

# Making a game out of training the 'boring stuff'

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## Background and rationale

- Mandatory workplace education is an accepted requirement in health environments. Maintaining a high degree of enthusiasm for training subjects that could be described as a 'bit boring', 'box ticking' and for things that are 'never going to happen' is mentally draining.
- How can we reinvigorate mandatory training and captivate staff attention?
- The cycle of training can feel like a hamster wheel, ever revolving with new recruits, existing staff who forgot what you taught them and team members who may be disengaged.

*Train... Sleep...Repeat...Train...Sleep...Repeat...*

Image Adobe purchase



## Methods

- Applying Malcolm Knowles's learning principles<sup>1</sup>, whereby adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction and are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job and personal life, you must seek out the 'what's in it for me factor?'
- Dramatic advertising, personalised invitations, game shows, role plays, and simulations were embedded within training sessions to enliven even the driest, most mundane, and repetitive topics.

## The invitations

A generic calendar appointment for all staff lacks excitement and creativity. Here are some creative options for advertising and inviting staff to training:

- Personalised invitations printed on Party invites handed out in person or slipped into staff lockers
- Collecting names and slotting people into times whereby creating a sense of importance, exclusivity and an air of 'limited opportunity, don't miss out!'
- Rewards on offer. Make it clear that there will be a reward you just need to understand the audience and their drivers. Certificates of attendance or a supplied morning tea may be the motivating factor.



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## Creative advertising for training

If you have taken the time to design the training materials and devoted your time for the training don't let yourself down by skimping on the promotion of that training.

- Win a Car! style Posters work (just don't let on that it's a Matchbox car)
- The Monday morning stunt. Secretly set up an eye-catching display that will have staff falling all over themselves (hopefully laughing) when they see it.



**In this Promotion 29/30 staff thought it was very funny and they would come to training 1/30 said it was 'too cold on the floor' and they were 'going to talk to the union'!**

## References

- Knowles M. The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species (3rd Ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1984.

## The Beer in the fridge story

A 6-pack of zero alcohol beer was placed prominently in the vaccine fridge. A small note invited the observer to claim a 'prize' for noticing there was contraband in the fridge. On presenting for the 'prize' they were given a chocolate frog and promptly booked in for strive-for-5 cold chain training!

This stunt works well with Pizza Boxes or anything that staff have been trained should not be in the fridge. The Author was asked to remove the beer before the Hospital accreditation visit.



Image Woolworths catalogue

## Training game ideas

Choose your favourite TV game show or party theme for training. Dividing the audience into teams will improve participation through collaboration. Here are a few ideas:

- The Price is Right! When educating on a class of medications have the participants rank the pharmaceuticals in order of lowest to highest value or rank in order of clinical effect. Playing a recording of the theme music will energise and build excitement.

**COME ON DOWN!**



Image source: Etsy purchase

- Pharmacy Feud- this game works well for post lunchtime training when the audience are in a bit of a slump, it will also encourage those staff who normally don't engage. Choose a theme, have a buzzer or bell, the teams compete for the top answers on the Survey board.



Image source: Etsy purchase



- Pass the parcel- rather than the presenter ask the questions and impart the information have the audience do the work. Wrap questions with a small chocolate in wrapping paper and pass the parcel to music. Everyone unwraps a layer, either asking or answering the questions.
- Pitch the audience against each other with a race to complete a task! For example, see who can label eyedrops the fastest while a timer ticks down. The team can vote to decide who's labelling is the best and who gets the wooden spoon.

**Ready...Set...Go!**



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## Results

- Written feedback from revamped training sessions was overwhelmingly positive and pre and post training scores improved. The messages imparted were retained longer when training offered tools to enhance recall and the learning experience was enjoyable for all involved.

## Evaluation/ Implications for practice

- Designing training packages that are reproducible and repetitive need not always apply a set script and dialogue. The trainees, your audience, bring to the table their own experience, injecting an element of difference whereby each session is never truly the same.
- The best advertisement for repeat attendance is staff walking out of training smiling and reporting to others that it was fun and informative.

## Key message

- Working in an organisation that values education and provides the necessary support to trainers is vital to avoid burnout.
- You are only limited by your imagination and possibly a budget for chocolate rewards when designing training to tick those boring boxes in the workplace.