PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE: October 2001

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

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

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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Editorial

That Was Not a Simulation

The rules have changed forever.

I am typing this on board the greatly-delayed US Airlines Flight 4761 from LaGuardia to Indianapolis.

Earlier this week, on September 11th, five of my friends and I were planning a workshop in Mohonk, NY, a scant 103 miles from Ground Zero. Around 9 AM, one of the hotel employees rushed into our meeting room, told us about the World Trade Center "accident," and wheeled in a television set. During the ensuing hours we multitasked between getting ready for the afternoon's workshop and discussing the implications of the terrorist attack.

The next day, I drove to LaGuardia airport hoping to catch a flight to San Antonio to conduct another workshop. Instead, I spent the next five days at the airport Courtyard Marriott waiting for the next flight to Indianapolis.

During this enforced vacation, I became frightened, worried about hasty retaliation, and reflected on my reactions. I designed peace games and created structures for debriefing trauma victims. I realized that different people cope in different ways. My preference is to be alone to reflect and write. Others prefer to share their feelings and emotions with strangers in the hotel lobby. Still others don't want anyone to intrude.

May you find peace and hope by using your personal style of coping.

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Conference

Play for Performance? Experience It!

There is a difference between reading about interactive experiential strategies and observing a skilled facilitator conducting them. And there is a difference between observing a facilitator and actually participating in an experiential activity.

Many *PFP* readers are involved in NASAGA 2001—as organizers, facilitators, and participants. It's not too late for you to join them. For more details, please visit

the NASAGA 2001 page on www.nasaga.org. You can register online.

This is what Chris Saeger, who was a staff member at the national headquarters of American Red Cross, says about last year's NASAGA conference:

> This conference has provided me with more practical and immediately useful material than any other conference I have attended. The conference has directly contributed to my ability to create award winning training programs. Most importantly, my organization has benefited through improved training. The people that attend my training programs come away confident that they have the skills they need and they are excited about putting the new skills into action.

This is what Matt Richter, an experienced trainer, says about NASAGA conferences:

> You don't have to be an accountant to do this cost-effectiveness comparison. No where else can you get four whole days of such effective hands-on professional development (including a full-day workshop) for less than $500!

Most NASAGA sessions devote 80 percent of their time to actual interaction, debriefing, and application discussions. NASAGA 2001 conference features several new and classic training games of different types. The facilitators include well-known game designers such as Andrew Kimball, Becky Mills, Brian Remer, Charles Petranek, Chris Saeger, Judee Blohm, Kat Koppett, Kevin Eikenberry, Lou Russell, Matt Richter, Mel Silberman, Susan El-Shamy, and couple of others with complex last names.

See you at NASAGA 2001!

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Commentary

More Misconceptions About Simulation

Last month, I discussed these four misconceptions about simulations and simulation games:

- All simulations are basically the same. If you have seen one, you have seen them all.
- Simulations reflect reality.
- Simulations are primarily used for technical training.

- High-fidelity simulations are more effective than low-fidelity simulations.

This month I would like to explore four more misconceptions.

Training Objectives

Misconception: *All simulations are directly related to training objectives.*

Actually, we can classify simulations into three major types, based on the relationship between the learning training objective and what is being simulated:

Type 1: Simulation is directly related to the learning objectives. Let us assume that we are training people how to form effective, high-performance virtual teams. In an online simulation called sTEAM, players are given the mission statement for a team, a budget, and a schedule. They are also provided with profiles of 60 imaginary employees around the world with information about their technical expertise, personality characteristics, geographic location, current workload, and previous experience with virtual teams. The player races against a timer to review the profiles and assemble the best virtual team to accomplish the specified mission at the least cost. In this simulation, what the player does online faithfully reflects the real-world task.

Type 2: Simulation is indirectly related to the learning objectives. Same situation, but a different approach: Players from around the world participate in an online simulation called EMPIRE that deals with the administration of remote outposts of the galactic federation. These players interact with each other through an online forum to detect and destroy local rebels. After completing the simulation, players reflect on their experience and identify factors that facilitated and hampered their work as an effective virtual team. In this simulation, the content of EMPIRE has nothing to do with the real world. However, the processes used by the players incorporate teamwork competencies that are related to the learning objectives.

Type 3: Simulation has nothing to do with the learning objectives. Here's another approach to the same topic of establishing high-performance virtual teams. Before playing the game, participants read an article on characteristics of effective virtual teams. An online simulation game called SPY STORY features a thrilling scenario in which the player roams around a graphic screen display, shooting down enemy agents. During the game, whenever an enemy agent appears, a multiple-choice question pops up on the screen. If the player selects the correct answer, the enemy is killed. Otherwise, the player becomes weaker. After 10 mistakes, the player dies. In SPY STORY, there is no connection between the scenario and the training objectives. The simulation merely provides extrinsic reward to participants for reading and recalling information from the article.

Each of these three types of simulation games has its own advantages and

disadvantages. Exactly which type to use depends on the nature of the objectives, the characteristics of the learners, and your own preferences and competencies.

Design Of Simulations

Misconception: *The best way to design a simulation is to use a systematic approach.*

Actually, simulation designers use a variety of techniques. Most traditional designers tend to have a systems background and to prefer a rational step-by-step approach. Others have an instructional design background. They too prefer an algorithmic, engineering model for designing their simulations. This systematic approach is the design procedure of choice for creating high-fidelity simulations in areas where basic algorithms and proven principles exist. This approach usually results in effective simulations—which are frequently mechanical, dull, uninteresting, and heavily didactic.

During the past 20 years, I have been tracking down and reviewing popular and powerful simulation games used for training purposes. These games have been created by a diverse group of designers including Garry Shirts, Fred Goodman, Ken Jones, Richard Powers, Dianne Saphiere, and Richard Duke. A common element among all these effective simulation games appears to be a creative spark. For example, in Garry Shirts' (1968) STARPOWER, this creative element is the hidden twist that guarantees that the simulation will self-destruct. In Fred Goodman's (1970) THEY SHOOT MARBLES, DON'T THEY?, it is the elegant simplicity of the few rules that the participants use to generate additional rules. In interviewing these creative simulation designers, it is clear to me that they do not use a systematic approach. My anecdotal data suggest that creative simulation designers go through idiosyncratic processes that share the following features:

- The designers spend an enormous amount of time in experiencing, analyzing, organizing, and questioning the background information. They re-examine the information from the points of view of different stakeholders.
- They ignore the task for periods of time ranging from a few hours to several years.
- They reach a magical moment (or imagine they do) when the critical core of the simulation becomes clear.
- They rapidly put together a crude prototype of the simulation, using materials at hand.
- They play test the prototype in their imagination and make appropriate adjustments.
- They play test the simulation with their friends and other guinea pigs and make appropriate adjustments.

- They repeat the play testing and revision until they are satisfied with the simulation (or give up in disgust).
- They let go of the simulation and let others use it.
- From time to time, they re-examine the simulation, talk to participants and facilitators, and make continuous improvements.

The question about simulation design is not whether a systematic approach is better than a chaotic approach, but rather which approach (or combination of approaches) best suits your temperament and the task at hand. Flexible design requires the use of both the engineer's and the artist's approaches to creating simulations.

