

Handling Trouble Trainees

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Successful training involves more than developing practical objectives, sharing valuable information and providing active learning. Even the most interesting content and effectively designed activities are not completely immune to challenging training situations. Disruptive behaviour by participants is one such training challenge, yet it is a manageable one. Below are some ideas for preventing and addressing disruptive participant behaviour.

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Create buy in.

Participants want to know that they and you are not wasting their time. Therefore, you need to explain the WIIFM (What's in it for me) factor. If you make clear the benefits of the training right from the start, their resistance should dissipate. Better yet, let them determine how they will benefit from the training by asking them directly, or by having them do an activity where the benefits will be revealed to them. Their buy-in will be stronger if they realize how the session will benefit themselves.

Establish ground rules.

Engage participants at the beginning of the session to brainstorm a list of ground rules how the attendees can interact with each other during the session, and how they can help themselves get the most out of the session. By them knowing their role in the session will ensure a

positive learning experience, they are less likely to give you a hard time.

Depersonalize it.

Address the behaviour, not the person, when handling a challenge. To avoid personalizing the situation, mentally separate individuals from the behaviours they exhibit. After all, it is the way the ideas are expressed – not the person – that disturbs the session. Anything you do as a trainer that is seen as unkind to a single participant can negatively affect the whole learning environment, making all participants uncomfortable and discouraging their participation. So go easy on the person and hard on the problem behaviours.

Be firm.

If you encounter someone who consistently dominates the discussion or who challenges everything you say, confront that person. It is best to take the person aside and let them know how their behaviour is affecting the class' learning. Sometimes, these people don't realize the impact of their behaviour. Other times, they just don't want to be there. Ask if there is anything you can do to make the learning experience more engaging for them. Try to stay positive – chances are good that you are not the reason for their resistance.

Keep it on track.

Do not channel too much energy into the challenges posed by one or two participants. Deal with issues as they arise, but for the sake of the class, respond quickly and move on. There's no point in continuing to struggle with individuals who are bent on not learning and on disrupting the learning for those who find the session productive. Your primary responsibility is to help the participants reach their training objectives. Deal with the resistance, but don't let it derail the program.

It may be hard to play second fiddle to your training message. But in the end, what you will gain from setting aside your feelings and focusing on the learners and their needs is confidence in your ability to manage disruption and pride in your professionalism. Good luck!

Links:

<http://www.speakernetnews.com/post/heckler.html>

