

Six Ways to Make Training Irrelevant

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No one sets out to make training irrelevant, yet many of us fall into some common mistakes that achieve that result. Here are six of the most common design mistakes and how you can avoid them.

Mistake #1: Include fun games and activities that have no relevance to the learning

Ensure that every activity has a clear point and that that point relates to the content of the session. If you do conduct an unrelated activity to provide a break in the learning, be sure to tell the group this and keep the time to a minimum.

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Mistake #2: Take too long to get to the point

Learners are intelligent and if your activities are designed well, they will get the point in a reasonable amount of time. Consider where in an activity the learners are likely to get the point and ensure the activity wraps up soon after that.

Mistake #3: Don't allow time for debrief

In the opposite sense, some activities require participants to process what they have experienced, especially after activities that are experiential. Design in time for participants to discuss what they have learned then summarize the learning points.

Mistake #4: Set people up for failure

Some activities are designed for people to fail (i.e. hide their watch then ask them questions about the numbers and hands to see how observant they are). Although these activities make a point, they risk leaving participants feeling manipulated. Use this type of activity selectively. Ensure that once people start to fail and get the point, they are not expected to stay in that state for long. Move quickly to something more positive. Thank people for participating in activities that may have put them in an uncomfortable position.

Mistake #5: Lecture people on things they already know

Question the need to review information that the group already knows. If only a few people need the information, see if you can deliver it outside of the larger group. If the review is intended to increase retention, use a method that allows participants to share their knowledge. This can be done through quizzes, peer presentations and application activities (where participants apply the knowledge in a specific situation).

Mistake #6: Create busy work

Yes, it may be interesting to have people take coloured cards, write their ideas, share cards, flip chart their answers and present them, but is this really necessary? If these elements of the activity don't add any value, see if you can streamline it to get the ideas shared more directly.