Simulation Formats

Misconception: *You should complete your analyses before selecting a suitable format for the simulation.*

In my experience, I have discovered that I cannot complete my analyses before selecting a suitable format for the simulation. This is similar to the media selection activity in instructional design. Everyone is familiar with the ideal concept of selecting the best training medium on the basis of task, learner, and system variables. However, experienced instructional designers are aware that nobody waits to select the suitable media until all the analyses are completed. The most effective approach is to select the media at the same time that you do the analyses. Similarly, in simulation game design the most practical approach is to tentatively select a simulation format sometime during the initial stages of the analysis and use this choice to guide the remaining stages of analysis. This makes logical sense since the choice of the simulation format has important implications for which aspects of the system is to be analyzed.

One of the common characteristics among expert designers is their familiarity with different simulation formats. Because of this, they are able to rapidly select the most appropriate format and use it as a template for their design. Here are a few formats that I regularly use in my design activities, each illustrated with an imaginary simulation:

Graphic models. This format is particularly suitable for modeling of complex situations. Its use involves mapping the process, identifying critical variables, and depicting their interrelationships in a diagrammatic format. A simulation called AUDIENCE REACTION is a huge graphic job aid with flowcharts, decision trees, and if-then diagrams linking various factors that influence the impact of a conference presentation. This type of simulation can also be presented as a computer graphic with the convenience of zooming in and out.

Playing card simulations. This format is particularly suited for interpersonal processes (such as negotiation, bargaining, cooperation, competition, and escalation). The suits and values of playing cards represent different values

while the play objective, procedures, and scoring reflect different behaviors and their consequences. In NEGOTIATE each player receives five cards. Players show their cards to each other and collaboratively create sequences of cards of the same suit. Since only the longest sequence receives score points, players negotiate with each other for the formation of sequences and for the division of rewards. In the process of participating in this simulation, players experience the impact of different negotiation strategies.

Race games. This CHUTES AND LADDERS format is particularly suited for exploring processes and procedures. Players go through a process (such as looking for a job, selling electronic products, or solving problems creatively) on a game board, one space at a time. Dice and chance cards supplement the game board. Participants' progress is accelerated or decelerated by intentional choices and chance elements that reflect real-world elements.

Cyclical games. This MONOPOLY format is particularly suited for repeated cycles of activities. The board game POLICIES reflects problems facing villages in third-world countries. At the beginning of each round, competing teams distribute their chips among different developmental sectors such as health, agriculture, education, and transportation. They throw dice, advance through spaces on the board, and land on areas that contain chance cards. Based on the team's initial allocation of resources and the stage of development, different consequences follow.

Interactive fiction. This DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS format is particularly suited for exploring decision-making. In NOVELTY, players begin with the first chapter of a novel about the marketing of an innovative software package. At the end of the chapter, the story stops at a critical juncture and requires the reader to make a decision. The choice of the decision directs the reader to another page, where the story continues-and stops at the next critical juncture requiring another decision. When the entire novel is completed, the reader is awarded an appropriate score to reflect the most probable consequences of his or her decisions.

Production simulations. This format is particularly suitable as a final training activity—or as an initial implementation activity—for cross-functional teams. PAGE 1, a simulation of publishing a newsletter, requires the integration of editorial, graphics, and desktop publishing functions. Different teams are supplied with the same graphics, typewritten copy, and camera-ready advertisements. In a 2-hour period, teams select appropriate content and layout the front page of a newsletter, typeset it, and produce a camera-ready copy. A panel of judges critically evaluates the outputs of different teams and identifies winners along different criteria.

After The Simulation

Misconception: *People learn from their experiences with the simulation.*

One of the realities of experiential learning is that people don't learn from experience—unless they take to reflect on that experience, derive useful lessons from it, and identify situations to transfer and apply these lessons.

To the designer and to the facilitator, the simulation has a salient message. But to most participants, the experience is chaos and confusion. They are not in a position to learn anything worthwhile unless they are required and encouraged to reflect on the experience through the process of *debriefing*.

Structured approaches to debriefing are more effective in ensuring learning than unstructured approaches. Most of these approaches incorporate these standard steps:

- Emotional ventilation to let off steam. This makes it easier for participants to analyze their experiences in a more objective fashion.
- Role dropping to return to reality from the simulated environment.
- Revealing the intentions, variables, and procedures used in the simulation game, especially if participants have been misled earlier to increase the psychological impact of the experience.
- Insight sharing to exchange participants' perceptions. This provides a set of generalizations for discussion.
- Generating hypotheses to suggest cause-effect relationships. This provides principles for extended exploration.
- Reality check to evaluate the authenticity of the experiences. This prevents overgeneralizations from the simplified simulation to the real world.
- Real-world transfer to discuss the application of the principles to the workplace. This reinforces future uses of present insights.
- What-ifs to speculate on the effects of imaginary changes in the context of the experience. This permits extrapolation of the principles.

Debriefing is too important to be relegated to an afterthought to simulation design. No simulation package can be considered complete without an extensive debriefing guide.

A Checklist

Here's a checklist to ensure that you avoid potential problems due to these misconceptions while designing your next simulation game:

- Explicitly present the model behind your simulation so that trainers can make an informed decision about whether to use your simulation.
- During the debriefing activity, explain your model, discuss its limitations, and compare it with major alternative models.
- Decide at what level (mega, macro, or micro) your simulation reflects reality. Stay at this level throughout your simulation.
- Remember that there are many different simulation formats. Select the most appropriate format to suit your needs and constraints.

- Don't limit your simulations to training. Experiment with alternative uses of simulations to strengthen different types of performance-improvement strategies.
- Choose the most appropriate level of fidelity to suit your needs. Insights gained from low-fidelity simulations apply to a wide range of situations; skills learned from high-fidelity simulations can be more reliably applied. In general, use low-fidelity simulations for interpersonal skills and high-fidelity simulations for technical procedures.
- Remember that there are many different approaches for designing a simulation. Select and use the approach that suits your training objectives and constraints.
- Be sure to allocate plenty of time for designing a debriefing guide for your simulation. Write this guide before and during the design of your simulation rather than postponing it to the end.

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Tool Kit

Trainers and facilitators can use a variety of interactive, experiential strategies to improve human performance. Based on his two decades of research, Thiagi has identified, catalogued, and explored several different strategies. You may periodically review a constantly expanding list (currently with 53 items) of these strategies.

In each issue of **Play for Performance***, the Tool Kit section explores a specific interactive strategy and presents practical suggestions and field-tested examples.*

Assessment-Based Learning Activities

Assessment-Based Learning Activities (ABLAs) require participants to complete a test, a rating scale, or a questionnaire and receive a score (and other feedback) about their personal competencies, attitudes, or personality traits. In some ABLAs, participants' responses are combined to identify the perceptions, opinions, or characteristics of a team, a workgroup, or an organization. Whenever appropriate, ABLAs encourage interaction and discussion among participants to analyze their responses and to apply the results to future action.

THINKING STYLE, A Sample Assessment-Based Learning Activity

The best way to understand how an assessment-based learning activity works is to participate in one. So get ready for a vicarious experience.

You are one of the 15 account executives in a software-engineering company. You are attending a workshop on creative and critical thinking.

Matt, your facilitator, announces that the first activity will help you identify your preferred thinking style. He explains that most people have different thinking styles, ranging along a continuum from the rational to the intuitive. Although neither style is superior to the other and both styles are effective in different contexts, most people have personal preferences. These preferences are similar to being left-handed or right-handed.

