflect on, and process, the message. As with many delivery skills, one effective way to improve your ability to use it is through continuing practice and feedback.

Another technique you can use is to incorporate planned pauses as you use media. For example, when you use overhead transparencies, you can cover part of the slide with a bulleted list and reveal each bullet as you discuss it. As you progress from bullet to bullet, you move the paper. The motion required for you to go to the overhead and move the paper to reveal each point permits a moment of silence that builds interest and attention. It also allows an effective transition between points.

You can also use silence for impact when you are delivering a message with a strong emotional component. Suppose you tell a sad—or inspirational—story to reinforce a concept, change an attitude, or excite the learners to take action. To increase the story's impact, you can pause at appropriate times throughout delivery and at the end. Such periods of silence are most effective in conveying your emotion and evoking feelings among your listeners.

Silence can also be used after you ask a question. Such pauses send a message to learners that you expect a response. In addition, silence after a question allows time for learners to consider the question and, if possible, formulate an appropriate response. Watch out for the mistake of not allowing people enough time to think of an answer to your questions. Worse yet is to permit insufficient lead-time to answer a question and then provide the answer to the learners. You should practice how you pause after asking questions. During the silence you should scan the room to identify individuals willing to participate. By doing this, sometimes for extended time periods, you may elicit a response from among the most reluctant participants.

When silence follows a question, learners realize that someone must answer. The tension created by silence usually prompts someone to volunteer. If you do this several times, you will condition the learners to answer questions.

### DISTANCE

The physical distance separating you and the learners sends a powerful nonverbal message. The closer you are to the learners, the more intimate and informal the learning climate becomes. Conversely, the farther away you are from the learners—and the more objects like podiums, tables, and audiovisual equipment are in the way—the more formal the learning climate becomes. Distance can thus affect the willingness of learners to participate. Generally, people talk less often when they are in formal settings and talk more when they are in informal settings. To create a more personal, intimate environment, you should set up the classroom so that you are positioned in close physical proximity to the participants. This will set a tone that encourages learners to interact in a more casual, relaxed manner.

You can change your proximity at different points in your delivery to match the message you plan to send. If you want to preserve formality at the opening of a training session to dramatize the impact, stand behind a podium to show authority and stress your position as trainer. On the other hand, if you wish to encourage discussion, move away from the podium and toward the learners. The closer you can get to them, the better.

Perhaps a simple example will emphasize how the instructor's proximity to the learners can set the tone. One of the authors was presenting to a group of senior college professors. The first session was conducted formally: The participants sat in neat rows, like students in a traditional college classroom, and the instructor stood behind a podium and delivered a PowerPoint presentation. But in the second session—which happened to focus on "how college professors can facilitate discussions"—the instructor modeled the role of facilitator by moving from behind the podium and sitting facing the front row of participants. The physical separation was reduced, and the participant interaction was dramatically improved.

## USING PROPS EFFECTIVELY

A *prop* is any physical object used for demonstration during training. Almost any object can serve as a prop, a term which is drawn from theater. For example, in an introductory computer course, a 3.5-inch floppy diskette might serve as a prop. You could display the disk when you begin discussing data storage methods. By doing that, you show learners a representative example. Some learners find it easier to understand when they have physical objects or other examples to see, touch, and examine.

Another example of a prop might be the finished product from a particular manufacturing process. A properly written memo could serve as a prop in a course on effective business writing or a sample of a defective product could be introduced during quality-related training. Regardless of the actual prop that is used, the key is to recognize how and why it is used. Props should not be used without a specific purpose or intent. Props should be used for demonstration purposes to help support or reinforce learning and achieve the course objectives. Props should be used to gain interest, focus attention, provide a big picture, or provide learners with a hands-on opportunity. It is not recommended that props be introduced simply because they are interesting or nice to use.

## WHEN TO USE PROPS

Props are excellent attention-getters to use when introducing a topic during training delivery. When you display a prop, it commands attention. People gaze at it, naturally curious what it is.

Some trainers will cleverly joke about "show-and-tell" time, reminiscent of kindergartners bringing something interesting to class.

Props need not be limited to use during opening segments, but they can be used throughout training. They can be an excellent way to provide learners with a big picture view of the training. In some cases the prop could actually be the central focus of the entire training program. For example, in a technical training course on using a voltmeter, the program itself may be centered around that device.

### STRATEGIES FOR USING PROPS EFFECTIVELY

Using props effectively can be challenging depending on the nature of the prop, the purpose for which it will be used, the learners, and the training situation. When using a prop, its purpose is the first, and arguably the most important, issue you should consider. In considering the purpose of the prop, examine the course objectives. What prop would help to support the objective? When should the prop be introduced? How should the prop be introduced? What is the most effective use of the prop? What problems or barriers could present themselves that might diminish the effectiveness of the prop? Answering these questions can help you to make best use of the prop to help achieve an objective.

