

Creative TRAINING TECHNIQUES

A Newsletter of Tips, Tactics and How-Tos for Delivering Effective Training



Bob Pike, Editor

A Few Words from Bob...

Don't wait for "corporate winter" to begin preparing yourself against possible future challenges, changes

If you are reading this in North America, chances are you've been buffeted by some unusually forceful weather in recent weeks and months. Early snows, flooding rains, overflowing rivers and blizzard-blocked highways — extreme weather seems to have become the norm this winter.

It seems too much, at times. How much can we be expected to stand, after all?

The unfortunate answer to that question: As much as we are given. Bad weather, after all, is something that happens, something we have to expect. Not only are we unable to prevent it. Often, we can't even get out of its way when we see it coming.

We *can't* prevent it, but we *can* prepare for it.

Weather isn't limited to the sky. An

analogous phenomenon takes place in all of our organizations. Reorganizations, downsizings, mergers, changes of leadership — these are the blizzards and floods of the business world. We can't always see them coming, and we can't accurately predict the severity of their effects on us and those around us.

It doesn't help to complain. Organizational change is as inevitable as winter. We can't prevent workplace "storms." But we can prepare.

Consider your value to the organization. If resources become limited, are you part of the emergency response team, or are you more likely to be washed away? And what about your flexibility? If the road you are on is blocked with organizational snow, are

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Tip of the Month

Internet provides free fun in form of origami



Looking for a quick energizer? A gift team members can award to one another?

A way to demonstrate the importance of working carefully?

Keith Korbut suggests searching the key word "origami" on the Internet. You'll find ready-to-print patterns for dozens of animals, airplanes, and

flowers, he says, all made using the Japanese paper-folding art of origami.

They're fun, they're plentiful, they're versatile, and best of all, Korbut says, they're free.

Korbut is a trainer with Monsanto Co., Indian Orchard, MA, e-mail: kakorb@ccmail.monsanto.com.

you responsive enough to take another route?

One way to shore up against corporate bad weather is to make your influence felt high in the organization before rough times reach you. Communicate regularly with the supervisors of the people you train. Tell them what you're doing and how students are responding. Ask them for input. Suggest programs they may not have considered.

Management-level people, in hard times, are often forced to think strictly in terms of dollars. Have you calculated the value of the training you provide, in terms of increased productivity, reduced turnover, or lowered rates of injury? Don't wait until bad weather to build that dike. Oftentimes, if trainers aren't prepared to prove it, their services are considered an expense, not an asset.

Usually, we get a brief warning before a change in the corporate winds. Pay attention, and be prepared to act. If your organization's new mission statement stresses quality, make sure you're doing the same, stressing it both in the classroom and in your own performance.

If the newspaper says your company is gaining notoriety for slow delivery, work proactively to do what you can do with training to alleviate that issue *before* someone comes down from upstairs to ask for your help. Make sure you're one step ahead *and* do what you can to be certain people know it.

You can't change the "weather." But you can stay alert and prepared. And when things get rough, remember, right after winter comes spring.

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Delivery

Overfilled container demonstrates the importance of prioritization



Kristin Arnold teaches the importance of prioritizing tasks with the following exercise, using one tennis ball and container, five golf balls, and a Ziploc bag of black-eyed peas:

◆ Ask for a show of hands from anyone who likes to play tennis. Throw a tennis ball to one of the hand-raisers.

◆ Ask if anyone likes to play golf. Toss golf balls to five participants.

◆ Ask if anyone likes black-eyed peas. Ask a participant to hold the bag of peas.

◆ Explain to the participants that the tennis ball is your "A" task — absolutely vital and must be done; the golf balls are your "B" tasks — important and should be done; and the peas are your "C" tasks — the "fast and friendly" tasks that could be done but are not essential.

◆ Ask students to assess realistically how they begin their day. Suggest that most people begin with some "fast and friendly" tasks that don't present too much of a challenge. Most will agree.

◆ Offer the tennis ball canister to the participant with the peas, and ask the person to pour about a third of the peas into the can. This represents the time spent on minor tasks at the beginning of the day.

◆ Ask, "What do we usually tackle next?" Most of the class will agree that a secondary task (represented by the golf balls) often comes next. Instruct two or three of the people with golf balls to add them to the canister.

◆ Suggest that, with the day well under way, perhaps it is time to tackle the big job of the day. Ask the holder of the tennis ball — the "A" task — to put it in the can.

◆ Ask students to continue "prioritizing" until the can is full. The result: All the materials will not fit.

◆ Empty the can and demonstrate how re-prioritizing things makes it possible to "fit everything in." Begin with the "A" task, follow with the "B" tasks, and conclude by pouring the peas into the canister. Everything fits easily.

◆ Discuss the way minor tasks always seem to fit in around the edges, while major tasks usually need to be given their space early, or there simply won't be enough room in the day to get everything done.

Important note: Test the volume of your canister before the session to be sure the volume of the three items *doesn't* fit in the wrong way and *does* fit in the right way. Adjust the number of golf balls and peas accordingly.

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