Matt distributes eight thinking-style cards to each participant. The cards contain a number and a statement. The first four cards in your hand contain the following:

- 31. I make my decisions quickly.
- 96. When I write a report, I seldom deviate from the original outline.
- 81. I sometimes arrive at a quick decision and then work backwards to come up with a logical justification.
- 32. When I solve crossword puzzles, I proceed from one clue the next.

Matt asks everyone to ignore the numbers and review the statements. Your goal is to collect five cards that do a good job of describing you by exchanging cards with other participants. You roam around the room and get rid of the card with the statement about sticking to the outline while writing a report (which is something that you never do). Sue eagerly grabs that card in exchange for one that says, "I think better when I doodle on a piece of paper." You continue reading other people's cards, swapping some, but refusing to part with your favorite cards. After eight exchanges, you report to Matt that you have five cards that describe your preferred behaviors. However, Matt asks you to continue circulating to see if you can improve your hand. A few minutes later, Matt brings the card-exchange activity to a close.

Matt now asks everyone to choose their five best cards and discard the rest. He says to look at the numbers on the cards. Matt explains that the cards with odd numbers are associated with intuitive thinking while those with even numbers are associated with rational thinking. He asks everyone to count the odd-numbered cards in their hands. You have four cards with odd-numbers. Following Matt's instructions, you and the other participants form three groups with the first group containing people with four or five odd cards, the second group with two or three, and the third group with zero or one. Your group contains only you and Sekar, a new arrival from India. In contrast, the first group has nine people and the second one has four.

Matt explains that the people in the first group may prefer logical thinking while those in the third group may prefer instinctive thinking; people in the second group don't indicate a clear preference. He asks members of the first and the third group to discuss the advantages of their preferred thinking style. The

second group prepares a two-column list outlining the advantages of both types of thinking. Matt also instructs everyone to come up with examples to support their list of advantages. Sekar explains how he intuitively decided to join your organization without spending too much time thinking through the implications. He has no regrets about his impulsive decision while one of his friends who spent a long time analyzing different job offers resigned her job after two weeks.

After 10 minutes, Matt asks you to write down your list of advantages on a flip chart sheet. He now asks the groups to come up with a list of disadvantages and limitations of their preferred thinking styles. You and Sekar instantly agree that there are no disadvantages to intuitive thinking but decide to create an imaginary list anyhow.

After another 10 minutes, Matt invites a representative from each team to present its list of advantages and disadvantages. You are surprised how prejudiced the members of the first group are. Even the second group does not seem to understand the importance of intuitive thinking.

Matt thanks the presenters and repeats the earlier statement that neither thinking style is superior and everyone should be able to switch from one style to the other to effectively deal with different situations.

Matt now asks members of each team to prepare a sales presentation for a contact-manager software product distributed by your organization. Before you and Sekar can start, Matt imposes a major constraint: Your potential customers prefer the opposite thinking style and your presentation should appeal to that style …

THINKING STYLE, The Online Version

Are you ready for another vicarious experience? This time you are going to participate in an online version of the same assessment-based learning activity.

You are at your computer, connected to the online university through the corporate intranet. You log in and select a menu item that says, "Explore Your Thinking Styles".

The picture of Matt, your virtual facilitator, appears on the screen. The text message discusses the thinking style continuum from the rational to the intuitive poles. It also explains that although neither style is superior to the other, most people have personal preferences.

When you click "Next", you see eight random thinking-style statements. Matt reappears and instructs you to drag and drop the statements so that they are arranged in an order. You place the statements that are very much like you near the top and those least like you near the bottom. When you are satisfied with the arrangement, you click "Next".

Additional statements pop up near the top of the screen. Matt tells you to press the "Delete" key if the statement is not like you. It is immediately replaced by another statement. If the statement is more like you than some of the lower-level statements in your list, you press the "Insert" key. This statement is added to the top of your list and the last statement in your list disappears. You can now rearrange your list by dragging and dropping the new statement to an appropriate location.

After eight such exchanges, you click "Done". Matt reappears and instantly gives you a percentage score to indicate your position along the rational-intuitive continuum. The text message explains that the higher the score, the more clearly the intuition preference is indicated. Your score of 80 suggests that you may prefer intutuion.

Matt now asks you to type a list of advantages of your preferred thinking style. You type the answers in a text box. When you have completed the task, you click a button marked "Contribute". Your list disappears and Matt reappears to thank you for your contribution. You are also shown a list of five advantages submitted by earlier participants who share your thinking style. You are happy to find that these five items are similar to the items that you typed.

Matt now asks you to type a list of disadvantages and limitations of your preferred thinking style. The computer uses the same procedure as before to accept your list and to give you feedback in the form of other participants' comments.

As a final activity, Matt asks you to type the headline and ad copy for a contact-manager software product distributed by your organization. Matt tells you that this ad should appeal to potential customers with a rational style (which is the exact opposite of yours). When you complete the task, the computer displays several samples of ads designed to appeal to rational and intuitive thinkers.

Games, Training, And Assessment

THINKING STYLES illustrates how assessment activities and training games share several characteristics: Both require active participation by the learner. Both yield immediate scores (and feedback) along with opportunities for repeated replay. Administering an assessment tool is similar to conducting a training game. Presenting the scores and analyzing their implications is similar to debriefing participants after the game. Assessment-based learning activities emphasize these similarities by incorporating measurement tools in a game-like framework.

To better understand the concept of assessment-based learning activities, let us briefly explore the relationship between training and assessment. Effective training is organized around specific instructional objectives. Mastery tests assess the achievement of these objectives. The combination of training and

assessment activities may be based on two different models:

- The **summative assessment model** separates assessment from training. The trainer's responsibility is to present the content and conduct suitable learning activities. Assessment is conducted in the form of a comprehensive test that is administered after the training session. The function of this assessment is to separate those who have mastered the training objectives from those who have not. Successful participants are certified to be "professionals" while the unsuccessful ones are efficiently eliminated.
- The **formative assessment model** is based on the principle that all participants can master all training objectives if we match the pace and type of training to individual learning styles. In this model, assessment is used before, during, and after the training activities. The purpose of assessment is not to pass or fail the participants but to provide feedback both to the participants and the trainer. In this integrated approach, tests help pinpoint participant errors and misunderstandings and suggest suitable learning activities to more effectively achieving the objectives

Assessment-based learning activities are based on a formative model that integrates training and assessment.

Types Of Assessment-Based Learning Activities

There are different types of assessment tools and different types of ABLA. Let us briefly explore the variables associated with different types of activities:

- **Individual assessment.** Most tests measure individual mastery of training objectives. Figure 1 provides alternative classification systems for such tests. Different types of assessment tools measure abilities (such as intelligence), personality traits (such as thinking styles featured in the sample game), and affective aspects of an individual (such as attitudes and opinions).
- **Group assessment.** Assessment-based learning activities are historically associated with teambuilding strategies. A traditional OD intervention is to administer a survey instrument on a group of people (a workgroup, a department, an organization, or a community) and provide feedback on the perceptions, characteristics, climate, obstacles, and other such critical information.
- **Types of assessment tools.** These include achievement tests, attitude scales, questionnaires, and performance tests. The last category may involve the assessment of a product (for example, a business letter) or a process (for example, installing a software program) through the use checklists and rating scales.
- **Types of results.** Participants' responses may produce a numerical score, a summary grade, or diagnostic feedback. Some assessment tools may yield all three types of results.