Once you have thoroughly assessed the purpose of the prop, reflect next on how you plan to use it during the presentation. Consider how you will display the prop. Will you hold it up and then pass it around? Is the prop so large or heavy that you must position it somewhere in or near the classroom? How difficult will it be for learners to see the prop?

If you think that learners will have difficulty seeing the prop, you have several options. One is to pass the prop around. Another is to ask learners to gather around it, if the prop is large. A third option is to have enough props (for example, computer terminals) for learners to cluster around in small groups. To illustrate, two of these methods were used by one of the authors some years ago during a general plant safety training course. During the program he handed out a pair of safety glasses to each participant when eye protection was covered. Each participant was encouraged to observe key features, such as the wrap-around shields, and actually to try wearing the glasses. Later in the same program the learners were asked to gather around a mock electrical utility box to observe as the trainer demonstrated the lockout-tagout procedure. Volunteers were then given the opportunity to perform the same tasks the trainer had demonstrated. Using these props helped the trainer to foster learning because it allowed participants to see and feel the material in a way that descriptions alone would not have allowed. Thus, their understanding was deepened.

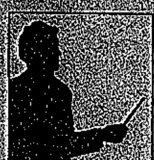
What do you do with props when you are finished using them? You may want to leave the prop in a visible location so learners can view it as you continue your presentation. Doing this can be helpful when the prop is referred to later in the training session. One disadvantage of this approach is that it can become a distraction to learners. If they continue to focus on the prop, they could miss key points you are presenting. On the other hand, you can choose to place the prop in a location so it cannot be seen, such as under a skirted table. Again, this strategy has potential advantages and disadvantages. If the prop was taken away, the focus of the learners can be returned to the training content. On the other hand, if the prop was removed from sight just as the curiosity of learners was peaking, then they may continue to focus on the prop even if it is out of sight, thus creating another divergence of focus. Consider this issue carefully before deciding what to do with a prop.

Be sure to try out a prop before using it in training. Allow other people to look at the prop to see if it functions as intended. Consider whether it is in working order. Does it need anything for operation such a batteries or a light bulb? Will the prop be understood by all learners, or is it more appropriate for a small group?

## ORGANIZING CONTENT EFFECTIVELY

Take a minute to think about a training session you have seen that was not well organized. What did you notice that made you think the training was disorganized? This section describes some ways that training can be presented in an organized way—and what happens when it is not.

### The Case of the Missing Slides



*"The worst experience I have had related to the delivery of training is with the previous trainer for a class who had left the slides all out of order and some of the notes were missing. I did not have time to prepare because of other commitments and because I knew the material well. A new trainer was observing me during the class so I wanted it to be done well. I wound up just getting through the material off the top of my head, making it more interactive, and then straightening out the slides over the break. It actually went quite well because it forced me to ad-lib on material I knew and has probably made me a more effective presenter who can deviate from the script notes."*

This trainer was fortunate in that he coped with overheads that were not assembled in order. But that could have turned into a disaster if he had not been familiar with the training content.

What should you do when confronted with a situation in which you must ad-lib? Here are some practical tips:

- Take a deep breath, pause, gather your thoughts, and continue.
- Ask the learners to take a short break of less than five minutes while you organize your notes, overheads, or other material.
- Provide the learners with an activity, exercise, or other useful task that permits you breathing room to organize your material.

- Ask the learners open-ended questions to get involvement without lecturing.

### LINKING CONTENT TO OBJECTIVES

The most obvious evidence of disorganized training is when there is a mismatch between the stated purpose and objectives of the course and its actual content or activities. Learners will be quick to notice that. They will then make statements like, "Why are we in this training?" or "What did we just learn, and why was that important?" To avoid this problem, be sure to spell out early in the program why the training is being conducted and how it will meet business needs or workplace issues. Then reemphasize that point throughout the course. When learners see the practical value of the training, they will pay attention and will be more motivated to learn.

### USING RELEVANT EXAMPLES AND INFORMATION

Use examples and content that are tied to the organization and to the learners' experience. When examples seem out of place, learners can become confused and wonder why they are included and how they fit into the course. For this reason, continually strive to relate content, examples, and other instructional matter, such as activities, to the overall premise of the course. After you provide an example, for instance, make a linking statement to demonstrate to learners why the example is important and how it fits the course, the corporate culture, and the industry of which the organization is part.

Try to use examples and facts that are realistic and relevant to the participants in your training course. The learners should see how the content is applicable to their personal or professional lives. Explain and demonstrate the relevance or benefits of the training to the learners. In a training course on tools for quality improvement, for example, you could reinforce the relevance of a specific tool by demonstrating an on-the-job application to which learners can relate. Even though the relevance of content may be self-evident to learners, always state the relevance to make it as explicit as possible.

