

THIAGI GAMELETTER: February 2009

SERIOUSLY FUN ACTIVITIES FOR TRAINERS, FACILITATORS, PERFORMANCE CONSULTANTS, AND MANAGERS.

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Mission

To increase and improve the use of interactive, experiential strategies to improve human performance in an effective, efficient, and enjoyable way.

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Feedback Request

Thiagi believes in practicing what he preaches. This is an interactive newsletter, so interact already! Send us your feedback, sarcastic remarks, and gratuitous advice through email to thiagi@thiagi.com . Thanks!

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Debriefing Game 1

DISTRIBUTED DEBATES

In the August 2008 issue of *TGL*, I explored the concept of [debriefing games](#) along with a model for debriefing, a sample activity called [DOLLAR AUCTION](#), and five different debriefing games. Let me continue this exploration in this issue with three more games that refer back to the same debriefing model and to DOLLAR AUCTION.

DISTRIBUTED DEBATES is especially effective for use in the do-you-agree phase of debriefing. It encourages participants to generate hypotheses and to check them against data and logic.

Flow of the Activity

1. Prior to conducting this debriefing game, think up a set of hypotheses related to the base activity. Here are four sample hypotheses related to the DOLLAR AUCTION:

- Extroverts get trapped in the bidding more frequently than introverts.
- The only way to enjoy this activity is not to participate.
- The only way to avoid excessive losses during the final stages of the auction is to negotiate with the other bidder.

- The presence of other participants in this activity encourages the two competing bidders in their dysfunctional behaviors.

Present each hypothesis and briefly explain it.

2. Divide the participants into twice as many teams as there are hypotheses. In our example, if we use the four hypotheses listed above, we will create eight teams.
3. Assign two teams to each hypothesis. Between these two teams, identify one as the *supporter* and the other as the *attacker*.
4. Give sufficient time for each team to reflect on the experiences during the DOLLAR AUCTION, recall similar real-life experiences, and come up with arguments to support or to reject the hypothesis.
5. Select a team at random and give it a couple of minutes to present its case. Immediately after this, ask the opposing team to present its case.
6. Continue this procedure of each pair of teams presenting their cases.
7. After all cases have been presented, ask participants to identify the team in each pair which made a more logical argument.

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Debriefing Game 2

20 QUESTIONS

Here's another debriefing game in which you divide participants into different groups and let them debrief themselves.

Flow of the Activity

1. To prepare for the game, generate 20 questions about the base activity. Refer to "A Model for Debriefing" in the August 2008 [debriefing games](#) article.

2. Organize the participants into teams of four to seven.
3. Explain that you are going to ask a series of questions. Each participant should think of the answer—without blurting it out.
4. Each participant now turns to the player on his or her left and whispers a prediction of how the player on the right will respond.
5. Participants take turns giving their personal responses. If a response matches the prediction, the predictor scores one point.
6. The game continues in this fashion with you asking one question at a time.

Sample Questions

Here are the 20 questions we recently used for debriefing a group that participated in DOLLAR AUCTION:

1. What word best describes your feelings during the auction?
2. What word best describes the probable feeling of the second-highest bidder at the conclusion of the auction?
3. What encouraged some people to participate in the initial bidding?
4. Why did some participants not bid at all?
5. Why did participants continue to bid beyond a dollar?
6. Do you agree that eventually all bidding will be restricted to just two participants?
7. Do you agree the best way to enjoy this game is to get the mischief started and then drop out?
8. Do you agree that men tend to bid more aggressively than women?
9. What if we auctioned off \$500 instead of just \$1? How would that have changed the participants' behaviors?
10. What if the profits from this auction were contributed to some charity? How would

that have changed the participants' behaviors?