- **Online vs. offline.** Computers and the Internet are changing the way assessment tools are administered, scored, and analyzed. As the second version of the sample game demonstrates, computers are speeding up the administration, increasing the accuracy, and enhancing the way participants receive feedback. As another example, I recently took a comprehensive personality-style instrument online. Within seconds of clicking on the "Submit" button, I received a 20-page personalized report that presented and explained my scores, identified my strengths and weaknesses, and recommended appropriate action steps.

Benefits Of Using Assessment-Based Learning Activities

Here are four major benefits:

- **ABLAs reduce test anxiety.** By converting the administration of an assessment instrument into playful activity, we reduce the stress associated with taking tests. In THINKING STYLES, the usual paper-and-pencil procedure of marking items on a rating scale is replaced by the interactive exchange of cards. This approach removes self-consciousness among participants and permits them to behave in a normal fashion. The playfulness of ABLAs has a more significant impact in reducing the anxiety associated with mastery tests and final examinations.
- **ABLAs involve participants in the entire assessment process.** The sample activity demonstrates how participants are involved in the total process of administering an assessment instrument, scoring responses, interpreting results, and action planning. Contrast this approach with the usual disjointed practice of completing an assessment instrument and receiving impersonal printed feedback after several days' delay.
- **ABLAs provide feedback in a suitable context.** The sample activity uses small group discussions and a simulated exercise to help participants gain insights into their strengths and limitations and to come up with application ideas. You can incorporate different types of assessment tools in other simulation games in a similar fashion.
- **ABLAs make training more performance oriented.** If the assessment instrument is a valid measure of the training objectives, then ABLAs transform the training session into an effective competency-based strategy.

Two Important Precautions

Mindless use of ABLAs may produce some undesirable results. Here are two important traps to avoid:

- **Invalid instruments.** The value of an assessment-based learning activity depends on the validity of the instrument that is incorporated in it. You can easily create an impressive looking assessment tool in a matter of minutes. It takes a much longer time (sometimes, several years) to construct and

validate an instrument that is reliable and objective. Unfortunately, facilitators and participants have no way to differentiate between a valid instrument and an invalid one by mere inspection. In your ABLA, make sure that the assessment instrument has been carefully created and systematically validated.

- **Overgeneralization.** With personality-type instruments, participants take their feedback to "scientific" data and assume that they are born with certain unalterable characteristics. This misperception may lead to a fatalistic attitude similar to the superstitious acceptance of the daily horoscopes as being The Truth. Similarly, low scores in a mastery test may lead a participant to conclude that she lacks the intelligence to master technical concepts. It is important for the facilitator to emphasize the formative concept that most people can master "difficult" training objectives if they modify the pace and mode of learning to suit their personal strengths.

More Examples

Here are six more examples of assessment-based learning activities, each briefly described from the participants' point of view. Some are online activities while others are conducted in a face-to-face environment. After reading each description, conduct a thought experiment of converting the activity from one mode to the other.

BEGINNING AT THE END. In this online activity, you begin by reviewing the "final" test. Your virtual facilitator informs you that the actual test will use different items (called parallel items) to measure the achievement of the same training objectives. After you review the test, you activate a stopwatch and visit different web sites to study relevant content. When you are ready, you click a button to take another version of the final test online. When you complete the test, you receive an immediate score with suggestions for additional study. If you receive a perfect score, the computer congratulates you and stops the stopwatch. Your name is added to a *Hall of Fame* where successful participants are listed in order of how quickly they asked for and passed the test.

FACT OR FICITION? In this interactive lecture, the facilitator begins by distributing a test with several true-false items. You read each item, you decide whether it is true or false, and circle the correct choice. After a suitable pause, the facilitator begins with the first item and asks participants to indicate their choice by raising their hand. She then asks a randomly selected participant to explain why she chose "true" and another participant to explain the "false" choice. Following this, the facilitator presents information related to topic so participants can decide on the correct choice. The facilitator repeats the same process with each item in the test until the topic is thoroughly explored.

UP AND DOWN. This icebreaker activity can be used to "administer" an entry

test and a survey of learning style-preferences. The facilitator asks such questions as "How many of you know how to calculate the bit error rate of an electronic device?" and "How many prefer a lecture presentation?" Participants who belong to the category identified in the facilitator's question stand up—and remain standing until the next question is asked. This activity helps the facilitator (and participants) to identify similarities and differences in entry levels and learning-style preferences.

TEST YOURSELF. In this face-to-face read.me game, you carefully study a handout. Later you join one of three teams. Your team prepares a 10 item multiple-choice examination to test the mastery of all key concepts from the handout. To help you in the process, the facilitator gives you a checklist on how to write valid multiple-choice items along with suitable examples. After constructing the test, you give it to the next team and receive a copy of the test constructed by another team. You and your teammates cooperatively answer the questions on this test. During the final phase of this activity, you give your completed test to next team and cooperatively score the test that you receive from another team. Thus, in TEST YOURSELF you and all other participants explore the training content three times by constructing a test, taking another test, and scoring still another test.

ONE LETTER AT A TIME. This computer game reminds you of the children's game of HANGMAN. You play this game as a painless method of taking the mastery test on the assigned training content. At the bottom of the game display area, you see a 30-second countdown timer and a score box. When you start the game, you see a short-answer question while the timer begins to count down. Below the question, you see blank answer boxes with appropriate spaces and punctuations. Each box stands for a letter in the answer. At Level 1 of the game (the easiest level), you see "free" letters placed inside a couple of the boxes. You guess the correct answer and type any letter in this answer. If your guess is correct, the letter appears in every appropriate box. If your guess is incorrect, you lose a point. If you correctly type the complete answer before running out of time, you score 10 points. You play the second level of the game in exactly the same way except you are not shown any "free" letters. In the third (and the most difficult) level of the game, you have to spell the answer, one letter at a time in the correct sequence, beginning with the first letter. Each time you play the game you are presented 10 different questions. These questions are taken from a large pool so every time you replay the game, you may see new items presented in a new sequence.

HOLLYWOOD. You are enrolled in a workshop on writing movie scripts. Your first task is to write a proposal for a feature film that you are pitching. This is actually your pretest, but you don't realize it. You give your proposal to the facilitator who gives you a five-item checklist in return. This checklist is for evaluating movie proposals (such as the one you wrote) and contains these five items: conflict, heroes and villains, location, pace, and the set. In addition to the checklist, you are also given a detailed handout on how to evaluate one of these

items. You handout explains (with examples) how to make sure that hero is an action-oriented person with sufficient motivation who is matched against a worthy opponent who is strong enough to present a real challenge. After everyone spends time reviewing the checklist (and mastering the details of evaluating one of the items), you are assembled into five-member teams. Each member of your team is an "expert" on a different item in the evaluation checklist. The facilitator gives you several proposals written by members of other teams. You and your teammates critically evaluate each proposal. In this process, you explain details of how to examine the proposal for suitable heroes and villains. You learn from the other members of your team how to evaluate the other items in the checklist. You attach feedback comments to each of the scripts that you evaluate. Shortly after this activity, the facilitator returns your proposal with feedback comments from the members of some other team.

What Next?

We have explored several principles and procedures related to assessment-based learning activities in this article. Take some time to reflect on the new ideas and to apply them to your training or facilitation needs.