### STRATEGIES TO GUIDE LEARNERS

Adult learners, unlike children, should be self-directed and willing to exert some effort to learn when they see reasons to do so. But adult learners often still prefer some structure to their learning and want to know what immediate practical value their learning will have. You can structure training more effectively by using overviews to introduce topics, summaries to synthesize and conclude a topic, and seamless transitions between topics.

### OVERVIEWS

An *overview* presents a big-picture summary of what is to come. An overview is often provided at the opening of a training program or of a part of a training program. (A part of a training program might include a single day in a multi-day course or an afternoon in a one-day course.)

To get an idea of what an overview is all about, think about the old statement that military training should be structured so that you "tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them." An overview serves the purpose to give them advance warning of what is to come. It "tells them what you are going to tell them" and thus presents a flash-forward of the training contents.

An *advanced organizer* is a special overview technique. As the phrase implies, it aids learners by preparing them in advance for what will be presented during training. Advanced organizers can take many forms. If you show an agenda, an outline of the training content, or a flowchart depicting the organization of the course, you are providing advanced organizers. They prepare learners for the training. They also help learners gain a broader perspective of the training by informing them of where they are and where they will go. In that sense, it is like a building map or city street map, where "X" indicates "you are here."

Overviews help provide learners with a context for each segment, answering the question "why are we covering this, and where is this leading?" Overviews may be simple statements that you can make, such as "In this segment we will be discussing (*topic to be discussed*). This is important because (*reasons the topic is important*). This section relates to the objective (*relevant objective*)."

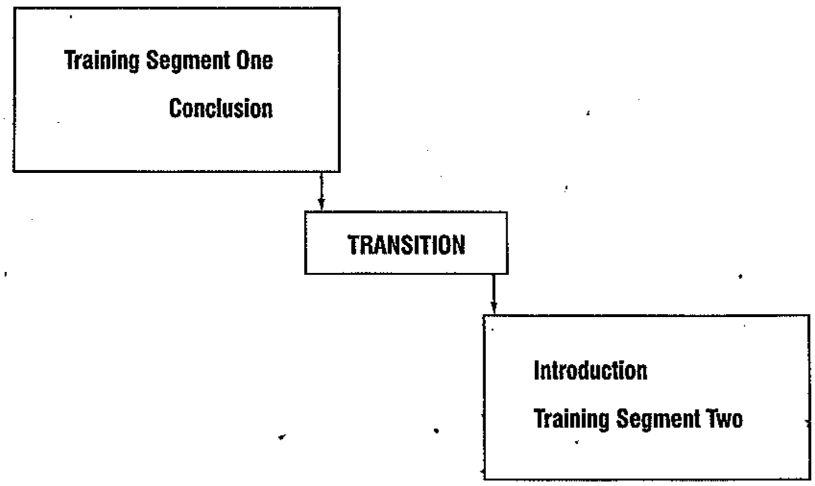
### SUMMARIES

*Summaries* or conclusions are usually provided at the end of a training segment. They help learners synthesize what was covered and distill the training into the key learning points. Summaries help "bring it all together," connecting all points. You might think of a summary as akin to an activity debrief in which learners discuss what they learned and draw conclusions about it. Summaries are also helpful in reinforcing how the training was useful and how it can be applied on-the-job.

## TRANSITIONS

*Transitions* are the connections between training segments. They link otherwise independent sequences. Transitions often take the form of statements that bridge the gap from the conclusion of one section to the introduction of the next section. Exhibit 7–4 depicts schematically how transitions help link together training segments.

**Exhibit 7–4**
**Transitions.**




Transitions should provide a bridge from one topic into the next. When transitions are seamless, the flow of training is smooth. But poor transitions indicate a disorganized trainer. What are some examples of poor transitions? They include extended pauses and the shuffling of papers or overheads in an effort to move on. Learners grow confused because they may not see how the next section relates to the last one. They are thrust into a new topic without preparation. Some learners may also express impatience because they feel time is being wasted. Here follows an example of an effective transition from one training topic to the next.

**TRAINER:** *I'd like to close our discussion on the importance of building trust in work teams. Keep in mind the three reasons we men-*

*tioned: one, higher morale and job satisfaction; two, more productivity and better performance; and three, more open communication.*

*Now we're going to shift gears and talk about specific ways you can build trust in your teams. We're going to begin with a quick exercise to identify a list of trust-building activities....*

Notice how the trainer brought the first section to conclusion by providing a summary of the key points. Next, the trainer explicitly informed the learners that a new topic was being introduced through the statement "now we're going to shift gears." Then the trainer provided an introduction to the next section by explaining to learners what would happen next.

