

# Quarterly Newsletter

# Instructor Connections

Fall 2007

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## Managing Group Learning

With training demand increasing, instructors have to find new creative training techniques to educate trainees while managing a controlled learning environment. One popular teaching method is to have the trainees participate in small social groups. "Research strongly suggests that more than 75% of all learners prefer to learn as a part of a group rather than by themselves," states Robert Pike (2003), author of *The Complete Guide to Training Delivery: A Competency-Based Approach*. The key to getting students to actively learn is to transfer the learning from the instructor to the students by creating small groups in which students can interact. A common misunderstanding is that instructors believe they lose control of the class by doing this. "Rather, responsibility for control passes from the instructor to a group leader. Chaos doesn't reign, learning does" (Pike, 2003).

In order to create this conducive learning environment, instructors should implement a creative training technique which links the learning material with a group activity. Finding your creative training technique allows "a system that most often is instructor-led, but remains participant-centered. The focus is always on what will help people learn best" (Pike, 2003). This benefits the students by increasing their learning curve and attention span. Responsibility still falls on the instructor to manage and control what the students discuss in their groups, but instead of acting as a lecturer, the instructor takes the role of a supervisor, pointing trainees in the right direction for topic discussion.

So how do you manage students in the small groups to ensure participation in the discussion? "When responsibility and control are shifted to the learners during a group activity, you must carefully monitor the groups to ensure that people understand the directions, stay on task, avoid problems, and meet expectations" says King et al (2001) in *Creative Training Techniques Handbook: Tips, Tactics, and How-To's for Delivering Effective Training, 3rd Edition*. Listed below are five ground rules that instructors can use in their trainings to maximize the learning capability of the students, while still maintaining control of the class.

- Encourage everyone to participate
- Keep an open mind to new ideas and opinions
- Manage the time and complete the tasks on time
- Be respectful of others and let everyone express their views and opinions
- Strive to reach consensus in group discussions

These sample rules are a good backbone for successful group discussions. Instructors should implement social group discussion as often as possible during the learning process. "Learning is a social experience," states Pike, (2003) an experience from which instructors and students will both benefit. Instructors will find that they do not have to work as meticulously to educate the trainees, while the students find they are retaining more information from their group discussions. It is a win-win situation for both!

### References:

- KING, S.B., KING, M., and ROTHWELL, W.J. (2001) *The Complete Guide to Training Delivery: A Competency-Based Approach*. AMACOM. Copyright AMACOM
- PIKE, R.W. (2003) *Creative Training Techniques Handbook: Tips, Tactics, and How-To's for Delivering Effective Training, 3rd Edition*. Human Resource Development Press Copyright Robert W. Pike, CSP, CPAE-Speakers Hall of Fame

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## The Workplace Learning Resource Center Update

The new Workplace Learning Resource Center (WpLRC), hosted by Training and Development Solutions at Chabot-Las Positas, is now fully operational. The new center will expand the provision of workplace learning services in the region, delivering a variety of customized workplace learning services to improve workers' basic skills and expanding customized assessment and training services for regional businesses.

"There is a great need for a fully-skilled, high performance workforce in the region and I am looking forward to leading the efforts of the Chabot-Las Positas Community College District's WpLRC" said Judi Watkins, Project Director, WpLRC. Judi was recently hired as the Project Director and brings an extensive background in economic and workforce development to the position.

The WpLRC Advisory Board has met, and is forging ahead with developing a regional service plan to respond to the needs of business and industry. The Board consists of a broad-based representation of government, business and industry, economic development organizations and regional colleges.

## SME Profile: Sandra Moody



Sandra Moody began her relationship with TDS in Spring 2007 as a veteran consultant and experienced instructor specializing in human resource development and health promotion education. Sandra's outgoing personality, friendly manner, background and skills make her a valuable resource as a soft skills instructor. Sandra has facilitated such trainings as "Listening to Get Things Done" for U.S. Food Service and an in-house training for the District's Facilities Department in "Team Building."

Sandra has extensive training in the area of human development, behavioral and positive psychology, coaching, and health education. She earned her M.S. in Counseling and B.A. in Human Development from California State University, Hayward. In addition, she has obtained certification as an International Trainer, Wellness Coach, Lifestyle Counselor; and is a qualified Myers-Briggs Facilitator with the Association of Psychological Type.

## News you Need to Know

- ✓ **Occasionally TDS gets a client referral from one of our SMEs** – It may be for a client who needs training outside the referring instructor's area of expertise, or it might be one of the instructor's clients that finds reassurance in the backing of a state-wide institution, and wants to work with the community college. Whatever the reason, when we get referrals, whenever possible, we give the referring SME the assignment. When the client contacts us for additional services we honor the existing relationship between the SME and the client, as the TDS contract requires. All training with the client is offered first to the referring SME to provide instruction as appropriate, before offering the gig to other SMEs. Call if we can assist you in winning business – when we team together, we all win!
- ✓ **TDS can provide procedural documentation and standardization for clients** – Many of the challenges facing today's companies involve the accurate transfer of knowledge from one shift to another or from one generation to another. The creation and use of clearly written procedures increases the company's ability to provide production efficiency and consistency, better customer service, as well as increase employee satisfaction in the workplace. If you know a company that would benefit from process documentation or the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), let us know because we can help.

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