Here are some additional projects to keep you occupied:

- Select a training objective (or teambuilding challenge) for designing and conducting an assessment-based learning activity.
- Locate or design a valid and reliable test (or some other type of assessment tool) to be incorporated in your assessment-based learning activity.
- Learn more about test construction and design of survey instruments.
- Complete an online survey or questionnaire. You can locate several free assessment instruments on the Web. Invest some money and time in taking the BE inventory. I discovered several important insights about my learning style by taking this instrument.
- Design an online test or questionnaire. Many web sites provide you with free tools for designing and administering different types of assessment tools.

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Figure 1

Figure 1

1. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy

- **Knowledge.** Example: Name the primary component of assessment-based

activities.

- **Comprehension (translation).** Example: Restate the definition of assessment-based activities in your own words.
- **Comprehension (interpretation).** Example: Summarize the definition of assessment-based activities.
- **Comprehension (extrapolation).** Example: Give an example of an assessment-based activity that you have recently experienced.
- **Application.** Example: Create an assessment-based activity for use in one of your training sessions.
- **Analysis.** Example: Identify different steps in an assessment-based activity and explain the key features of each step. Also explain the relationship among the steps.
- **Synthesis.** Example: Create a novel type of assessment-based activity that uses the steps in a different order.
- **Evaluation.** Example: Design and use a rating scale for evaluating the quality of an assessment-based activity.

2. Based on Gagne's Domains of Learning

- **Knowledge.** Example: Describe the characteristics of an assessment-based activity.
- **Comprehension application.** Example: Identify the missing element in the following description of an assessment-based activity...
- **Problem solving.** Example: Modify the following assessment-based activity to better suit your training context.
- **Verbal information.** Example: Write a short paragraph explaining the rationale for the use of assessment-based activities.
- **Discrimination learning.** Example: Differentiate between an assessment-based activity and the administration of training tests.
- **Concept learning.** Example: Classify the following 12 descriptions of assessment-based activities into different categories based on the type of measuring instrument used in each.
- **Rule learning.** Example: Apply the principles of assessment-based activity to design a training session.
- **Cognitive strategies.** Example: Create and apply an action plan for learning more about assessment-based learning and using your new skills and knowledge in training sessions.

3. Based on Additional Categories of Higher Level Thinking

- **Critical thinking (evaluation).** Example: Discuss the advantages and limitations of assessment-based activities.
- **Critical thinking (prediction).** Example: How will the future trends in online learning affect assessment-based activities?
- **Creative thinking.** Example: Brainstorm a list of unusual applications of assessment-based activities.

Guest Gamer

This column features interviews with outstanding designers and users of interactive experiential activities. Our guest this month, **Susan El-Shamy***, is Senior Partner at Advancement Strategies, Inc., a training and development resources company in Bloomington, IN, where she designs and delivers training products and programs. Susan is the designer of the experiential learning game, DIVERSITY BINGO. She also designed nine different decks of Action Pack learning cards including the* **Customer Service Cards***, the* **Leadership Development Deck***, the* **Team Development Deck***, and the* **Diversity Deck***. Susan has recently published* **Training Games: Everything You Need to Know About Using Games to Reinforce Learning** *through Stylus Publishing.*

Interview with Susan El-Shamy

Thiagi: Susan, what is your specialty area in training games design?

Susan: Most of my games have something to do with cards. My first published game, DIVERSITY BINGO, involves the use of a Bingo-style matrix cards. The other games and activities I've designed make use of specially constructed decks of cards on specific topics.

Thiagi: When did you get into the business of designing and using training games?

Susan: My doctoral research was in the area of structured small group therapy. This was back in the seventies in the era of encounter groups and personal growth groups. I was very interested in experiential activities for personal growth and development. As a counselor, therapist, and educator, I used experiential activities to help people raise their awareness and broaden their perceptions. Then, I changed careers from the academic world of teaching and counseling to the business world of training and development. One of the first discoveries I made in the business world was a whole new realm of games and simulations. I learned to use games to help departments find better and quicker processes, to assist groups in finding ways to work together more effectively and to help individuals prepare for international work assignments.

Thiagi: How long have you been designing and using games?

Susan: As long as I can remember! I designed games as a child, as a teacher of

English as a Foreign Language, as a group therapist, and as a corporate trainer, right now!

Thiagi: *Where do you use your training games and how do you clients and participants respond?*

Susan: I use games and learning activities in every seminar and workshop I design and deliver. Although I work with a very broad range of clients and participants, it's very seldom that I get any significant resistance. When it comes to using games, I usually just do it. And people are up and moving and learning and having fun before they realize that what they are doing is playing a game.

Thiagi: *What advice do you have to newcomers?*

Susan: It is important to keep focused on the learning while designing and while using a training game. A good training game must, of course, first of all be a good game; that is, it must have players competing to meet a challenge and achieve a goal within an interesting context. It also needs to be practical in terms of the constraints of the training situation and the competencies of the trainer. But most importantly, the game needs to support the learning objectives of the training. It is so easy to become infatuated with a particular game. Games can be so clever, fun, involving, but they can also be time consuming. You must make sure that the time invested in the game yields a significant amount of learning.

Thiagi: *What types of games do you use most frequently?*

Susan: In my book on *Training Games*, I classify training games into four categories that are determined by two factors: how the learning occurs and what is required of the trainer. By "how the learning occurs," I mean, does the learning occur primarily through the interaction of the learner with content material (*content-focused games*) or does the learning take place through the actual physical experience of the learner (*experiential games*)? By "what is required of the trainer," I mean, does the trainer purchase or design the game and then facilitate the game, or, does the trainer purchase the game frame or template, insert content into that frame or template, and then facilitate it? That is, non-frame games vs. frame games.

I love all types of games and use all types in my training. I probably use content-focused card games and board games most often because I like to use games to practice basic knowledge and skills being developed in the training. And card games and board games do that so well. But I still have a great love of experiential games and activities and probably use them almost as often as my content-focused card games.

Thiagi: *What is your favorite game?*

Susan: Susan: I've got so many; that's hard to answer. For cross-cultural training I love BAFA BAFA. It takes some time to do it right, but they don't call it a classic for nothing! Your own BARNGA is the best example of an experiential simulation game I've ever found. Steve Sugar's QUIZO is an excellent example of a content-focused frame game with a unique use of a Bingo format. And speaking of Bingo, I've got to say that after more than 10 years, I still love my DIVERSITY BINGO.

Thiagi: Do you have any book recommendations?

Susan: I think that electronic training games are having a huge impact on the "how" of training games. Therefore, Marc Prensky's *Digital Game-Based Learning* is a major must-read.

Thiagi: What are your thoughts about the future of training games?

Susan: There is something so universal about playing games, which is why I think all games, training games included, will always be with us. There is pleasure in the playing of a game, pleasure that comes from a number of factors: the high level of involvement, the interaction with other players, the competitive element, the building of skills, and increasing of competencies. All of these factors can work together in a training game to make the learning fun. I see the future as being one of continuous learning and if we have to be learning all the time, why not do it in a way that is enjoyable? I think that e-learning and e-games will continue to grow and increase in quality as well as quantity. However, I like to believe that there will always be opportunities for human beings to get together in person to learn and play and grow.

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Framegame

PASS IT ON!
by Susan El-Shamy

Purpose

To encourage groups of participants to conduct a focused discussion on a selected topic.