## MANAGING TIME AND AVOIDING DIGRESSIONS

As a trainer, you must ensure that time is managed effectively. If you have distributed an agenda with time estimates, try to stick to them. Rehearse the course in advance to get realistic time estimates. Your goal is to ensure that each training segment is covered in sufficient detail to achieve the learning objectives.

Now, it is quite true that learner groups differ dramatically. Each group is unique. Some groups simply require more time than others to master the same material. One group may have more experienced learners who require less background or less explanation, or another group may have more motivated learners. Whatever the reason, you should realize that no two groups will progress through material at the same pace. Your job as trainer, however, is to ensure that all groups emerge with equivalent competence, having mastered the learning objectives for the training.

*Digressions* are diversions from the intended topic that may (or may not) work against achieving the learning objectives. A digression is when a learner accidentally or deliberately diverts the presentation into an unrelated area by asking a question or telling a story. This can be called *taking the group off on a tangent* (also known by other names, such as "going on a wild goose chase" or "going on safari").

Digressions are natural. They occur because learners may associate one topic in the training with other topics they have curiosity about. Alternatively, the training course may hit on a topic about which participants have axes to grind, and they use the training program as a bully pulpit to state their positions, try to build support, or to vent their feelings.

When digressions are short and do not derail the logical relationship among topics in the training course, they can be beneficial because they may introduce new, insightful, and highly relevant perspectives. However, when diversions become lengthy, they jeopardize the chance that the training objectives will be met. Worse yet, some learners in a group may not want to pursue the unrelated topic, and they will feel that the time is wasted and will usually say so—either during the course or on end-of-course participant evaluations.

### CORRECTING DIGRESSIONS

Take corrective action when you sense that a digression is becoming too lengthy or is beginning to wear out its welcome with most learners in a group. If you have made the digression by telling a story, for example, cut it short and move right back to the topic. If a participant made the digression, then interrupt him or her and say something like "this is quite interesting, but it does not seem related to the topic. Let's move on so that we can achieve our course objectives in the time we have." As another option, ask the participant if it would be okay to return to that topic when more time was available for it. Often people do not realize that their well-intentioned comments, questions, stories, or observations have turned into digressions. However, typically, when learners recognize that they have strayed from the intended topic, they are more willing to return to it.

Redirecting digressions back to the planned topic for discussion helps the learners stay focused. It also gives the impression that you are well organized with specific goals and tasks that need to be achieved. On the other hand, when you allow digressions to run unchecked, you give the appearance of being disorganized.

## LOGICAL FLOW OF THE PRESENTATION

The overall flow of the presentation should be derived from the instructional design of the training. However, the actual word usage, sentence choice, and organization often comes from the trainer. In other words, designers create the overall structure that guides training, but you must implement that design through the delivery process. Words and sentences used during delivery should be carefully chosen and arranged logically to achieve smooth and even flow. When the flow of delivery is not logical to learners, it can lead to frustration because they become confused and unable to make sense of the content or connections being made between content points.

### CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Concluding statements are an important, but often neglected, part of a training course. They are important because they provide closure. Concluding statements may appear at the end of a large segment of content or immediately preceding transitions. (The topic of summaries, which help to provide learners with guidance, was discussed earlier in this chapter.)

Concluding statements, like summaries, bring closure to a delivery segment. When concluding statements are absent from delivery, learners are left hanging. A useful strategy is to plan concluding statements or points before you deliver the course or section.

Here are some practical tips for concluding statements:

- Check for understanding. Say something like, "We have now reached the end of this section (or course). We have covered topics a, b, and c. What further questions do you have about this material before we move on to the related topic of d (or before we adjourn)?"
- Try to stimulate creativity. Say something like, "We have now reached the end of this section (or course). But, I wonder, are there more creative ways to view this topic? What are your thoughts on specific ways we could do that?"

## USING ANECDOTES, STORIES, ANALOGIES, AND HUMOR EFFECTIVELY

Anecdotes, stories, analogies, and humor can enliven your training, making it memorable and interesting. When used appropriately, they can reinforce key points and drive home important information. They are especially useful for showing the practical applications of otherwise abstract ideas. This section describes each technique and provides strategies for incorporating them effectively into your presentation. Use the job aid appearing in Exhibit 7–5 to help you plan to use stories, anecdotes, and humor.

### STORIES AND ANECDOTES

Storytelling is an ancient art that has been used to pass information from one person to the next for millennia. A *story* is a real or fictitious tale told to convey meaning. An *anecdote* is similar to a story but is generally shorter and more direct. Stories and anecdotes used in training

**Exhibit 7–5**
**Job aid for using anecdotes, stories, and humor effectively.**

| |
|---|
| Approximate length of anecdote, story, or humor: ________ |
| What is the purpose or the key message of the story? |
| What is your opening statement? How will you gain the attention of the audience? |
| How will you bridge into your key message? |
| How will you close your story? How will you drive the main point(s) home? |
| What are your transitional phrases? When will you use them? |
| What emotion(s) do you plan to convey? How? |
| What props will you use? How and when? |
| What gestures will you use for impact? When? |

should have a specific direction or purpose. They should not be told for their mere entertainment value.