11. What if we auctioned off some merchandise (such as a book) instead of money? How would that have changed the participants' behaviors?
12. What if all bidders (instead of just the top two) were required to pay the amount they bid? How would that have changed the participants' behaviors?
13. What if you could skip increments during the bidding? How would that have changed the participants' behaviors?
14. What real-life behaviors does this activity simulate?
15. What is a real-world equivalent of bidding more than a dollar for a dollar?
16. If we conducted another auction under the same rules, how would you behave differently?
17. What advice would you give to somebody who does not know how this auction usually ends up?
18. This activity illustrates people throwing good money after bad. What real-world examples can you give of this type of behavior?
19. This activity also illustrates the principle of escalation in which one person's action decreases his or her pain and increases the other person's pain—and sets up a vicious cycle. What real-world examples of escalations can you think of?
20. What changes would you make in DOLLAR AUCTION to make it more interesting?

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Debriefing Game 3

SUDDEN DEBRIEF

In the January 2009 issue of *TGL* we explored different applications of a framegame called

SUDDEN SURVEY. Here's the transformation of this framegame into a debriefing game.

Purpose

- To collect baseline information on participants' current knowledge and opinions on different topics related to performance management.
- To build upon this base and explore additional concepts, ideas, and issues related to the topic.

Participants

Minimum: 18

Maximum: Any number

Best: 24 to 36

Note: Participants will be divided into four to six teams.

Time Requirement

45 to 60 minutes

Supplies

- Question cards
- Sheets of flip chart paper
- Felt-tipped markers
- Timer
- Whistle

Preparation

Prepare question cards. Come up with four to six questions related to the earlier activity that you want to debrief. Here are the five questions that we came up with for debriefing DOLLAR AUCTION.

- What were your feelings when the auction ended?
- What behaviors during the auction surprised you the most?

- What lessons did you learn from the auction?
- What advice would give to a future participant?
- What real-world behaviors are similar to those exhibited during this auction?

Create a question card for each of the five questions. For example, if you have 20 participants, you will need to make four copies of each question card. Here's a sample question card:

You are a member of Team 1.

Your Team's Question:

What behaviors during the auction surprised you the most?

Schedule

- ***Planning.*** 2 minutes to plan how to collect responses from other participants.
- ***Data Collection.*** 3 minutes to collect responses from other participants.
- ***Analysis.*** 3 minutes to analyze and summarize the responses.
- ***Report.*** 1 minute to present your summary report.
- ***Discussion.*** 3 minutes to participate in a discussion of the question and responses.

Flow

Brief the participants. Explain that you are going to conduct an activity called SUDDEN DEBRIEF. This activity will involve all participants collecting and sharing useful information for debriefing.

Explain the activity. Tell participants that you are going to organize them into five teams. Each team will be assigned a different debriefing question related to the game that they experienced earlier. Instruct the teams to collect information from all participants—including members of their own team—related to the question assigned to them.

Set the agenda. Explain the following schedule:

- 2 minutes to plan how to collect responses from other participants.
- 3 minutes to collect responses from other participants.
- 3 minutes to analyze and summarize the responses.
- 1 minute to present your summary report.
- 3 minutes to participate in a discussion of the question and responses.

Make team allocations. Shuffle the packet of question cards and ask each participant to take a card. Ask participants to find other members of their team who have a card with the same question. Invite each team to gather around in a convenient corner.

Coordinate the planning activity. Ask each team to begin planning how to collect responses from everyone in the room (including members of their own team). Announce a 2-minute time limit and start the timer.

After 1 minute, announce a 1-minute warning. After 2 minutes, announce the end of the planning period.

Coordinate the information-collection activity. Announce that each team now has 3 minutes to collect responses on the question assigned to it. Get out of the way as everyone tries to talk to as many others as possible. Announce a 3 minute time limit and start the timer.

After 2 minutes, announce a 1-minute warning. After 3 minutes, announce the end of the survey period.

Coordinate the analysis activity. Ask participants to return to their teams. Invite team members to share and organize all the responses they collected. Distribute a sheet of flip chart paper to each team and ask teams to summarize their results on this sheet. Announce a 3 minute time limit and start the timer.

After 2 minutes, announce a 1-minute warning. After 3 minutes, announce the end of the analysis period.

Coordinate the reporting activity. Randomly select a team and ask it to display the flip

chart poster. Ask a representative from this team to present its results and conclusions. Start the timer and announce the end of the reporting period at the end of 1 minute.