Sample Topics

- characteristics of an effective team

- qualities of a good leader
- guidelines for a conducting productive meetings
- ground rules for managing conflict
- suggestions for doing business in China
- criteria for user-friendly Web pages

Summary

A deck of cards is shuffled and dealt out to participants who then choose the least important card in their hand to be passed on, until each person is left with one card. People then share and compare their final "most-important" cards.

Participants

Any number can play, divided into groups of four to six.

Time

30 to 40 minutes, depending on the complexity of the topic.

Supplies

Prepare a deck of 25-50 cards, each with a different item (guideline, characteristic, criterion, or suggestion) related to the selected topic. You will need one deck of cards for each small group of four to six players.

Flow

1. Begin with a general discussion of the selected topic. Explain the type of items in the cards.
2. Divide the participants into small groups of four to six people and have each group sit in a circle around tables. Give each group a deck of cards.
3. Ask participants to shuffle the cards and deal them around each table until all the cards have been dealt.
4. Have participants look over the cards in their hands and select the one they feel is the least important. After a suitable pause, count out loud, "One, two, pass it on." At "pass it on," everyone passes her "least important card" to the person on the left.
5. Ask participants to look over the cards that they now have, and choose the least important card. Again say, "One, two, pass it on" and have everyone pass the "least important card" to the person on the left.
6. Repeat this process several times. Gradually increase the pace, giving less time to think and decide. Continue until each participant has had the chance to consider at least eight cards.
7. Change the procedure and have everyone choose the least important card, and when you say, "One, two, pass it on" have them put the card face up in

the center of the table. Continue this procedure until each person is left with a single card.

8. Now, when you say, "One, two, pass it on," players may discard their card and pick up another one from the center of the table. Do this activity very briskly three or four times.

9. Ask each participant read the card that she kept and explain its significance: "This is the card I kept and this is why I think it is so important."

10. Have the groups share and compare the cards that they have selected. Give a prize to the group that has chosen the most cards that were also chosen by the other groups. (If you only have two groups, give both a prize if they have more than 50 percent agreement.)

11. Write the final items on a flipchart and have the group as a whole assess itself by answering questions like these:

- Which of these are we best at?
- Which do we most need to work on?
- Which of these is most valued in our organization?

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Reflective Teamwork Activity

MANAGEMENT

A Reflective Teamwork Activity (RTA) involves participants creating a checklist and then evaluating their performance by using the same checklist they created.

Here's an outline of this activity: Participants are organized into groups of five. Members of each group are randomly assigned to the roles of a manager, an assistant manager, and three employees. Each participant prepares a list related to a different management topic. The manager has the lengthy task and additional supervisory responsibilities. Other group members have simpler tasks. After the list preparation activity is completed, a debriefing discussion relates the manager's behavior to the items in her list.

Purpose

To explore factors related to delegation by managers

Participants

Any number, divided into groups of five.

Time

15 minutes for the activity. 15-30 minutes for debriefing.

Supplies

- A set of five instruction sheets for each group (One for the manager, one for the assistant manager, and three for employees)
- A copy of the Task Completion Form (for use by the manager)

Flow

Get ready for the activity. Make sufficient number of copies of the three *Instruction Sheets* using the masters provided at the end of this section. Read through the contents. Underline the topic of *Delegation* in the manager's instruction sheet. Underline one of the other four topics in the assistant manager's and employees' instruction sheets.

Remember this important point: Even though the focus of this activity is on delegation, you make it appear that this topic is a randomly selected along with a set of management topics. Give the impression that the topics are randomly assigned to different people. The manager has significantly more work to do than any of the other members of the group. Do not point this out; let the participants assume that everyone has an equal amount of work.

Organize groups. Divide participants into groups of five and give a set of instructions sheets to each member of each group. This ensures random distribution of the manager's role to a member of the group. Ask the manager and the assistant manager in each group to identify themselves. Distribute copies of the *Task Completion Form* to the managers.

Brief participants. Introduce the activity as an exploration of management behaviors. Briefly explain the flow of activity, identifying the five different topics of feedback, motivation, time management, delegation, and coaching. If necessary, briefly define any of these terms.

Begin the activity. Ask managers to note the time and ask everyone to get started. Walk around the groups, observing participants in action, without interfering with their activities.

Conclude the activity. Call time at the end of 5 minutes. Check to see if the managers have completed their list and the filled out the *Task Completion Form*.

Debrief the group. Read different *Instruction Sheets* and point out that the manager had insufficient time to complete their tasks while the other members of the group had plenty of free time. Explain that the focus of the activity was to

explore why managers don't delegate.

Explore opportunities for delegation. Read the manager's *Instruction Sheet* again and ask participants to identify different task s that the managers could have delegated. This list could include delegation of logistic tasks (such as time keeping) to an individual, delegation of partial tasks to everyone (such as filling out the Task Completion Form), and asking for everyone's contributions to the major task (coming up with the list of 12 items related to delegation). Find out if any manager delegated any of these activities. Congratulate these managers.

Explore why managers did not delegate. Ask each manager to read the list of reasons why managers do not delegate. Discuss how many of the reasons applied to the manager's list preparation task in this activity. Offer any item from the following list if it did not appear in the manager's lists:

- Nobody told the managers that they could delegate.
- A lot of time is required to explain the task to the others.
- Managers feel that only they understand what is needed.
- Managers feel that only they can do the job.
- Managers feel that they can do a better job than any of the others
- Managers feel that nobody can reach their high standards.
- Managers don't trust the others.
- Managers don't have the time to coach and teach others.
- Managers don't like to boss people around.
- Managers feel that they are not doing their job if they delegate their tasks to others.
- Managers don't know how to delegate.
- Managers feel that the others are too busy on their own tasks.
- Managers want to be in control of everything.

Discuss how managers can do a more effective job of delegating. Ask managers to read the items from the second part of their lists. Ask participants for additional suggestions.

Suggest follow-up. Briefly emphasize the need for applying the insights from the activity to delegating tasks in their workplace. Explain that you are going to delegate this action-planning task to each individual participant.

Handouts

(Use your browser's BACK button to return here after you have looked at each handout.)

- Manager's Instruction Sheet
- Task Completion Form
- Assistant Manager's Instruction Sheet
- Employee's Instruction Sheet

Or you can download and print the PDF handouts (14,948 bytes; may take a little while)

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MANAGEMENT-1

Manager's Instruction Sheet

You have 5 minutes to complete the task.

You have two sets of responsibilities:

- Supervise others
- Complete your list preparation task

Supervisory Responsibilities

Make sure that everyone (including you) has a separate topic assigned for the List Preparation Activity

Fill out the Task Completion Form during the activity.

Keep an eye on the clock. Announce the remaining time at the end of each 1-minute period.

Stop your employees at exactly 5 minutes. (After all, we don't want to incur any violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act.)

List Preparation Task

You (and everyone else in your work group) have been assigned one of the following topics. Your topic is underlined:

- **Feedback:** Why do managers fail to give useful feedback? How can they give more useful feedback?
- **Motivation:** Why do managers fail to motivate employees? How can they motivate their employees more effectively?
- **Time Management:** Why do managers fail to manage their time effectively? How can they manage their time more effectively?
- **Delegation:** Why do managers fail to delegate effectively? How can they delegate more effectively?
- **Coaching:** Why do managers fail to coach their employees? How can they become more effective coaches?

Your task is to come up with a list of six responses to *each* of the two questions related to your topic. Use a separate piece of paper to prepare your list.