Stories and anecdotes about people and situations are helpful in organizations because they can communicate important information about the corporate culture, the taken-for-granted assumptions about the "right" and "wrong" ways to "do things around here." For instance, a story about a company president who arrives at the office at 5:30 A.M. on a snowy winter morning to shovel the sidewalk could be told to convey a number of corporate values, such as the importance of work ethic, the value of having concern for employees, and the organization's tradition of leadership sacrifice. Some stories are told so often that they become exaggerated, transforming people into myths and legends and making events more dramatic than they were in reality.

When stories or anecdotes are told without an express intent they can leave learners confused as to how they relate to the content of the program. For this reason, if you choose to use stories or anecdotes, first consider the purpose that will be served. Next, select a story or anecdote that will achieve this purpose. If you are developing the story, then first consider the one or few key points to be conveyed based on the predetermined purpose, and then design the story around those key bullets. Lay this initial groundwork before incorporating the story or anecdote into the presentation. The next section discusses important delivery considerations.

## Practice Telling Stories in Advance

Some people are natural, gifted storytellers. Others find telling stories or anecdotes difficult and therefore use them minimally. Whether or not you are one of the gifted, it helps to practice telling your story before you deliver it to a group in a training session. *How* you deliver the story is key. Practice helps you make the story concise. It also helps you learn how to make smooth transitions, keep elements of the story in the right sequence, and incorporate appropriate nonverbal behaviors—such as gestures and facial expressions—into the delivery. Practice makes the delivery smooth and gives it maximum impact.

## Use Your Experiences

Direct experiences are usually easy to relate because they represent a recollection of your memory of those occurrences. Dale Carnegie, one of the gurus of public speaking, states that one of the cardinal rules of public speaking is to talk about a topic you have earned the right to discuss, and he cites experience as one method for earning that right. Experience can often be recounted in great detail. Some memorable stories incorporated during training are tales of real, or sometimes exaggerated, events experienced or observed by the trainer. These events may be positive, negative, challenging, humorous, or interesting, and they are designed to convey a specific message to the listeners that tie back to the content and to the objectives.

But let us be clear. If you do not plan a story or anecdote but rather tell an impromptu story, you risk creating a diversion. Make sure that the point of the story is clear and is related to your topic, or it becomes a *war story* or (if illustrating a nightmare scenario about something gone badly awry) a *horror story.* Stories told effectively and on point may also illustrate your own adherence to the principle illustrated in the story while building your credibility as someone who lives by the principles he or she teaches to others.

### Using Learners' Stories

In a training session, you are not necessarily the only one who has had firsthand experience with the topic. The learners may also have had that experience. Consequently, you can tap into that experience by asking the learners to share their experiences by telling stories or anecdotes to your group. These stories are examples, told in the words of the learners without rehearsal, and they can be powerfully instructive. Further, you can adopt stories and anecdotes provided by learners and incorporate them into future training sessions. If you do that, however, you should either obtain permission or approval from the person to use the story or else carefully disguise identities.

Such stories, when told originally by a well-respected or highly regarded individual, often have instant credibility with a group of learners. Telling a group of learners, "Several weeks ago our CEO sat in this seat and told the group a story, and I'd like to share with you the experience that she related to us," would be likely to gain their attention and command interest.

How can you solicit stories or anecdotes from learners? The simplest approach is to ask them to share experiences they have had. This off-the-top-of-their-head approach can yield spontaneous expressions of thoughts and feelings. The stories can be highly entertaining and instructive. But be careful: Use this approach only if you are certain that there are veteran workers in your audience. Soliciting stories from novices will lead to uncomfortable silences, since they have had no experiences and thus have no stories.

Even when the learners are experienced and have powerful stories to share, you must take care that the storyteller stays on track and does not talk in circles. Another danger you must watch for is that some storytellers will use this opportunity to drone on forever or get on a soapbox. In these cases, others may begin to roll their eyes, drift off, or in other ways lose interest and become distracted. When this happens, you'll need to intervene and either cut the story short or help the speaker focus and deliver the key message.

A true story is in order here. One of the authors was teaching a course on career planning to executive MBAs in China. At one point, he asked participants to tell short stories from their experiences that illustrated what their career goals were and why they considered those goals important. One student took the opportunity to spend over ten minutes telling an inspirational story from the life of Buddha and using that to justify his avowed career goal of "converting the world to Buddhism." The author still remembers the rolling eyes, the silent laughter, the whispered comments, and the agonized looks he got from other students during the tortured time that the student droned in a monotone to tell his story. The point is that the author learned from the experience that it is important to give people advance cues about how long their stories should be and what will happen if they devote too much time. Now he introduces that section by saying "before we begin, let me remind you to keep your story short—under two minutes—or else we will cut you off and move on to the next person so that everyone has an opportunity to speak."