Discuss the topic. Comment on the information summarized by the team. Correct any major errors or misconceptions. Provide additional information that is relevant to the question. Invite participants to discuss the question, responses, and your comments.

Repeat this procedure with each team's report.

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Graphics Game

VALUES COMPASS by Gareth Kingston



In this game, team members give instructions to a blindfolded teammate to trace a path and reach the end goal. Instead of calling out "up", "down", "north", or "south", they identify the directions by yelling out their company's values.

Purpose

- To reinforce company values
- To explore the benefits of shared values

Supplies

- 2 flip charts
- marker
- 2 blindfolds

Preparation

Prepare the flip charts by drawing a simple spiral path on each of them. The path should

have vertical and horizontal straight lines. Draw the following path on the first flip chart:

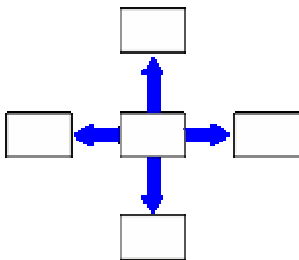


Draw the following path on the second flip chart:



Flow

1. Introduce the company values and discuss the importance of these values.
2. Divide the participants into two groups. Ask each group to create a compass using the five values (most companies have five values) writing each value randomly into one of the boxes in a compass figure (as shown below) to create their compass.



3. Ask each team to nominate a member to be blindfolded. Ask this member to memorize the values compass before she is blindfolded. Inform the blindfolded people that they will have to trace the line from the beginning to the end. They will be guided by their teammates who will be shouting the values to direct them.
4. Explain the constraints. Team members cannot touch the blindfolded person. They may not use words that refer to directions (such as North, East, South, West, up, down, left, or right).
5. Start the activity by placing the index finger of the blindfolded participants at the beginning location. Ask the teammates to give directions by using only the values they wrote on the compass figure. The blindfolded participant should move her finger along the

line. If she goes off the line, she has to return to the beginning and start all over again.

6. Give useful tips. Point out that the value associated with the middle position of the compass is the equivalent of "Stop". Suggest to the blindfolded person that she move her finger slowly and be ready to stop whenever her teammates yell out the appropriate value.

7. When one of the blindfolded participants reaches the ending location inside the matrix, stop the activity. Congratulate the winning contestant and her team of advisors.

Some Debriefing Suggestions

- You did not specify a goal for the path tracing activity. The two groups may focus on different outcomes: one may focus on quality while the other may focus on speed. What is the consequence of these different goals? Where do we find such alternative goals in our company?
- In some groups, participants may enthusiastically shout out values directions, while in other groups, participants may consider the activity to be trivial and leave one person to shout out navigation suggestions for the blindfolded person. What makes participants have different preferences and values?
- What roles evolved in the two groups? What were similar and what were different?
- If we define values as shared set of principles, how do we all live the values in our company?

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Jolt Principles

How To Benefit from A Jolt Without Conducting It

Here are seven situations in which I don't use a jolt, even though they could be highly appropriate:

1. I haven't earned enough trust among the participants to trap them with a jolt.

2. The jolt deals with a controversial topic.
3. The room setup does not permit participants moving around, pairing up, or working in teams.
4. I don't have enough participants to produce the maximum impact of the jolt.
5. I have been using too many jolts already.
6. I don't have enough time for an appropriate debriefing discussion.
7. I am conducting a webinar.

In these situations, I prefer to let the participants vicariously experience the jolt. Instead of conducting the jolt, I tell them what happened with an actual or fictional group that experienced the jolt at an earlier time. I use my best storytelling techniques and describe the situation in detail. I pause at a critical juncture in my story and ask participants "What do think the people did at this situation?" (To avoid entrapment, I never ask, "What would you have done in this situation?") Participants' responses usually contain the same types of mindless decisions that occur when I actually conduct the jolt. At a convenient juncture, I reveal the more mindful and effective responses participants could have provided. I debrief the group by asking them to speculate on how the fictional participants felt. Using this approach, I let participants receive valuable insights from the vicarious jolt without having to embarrass themselves.