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MANAGEMENT-2

Task Completion Form

Task Completion Form

Job Title	Name	Assigned Topic	Completion Time

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MANAGEMENT-3

Assistant Manager's Instruction Sheet

You have 5 minutes to complete the task.

You (and everyone else in your work group) have been assigned one of the following topics. Your topic is underlined:

- **Feedback:** Why do managers fail to give useful feedback? How can they give more useful feedback?
- **Motivation:** Why do managers fail to motivate employees? How can they motivate their employees more effectively?
- **Time Management:** Why do managers fail to manage their time effectively? How can they manage their time more effectively?
- **Delegation:** Why do managers fail to delegate effectively? How can they delegate more effectively?

- **Coaching:** Why do managers fail to coach their employees? How can they become more effective coaches?

Your task is to come up with *one* response to *each* of the two questions related to your topic. Use a separate piece of paper to prepare your list.

If the manager asks you to do something else, do that immediately. (But don't volunteer.)

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MANAGEMENT-4

Employee's Instruction Sheet

You have 5 minutes to complete the task.

You (and everyone else in your work group) have been assigned one of the following topics. Your topic is underlined:

- **Feedback:** Why do managers fail to give useful feedback? How can they give more useful feedback?
- **Motivation:** Why do managers fail to motivate employees? How can they motivate their employees more effectively?
- **Time Management:** Why do managers fail to manage their time effectively? How can they manage their time more effectively?
- **Delegation:** Why do managers fail to delegate effectively? How can they delegate more effectively?
- **Coaching:** Why do managers fail to coach their employees? How can they become more effective coaches?

Your task is to come up with *one* response to *each* of the two questions related to your topic. Use a separate piece of paper to prepare your list.

If the manager asks you to do something else, do that immediately. (But don't volunteer.)

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Structured Sharing

BOTH SIDES

Organizational life is full of paradoxes. It looks as if you always get contradictory advice. For example, one manager suggests that all your training should be on the Web. Another manager extols the virtues of classroom teaching. In a situation like this, it is useless to ask, "Which is better: online learning or instructor-led learning?" The answer is invariably, "It all depends." In the complex real world, the effectiveness of any strategy depends on the context. For example, training effectiveness depends on the content, objectives, learners, technology, and facilitators. In order for you to come up with the best strategy, you must explore the advantages and disadvantages of conflicting guidelines.

That's what BOTH SIDES helps you to do.

Purpose

To better understand conflicting guidelines by discussing the positive and negative aspects of each.

Participants

Any number, organized into triads.

Time

30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the number of factors and the time allowed for each discussion.

Supplies

- Timer
- Whistle

Preparation

Specify the general topic or issue that you want to explore. Then come up with a list of several opposing pairs of advice ("dichotomies") related to that topic. The effectiveness of this activity depends on your ability to come up with a dozen or more conflicting pairs of advice.

Here's an example:

Topic: Effective training

Dichotomies:

- Content is important vs. Process is important
- We should focus on learning outcomes vs. We should focus on learning activities
- The teacher is an expert vs. The teacher is a fellow learner
- Learn from doing vs. Learn from reflecting on what you did
- Learners cooperate with each other vs. Learners compete with each other
- Use high-touch strategies vs. Use high-tech equipment
- Learn independently vs. Learn in team
- Present the content through graphics vs. Present the content through text
- Develop specific objectives vs. Develop general goals
- Focus on facilitating learning vs. Focus on transmitting information
- Create a playful learning environment vs. Create a serious learning environment
- Provide a well-organized structure vs. Provide the freedom to explore
- Plan the lessons carefully vs. Improvise your lessons
- Emphasize the underlying theory vs. Focus on practical applications

More Examples

Topic: Workplace violence. **Dichotomies:** Empowerment vs. Control. Prevention vs. Damage control.

Topic: Hospital management. **Dichotomies:** Patient satisfaction vs. Employee satisfaction. Specialization vs. Generalization.

Topic: Conflict management. **Dichotomies:** Assertiveness vs. Empathy. Intention vs. Impact.

Topic: Teamwork. **Dichotomies:** Compliance vs. Challenge. Shared leadership vs. Assigned leadership.

Topic: Cross-Cultural Communication. **Dichotomies:** Individualism vs. Collectivism. Direct vs. Indirect Communication.

Topic: Sales. **Dichotomies:** Product knowledge vs. People knowledge. Needs focus vs. Solution focus.

Topic: Change Management. **Dichotomies:** Charismatic leader vs. Invisible change agent. Top-down change vs. Bottom-up change.

Flow

Brief participants. Introduce the topic to be explored. Identify conflicting guidelines related to topic. Discuss how these guidelines make sense in different contexts. Stress the importance of exploring polarized and paradoxical guidelines to better understand the factors that influence productivity and improved performance.

Organize participants into triads. Divide participants into groups of three. If two participants are left over, ask them to form a triad with you. If only one participant is left over, ask her to play the role of observer.

Assign roles. Ask each triad to identify the person who most closely resembles you. Ask this person to play the role of the Neutral Listener for the first round. Explain that the other two members of the triad will become the Right Advocate and the Left Advocate. Announce that the Right Advocate for each round will become the Neutral Listener for the next round.

Explain the role of the Neutral Listener. The person in the "middle" of each triad should invite the Advocates to present their positions. While an advocate is making her presentation, the Neutral Listener should maintain eye contact, nod, smile, and demonstrate other nonverbal behaviors associated with active listening. However, it is important the Neutral Observer hide her personal opinions and listen to both Advocates with equal interest.

Explain the role of the Advocates. Each advocate will be assigned one of two conflicting guidelines related to topic. Both advocates will prepare a presentation supporting their position and attacking the opposing position. After 15 seconds, the Neutral Listener will point to one of the Advocates. This person will make her presentation for 60 seconds. Immediately after this, the other Advocate will make her presentation.

Process the first dichotomy. Announce the first guideline for the Right Advocate. Immediately announce the conflicting guideline for the Left Advocate. Ask all advocates to get ready for their presentation. After 15 seconds, blow the whistle and instruct the Neutral Listeners to point to either observer to make her presentation. Pause for a minute. Blow the whistle again and ask the other Advocate to make her presentation. Blow the whistle after another minute. Randomly select a Neutral Listener and ask her to summarize the key points from both presentations.

Continue with additional dichotomies. Thank the Advocates and Neutral Listeners. Ask the Right Advocates in each triad to assume the role of the Neutral Listener for the next round. (The Left Advocate from the previous round will now become the Right Advocate and the original Neutral Listener will become the new Right Advocate.) Announce the next pair of conflicting guidelines and conduct another round of the activity. Repeat the same process with each dichotomy.

Conclude the session. Invite participants to suggest other pairs of conflicting guidelines. Treat them in the same fashion. When all dichotomies have been discussed, conduct a debriefing discussion to figure out how to creatively select and synthesize contradictory guidelines.

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Book Review

An Excellent Introduction to Training Games

There are hundreds of books with specific training games but very few that provide a generic overview, rationale, guidelines, and conceptual framework to the field of interactive experiential training strategies. Susan El-Shamy's recent book is a welcome addition to this category.

Training Games is divided into two parts. The first part provides a big-picture view with definitions, types, theoretical background, and psychological rationale. The second part provides how-to guidelines for choosing, conducting, debriefing, and assessing training games. This part also provides examples of training games in action along with guidelines for creating your own games. The last chapter in the book has a list of recent games, books, and web sites.