## GATHERING CRITICAL INCIDENT EXPERIENCES

Another method you can use to solicit stories from learners is to ask them to use the *critical incident technique* to structure storytelling, either by writing about or telling of a *difficult situation* they have encountered in their work lives. This method gives learners an organized structure to follow in telling their story. You can solicit critical incidents and then read the stories to others or use them as guides when conveying the information. The written critical incident technique can be useful for giving structure to the story and focusing the topic in specific directions. In the critical incident method, learners are asked to recall an experience they have had in a specific area of focus and describe it in detail. Incidentally, we used the critical incident method in the research study we conducted for this book. We asked practitioners to respond to the following:

> Please describe the *worst experience* you have had related to the delivery of training. Provide as much detail as possible including what happened, who was involved (positions only), what you did, and the results.
>
> Please describe the *most typical problem* you face on a regular basis related to the delivery of training. Provide as much detail as possible including the situation, how you handle it, and the results.

We then used the responses we obtained from trainers as the critical incidents that appear in this book. They relate real-life experiences, which in many cases are very enlightening because they provide common and worst-case scenarios of what trainers encounter when delivering training. Virtually any subject could be used to solicit critical incidents. For example, critical incidents could be gathered about such topics as customer service, new technology, or dealing with a manager or supervisor. Critical incidents need not focus only on negative experiences or problems but can be used to gather positive information as well. For example, learners could be asked to describe in detail the best treatment they have received as customers. Regardless of the content, responses that learners provide to critical incidents can be used in training in various ways. You can have the learners read stories aloud, share them with others in a small group, or use them during future training sessions.

## ANALOGIES

An *analogy* is a comparison between two things that are otherwise dissimilar. For example, a supervisor who is described as a "battle-ax" is easily recognizable as someone who uses an autocratic, traditional management style. Analogies are useful in training because they simplify complex concepts or ideas. For example, in a basic computer hardware course, a trainer uses the brain as an analogy for the microprocessor chip of a computer. Continuing the analogy, the brain can receive information, such as numbers; perform calculations on the numbers, such as adding them together; and produce a result, such as the sum of the numbers. The workings of the brain in this example could be compared to many microprocessor functions. Obviously analogies will tend to break down if extended too far, but they can be useful in illustrating a complex idea or an abstract concept through a notion with which most learners are familiar.

When you use analogies, make sure that they are clear. Tell learners that you are using an analogy and then isolate key elements of two unlike items for comparison. You should also consider aspects of the analogy that do not hold true or ways in which the analogy could produce conflicting information or confusion. In the example of the brain and microprocessor, a learner might ask if the microprocessor has the ability to reason since the brain has that capacity. The trainer in this case should be prepared to deal with such questions or others that might arise about the analogy. The job aid shown in Exhibit 7–6 can be used to assist you with effectively incorporating analogies into delivery.

## HUMOR

*Humor* includes jokes, tricks, stunts, funny stories, or other actions that are used for entertainment as well as for learning. Humor helps to create a relaxed, informal, and energized learning climate, such as the trainer who enters the room riding a unicycle or wearing Groucho Marx–type glasses. In addition, humor and tricks can be effective ways to illustrate key information. For example, a trainer may juggle more and more balls in the air until they eventually fall to the ground as a way to make the point that the job of the supervisor is often like a juggling act.

As with storytelling, using humor is an art. Two types of humor that can be used are *planned humor* and *spontaneous humor*. *Planned humor* involves predetermining a time during training when humor, such as a joke or funny incident, will be used. This type of humor can be practiced and refined in advance to ensure evoking the intended response from learners. *Spontaneous humor*, as the name suggests, is unplanned and arises during delivery. This type of humor is often the result of something that happens during delivery, such as a participant comment, or a faux pas that a quick-witted trainer converts into humor. Such humor is often without specific purpose or intent but can be used to foster a relaxed or energized learning climate.

### INAPPROPRIATE HUMOR

Avoid inappropriate humor that is uncomplimentary to specific people or groups, and avoid so-called practical jokes that may hurt someone. If you must use humor that puts people down, direct it at yourself. Otherwise, stick to humor that makes the point without taking the risk of offending anyone. When in doubt, ask other people before you use the joke or humorous story.

### STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING HUMOR

There are several strategies you can use when incorporating humor into the training situation. These guidelines apply primarily to

**Exhibit 7–6**
**Job aid for using analogies effectively.**

| |
|---|
| What is the purpose or the key message you want to convey through the analogy? |
| Does the analogy make your message or concept clearer? How do you know? Have you tested it on anyone? |
| What concepts are you comparing? |
| What are the similarities of the concepts? How will you convey this information? |
| What are the dissimilarities of the concepts? (Where might the analogy break down?) How will you convey this information? |
| How will you drive your main point(s) home? |
| Will you use an object or prop to demonstrate the analogy? Will the prop make your analogy clearer? |

planned humor. As in using stories or anecdotes, use humor with a specific purpose in mind. What is the overall objective or purpose of the joke? Is it to gain attention? Is it to convey an important content point in a humorous way? Is it simply to entertain learners? You should be aware that using humor for entertainment purposes only can be dangerous. When this happens, learners may leave the session feeling positive about the experience, but when they reflect on the actual content and application of that learning, they may discover that it was lacking. For this reason, use humor in training to serve a specific purpose, such as reinforcing a content point or energizing the group. As with stories and anecdotes, practice telling the joke. Do that to ensure maximum impact.

### TIMING OF HUMOR

Often the success of humor in training hinges upon its timing. This is especially relevant with spontaneous humor, which arises from the situation. If you are able to incorporate humor as it presents itself, it can be highly effective because it is genuine and relevant. Situations that might be the catalyst for spontaneous humor include unplanned mishaps, such as mistakes in the materials or inappropriate environmental noises. In essence, you are playing off something that was not supposed to happen, diminishing its potentially harmful impact while relaxing and energizing the learners.

With planned humor, timing is critical as well. A joke or funny story that is told out of place may fall flat because it was delivered too early or too late. When planned humor is not timed well, learners may not make the connection between the content and the humor, if the purpose was to reinforce content. This may lead to confusion.

The way in which you introduce humor is important as well. Sometimes when you begin to tell a funny story some learners may not be tuned in and therefore miss enough of the story to minimize its overall impact. Take time to set up the use of humor to ensure that you have everyone's attention. One strategy is to pause or remain silent prior to delivery. As mentioned earlier, such silence can capture interest and focus learners' attention. During delivery, incorporate appropriate and matching nonverbal behaviors to fully maximize delivery, such as eye contact with the learners during delivery, gestures and movement to dramatize the humor, and facial expressions to complement your verbal language. During delivery, also attempt to gauge learner reaction and adjust appropriately. For example, if some learners appear to be drifting, increase your level of enthusiasm or change your voice.

### ENDING HUMOR

The final aspect of using humor is knowing how to end it. If the punchline to a joke falls flat or is lost, or if the funny story ends abruptly, the overall impact is reduced. Therefore, pay close attention to the ending, which often contains the key learning point. Humor may be unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. When a joke or other humor does not achieve its intended purpose, you must attempt to recover. Sometimes ineffective planned humor gives you an opportunity to incorporate spontaneous humor. For example, if you bumble through telling a joke and it fails, saying, "I should have let someone else tell that one!" may help in recovery. A statement like this can add humor to an otherwise embarrassing situation, and it also demonstrates to the learners that you can laugh at yourself. This is similar to admitting mistakes. If the intent of the failed humor was to make a content point, then you may need to address that issue by saying, "The point I was trying to make through that miserable joke was..." This ensures that, although the method of making the point was not successful, the point received enough attention and reinforcement.

The use of stories, anecdotes, analogies, and humor is an art as well as a science. It is a science because of its potential to enhance learning, and it therefore should be designed and incorporated with precisely defined objectives in mind. It is also an art because creativity is essential and the difference between success and failure in using humor is often dependent on subtle nuances that are difficult to reproduce.

## DO NOT INSULT, OFFEND, OR CONFUSE LEARNERS

Regardless of the technique being incorporated into delivery there are some key elements that must be considered. Make sure that no learners are insulted or offended by the story, anecdote, analogy, or humor. Some learners may take offense because a joke offends their culture, race, gender, religion, or other characteristic. Knowingly using potentially offensive humor can hamper learning and raise serious ethical questions. Further, if such humor is unwittingly used, the damage it causes may be irreparable. Therefore, think carefully before using such techniques.

In addition to avoiding potentially offensive stories, anecdotes, or humor, make sure that jokes or other stories are free of jargon or technical terminology that could confuse learners. Or, if you must use such terminology, be sure to clarify its meaning.

## SUMMARY

Many issues contribute to your ability to demonstrate effective presentation skills, as this chapter has shown. When judging the relative success of a presentation, always think first of how well it supports the achievement of learning objectives. This chapter has described and emphasized the importance of the following:

- Adhering to allotted time.
- Using your voice effectively.
- Using nonverbal behavior to support training information.
- Organizing the logical flow of a presentation.
- Using stories, anecdotes, analogies, and humor effectively.

## STRATEGY LIST

*Actionable Strategies to Improve Training Effectiveness:*

### USE YOUR VOICE EFFECTIVELY

❒ Vary your vocal tones to convey enthusiasm, sincerity, seriousness, and other emotions.