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Jolt

SYNCHRONIZED CLAPPING

This is perhaps my favorite jolt. It lasts for a very short period of time and requires no props or handouts. You can use it with groups of any size.

I was surprised when someone pointed out that they had not seen my version in print. So here it is.

Purpose

To emphasize that action speaks louder than words.

Participants

Any number

Time

2 minutes for the activity. At least 10 minutes for debriefing.

Flow

Ask everyone to clap her hands once. Pause while participants do this.

Complain that the clapping performance was ragged. You want participants to synchronize their claps so that outsiders will hear a single thunderous sound.

Explain that you will provide a non-electronic performance support system to synchronize participants' clapping: You will count "One, two, three" and then you will say, "Clap". Ask everyone to wait until you say, "Clap" before they clap simultaneously.

Count "One, two, three". Immediately after three, clap your hands (without saying "Clap"). After most participants have clapped their hands, act surprised and say, "Clap".

Ask participants why they did not follow the instructions and wait until you said, "Clap" before clapping their hands. Someone will probably say, "But you clapped your hand..." Ask if they would jump off a cliff just because you did.

Debriefing

Ask participants what they learned from the activity. Discuss alternative learning points that they offer.

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Brian's Words



Brian Remer is Creative Learning Director at The Firefly Group (brian@thefirefly.org). In addition to being a master of the 99-words format, Brian invents games and interactive strategies to expand learning and deepen insights. To find out more about him, read his August 2004 [Guest Gamer Interview](#).

Problems, Pressure, Pie! **by Brian Remer**

Problems, Pressure, Pie!

My wife makes pies. I roll out the crusts. It's tricky to get a perfectly round, thin circle of dough. Any imperfection in the edge of the ball of dough gets worse under the rolling pin. Every tiny crack, under pressure, gets magnified into a huge gash. My early pie crusts looked like Norwegian fjords!

Experience has taught me to cut off the "peninsulas" and patch them over the "chasms" as I go along—before they become too exaggerated.

When the pressure's off, pay attention to the details so they don't become big problems later on.

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Check It Out

Training Magazine Network

Have you experienced online social learning communities? If yes, here's another useful community for you to join. If no, this community will provide you with an excellent introduction to online social networking. Membership in the Training Magazine Network (<http://trainingmagnetnetwork.com/>) is free. When you join, you network with global learning professionals.

Valuable Webinars

As a member of the network, you also get to attend free monthly webinars. Previous webinars were conducted by Tony Karrer, Jay Cross, Bob Pike, Anders Gronstedt, and Sivasailam Thiagarajan (hey, that's me). Karen Hyder is scheduled to conduct a webinar on February 18th titled *The Tricks of Master Virtual Presenters*.

Free Learning Tools

Here are some online widgets that you get to download and use for free:

- Measure Return On Learning (ROL) fast, easily and free
- CoachLine Coaching 2.0 widget
- Create not Rapid, but Instant Learning
- Socio-Metric widget plots relationships, application of learning and tangible results of learning

Downloadable MicroGames

As a member of this community you can download the interactive, fun, and engaging online games. You can change the logo, test questions, passing score, number of tests, and other features of these games. You can use the games that you created to make your e-learning programs more engaging. Download the games and read the editing guidelines to get started.

Learn from Experience

There are several other advantages of joining this community. Rather than me describing them, why not visit the [Training Magazine Network](#) and discover them for yourself.

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Single Item Survey

What Changes Do You Anticipate? by Tracy Tagliati



2009 promises to be a year of dramatic change. With this in mind, here's this issue's single item survey:

What changes do you anticipate in the fields of training, facilitation, development, and performance improvement? What trends have you already spotted in these fields?

Here are some trends that I have spotted:

1. All training is becoming increasingly interactive.
2. Most training is migrating to the Internet. Most often, the decision to go online is based on economic—and not on instructional—grounds.
3. Most new hires have been brought up on video games. They have very short attention spans and are easily bored by lecture presentations.

To send your questions, visit [this survey page](#) (opens in a new window). You may send more than one response. You may include your name along with your response or keep it anonymous. You may check out other people's responses by clicking the "Peer Answers" button before or after you send your response.

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