❒ Use volume, rate, tempo, and inflection to ensure that everyone can hear, to stimulate interest, and to enhance your message.

❒ Identify distracting speech mannerisms ("ahh," "like," "you know") and attempt to correct them. Ask a co-worker to watch you during training and point them out to you. Learn to substitute these mannerisms with silence.

❒ Use microphones when you are training a large audience. Caution: Turn microphones "off" when not in use.

### USE APPROPRIATE NONVERBALS

**Eye Contact**

❒ Use eye contact to demonstrate one-on-one attention to learners and to draw learners into the training process.

❒ Avoid making eye contact with some learners and not others.

- ❒ Scan the room on a regular basis to periodically make eye contact with every learner. Caution: Do not pause too long or stare at learners.
- ❒ Recognize a lack of eye contact from learners may mean they do not want to participate, they are bored, or they are distracted. This may signal a need to take a break.
- ❒ Ask learners or colleagues for feedback on how well you make eye contact.

**Gestures**

- ❒ Use gestures to support or replace your message.
- ❒ Test gestures with colleagues and learners for their appropriateness and impact.
- ❒ Ask for feedback regarding distracting gestures you may exhibit.
- ❒ Practice, rehearse, and drill to get your gestures right.
- ❒ Be certain that your gestures match your message. Ask for feedback from your co-workers and learners.

**Silence**

- ❒ Use silence before or after important points, following a question, or at other appropriate times during delivery to arouse interest and stimulate curiosity.
- ❒ Use silence before a statement to convey its importance.
- ❒ Use silence to encourage learner reflection on your message.
- ❒ Use silence to evoke emotion among your listeners.
- ❒ Use silence after questions to encourage learner response and participation.

**Distance**

- ❒ Move closer to learners to create a more intimate and informal learning climate. Caution: Be careful not to invade someone's air space by getting too close.

- ❑ Move away from learners to create a more formal learning climate.
- ❑ Change your proximity to learners throughout training to match the message you plan to send and to add variety.

**Using Props Effectively**

- ❑ Use props to support or reinforce learning and achieve the course objectives.
- ❑ Use props to gain interest, provide a big picture, focus attention, or to provide learners with a hands-on opportunity.
- ❑ Be aware that using props can take learner attention away from what you are saying and become distracting.
- ❑ Determine how and when to use props before training occurs. Ask for feedback from co-workers regarding your timing and use of props.
- ❑ Determine in advance how the prop will be displayed or passed around to learners.
- ❑ Use props that are relevant to the training and familiar to learners.
- ❑ When you are finished using the prop, remove it from view so that it does not become distracting.
- ❑ Avoid using props that could be potentially dangerous.

## STRATEGIES TO GUIDE AND FACILITATE LEARNING

- ❑ Link the training content and activities to the course objectives.
- ❑ Use examples and content that are tied to the organization and to the learners' experience and work environment.
- ❑ Provide learners with an overview or big picture of the training at the beginning of the course. This can be in the form of a flow-chart, outline/agenda, or a graphic.
- ❑ Provide learners with summaries at the end of training segments to help them synthesize important learning points.

- ❒ Use transitions between training segments to demonstrate the link or connections between them. Transitions provide a bridge from one topic to the next.
- ❒ Manage time so that each segment is covered in sufficient detail to achieve learning objectives.
- ❒ Use digressions in the conversation to make or enhance your message without derailing your learning objectives.
- ❒ Use concluding statements at the end of segments to provide closure to a topic.

## ENLIVEN YOUR TRAINING

### Stories/Anecdotes

- ❒ Use stories and anecdotes to communicate important information and reinforce concepts and ideas.
- ❒ Link stories and anecdotes to the objectives. Identify this in advance and test your strategies with several coworkers.
- ❒ Practice telling stories in advance to ensure smooth and natural flow.
- ❒ Base stories on your actual experiences.
- ❒ Ask learners to volunteer sharing their relevant experiences and stories with the groups.

### Analogies

- ❒ Use analogies to simplify complex concepts or issues.
- ❒ Make sure that your analogies are clear, familiar to learners, and easy to connect to the analogy and the concept you are attempting to convey.

### Humor

- ❒ Use humor to lighten the mood, emphasize a point, illustrate key information, or enliven your audience.
- ❒ Ask for feedback from several co-workers regarding humor you plan to use. Ask them if the humor is appropriate, funny, and supportive of the message.

❒ Be aware of your own ability and limitations to be humorous and do not attempt to exceed them.

❒ Avoid inappropriate humor that is uncomplimentary to specific people or groups. Caution: Do not allow anyone to be the target of humor. Stick to humor that makes the point without offending someone.

❒ Use a period of silence before using humor to capture learners' attention. This will prevent them from missing key information.