Susan has an excellent writing style and the book is easy to read and use. Each chapter has a convenient summary ("In a Nutshell"), personal anecdotes, and useful tables. One of the most important sections of the book is Chapter 2 which contains a list of 10 reasons for training with games and 10 criteria for training games cross referenced to 13 theoretical bases (such as accelerated learning, adult learning theory, constructivism, learning styles, and social-learning theory). You will find this chapter very useful in convincing corporate decisionmakers that games are an important element of effective training.

Susan categorizes training games in a 2 x 2 matrix:

- **Trainer's responsibility:** Facilitate given content or insert content and facilitate.
- **Source of learning:** Interaction with the content or physical experiencing of the content.

This matrix yields the following four types of training games:

- content-focused games
- content-focused framegames
- experiential games
- experiential framegames.

Susan consistently uses this convenient framework in describing and discussing different examples throughout her book.

I strongly recommend Training Games to any trainer who is new to the field. Even experienced facilitators can benefit from Susan's framework, guidelines,

and resource lists.

Susan El-Shamy is Senior Partner at Advancement Strategies, Inc., a training and development resources company in Bloomington, Indiana, and an award-winning designer of games and interactive group learning products. Be sure to read her interview and sample game elsewhere in this issue.

Details: *Training Games: Everything You Need to Know About Using Games to Reinforce Learning* by Susan El-Shamy. Stylus Publishing, 22883 Quicksilver Drive, Sterling, VA 20116. http://www.styluspub.com . ISBN 1-57922-040-1. $19.95.

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Humor

A Phonics Lesson

My name is Thiagi. Actually it is a shortened form of my "real" name, Sivasailam Thiagarajan. I thought that by shortening it my friends would find it easier to pronounce this non-Anglo name.

This assumption turned out to be absolutely incorrect. People pronounce "Thiagi" several different ways. My friend the ESL teacher explained to me that she could come up with 27 different pronunciations of "Thiagi".

This gave me a sadistic idea.

You see, one thing that bothers me about my well-meaning friends is the patronizing way they try to teach me English. They enunciate slowly and say, "It's not a 'w', it's a 'v'."

The problem is that they sound the same to me. Since I grew up speaking Tamil in South India, my auditory complex didn't learn to discriminate between those two phonemes. (Similarly, people who grew up speaking English have trouble distinguishing between the two "p"'s in the word "paper"—but they sound very different to Hindi speakers.)

This is my payback strategy: Whenever somebody says my name, I politely explain: "I'm sorry, but it is not Thiagi, it's Thiagi" making sure that I pronounce the name exactly the same way both times!

With some embarrassment, the person tries pronouncing my name differently—and I keep repeating the same feedback more slowly, deliberately, and loudly.

The poor speaker tries to differentiate between what she is saying and what I am saying and eventually gives up.
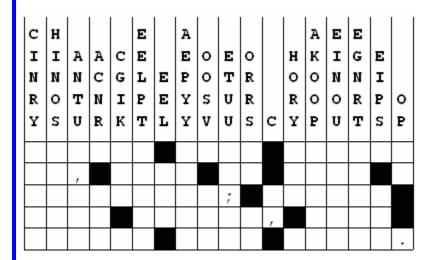
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Puzzle

Victor Hugo on Change

Here's a letter drop puzzle for a quotation from Victor Hugo. To solve it, move each letter to one of the empty boxes below it. Don't put any letters in the black boxes. If you place all the letters in the correct boxes, you will spell out a message, reading from left to right and top to bottom.

All punctuation has been placed in appropriate boxes. Black boxes mark the spaces between words in the message.

Important note: A word does **not** end at the end of a line unless there is a black box there.

C	H				E		A						A	E	E		
I	I	A	A	C	E		E	O	E	O		H	K	I	G	E	
N	N	N	C	G	L	E	P	O	T	R		O	O	N	N	I	
R	O	T	N	I	P	E	Y	S	U	R		R	O	O	R	P	O
Y	S	U	R	K	T	L	Y	V	U	S	C	Y	P	U	T	S	P
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We also have a PDF version you can download and print.

New!! We now have a Flash version you can solve on your computer screen!

Your browser must support Macromedia Flash in order to use this.

A Hint

The Solution

Using Puzzles for Training

Did you try to solve the puzzle? Did you use the hint? Did you click on the solution without trying to solve the puzzle? Did you look at the puzzle and tell yourself, "I am no good at these" and move to some other page?

Raja and I have been exploring the use of puzzles as training tools. We would like to encourage you to join us in this exploration.

Here are a couple of ways that we have used puzzles like these before and after our training sessions:

- **Before the session**, we place copies of some puzzles (related to the training topic) at participants' seats. Those who come early have some relevant task to keep them entertained.
- **After the session**, a couple of weeks later, we mail a few puzzles (related to the training topic) to all participants. We enclose a friendly note reminding them to apply their new skills and knowledge.

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Contest Results

GAME as an Acronym

Contest 108 invited readers to respond to this question: "If GAME were an acronym, what would be its expansion?"

Here are the contest entries:

1. Gain Advanced Memory Embellishment (Peggy Johnson)
2. Games Advance Memory Elaboration (Peggy Johnson)
3. Games Advance Memory Elevation (Peggy Johnson)
4. Games Advance Memory Embellishment (Peggy Johnson)
5. Gawd Awful Made Extraordinary (Michelle Blasé)
6. Generate and Achieve Maximum Excellence (Jana Nelson)
7. Generates Alotov Mutual Enlightenment (Roger Greenaway)
8. Generating Awareness Motivating Effectiveness (Toni Webster)
9. Generously Allowing Multiple Entries (Roger Greenaway)
10. Get All Minds Energized (Jean Langston)
11. Get audiences motivated and energized (Bill Matthews)
12. Getting Absorbed with Meaningful Exercises (Margaret Dix)
13. Getting Animated with Magical E-learning (Margaret Dix)
14. Getting Asses Moving Exercise (Virginia H. Morgan)
15. Giving A Meaningful Experience (Dick Carlson)
16. Giving Answers Meaning and Energy (Peggy Johnson)

17. Giving Away Meaningless Exercises (Margaret Dix)
18. Go After Meaningful Experiences (Virginia H. Morgan)
19. Go Ahead Make Excuses (Virginia H. Morgan)
20. God Almighty Make it End (Virginia H. Morgan)
21. God Awful Mind Experiments (Virginia H. Morgan)
22. Gradually Awakening the Mental Energy (Margaret Dix)
23. Grand Adventure in Mining Experience (Donavan Vicha)
24. Great Activities Maximize Effectiveness (Jana Nelson)
25. Great Adventures Motivating Excellent Service (Tae Ann Umemoto)
26. Great Alternative Method for Education (Roger Greenaway)
27. Greatly Agitated Mental Exercises (Virginia H. Morgan)
28. Group Activities Maximize Enthusiasm (Jana Nelson)
29. Growing Attempts at Mastering Excitement (Michelle Blasé)
30. Grownups who Achieve Mental Ecstasy (Michelle Blasé)
31. Growth Ameliorating Multifaceted Exercise (Roger Greenaway)
32. Growth, Achievement, Mastery, and Excellence (George Spelvin)
33. Guess Again for Meaningful Experiences (Virginia H. Morgan)

And The Winners Are ...

Our panel of judges selected two winners:

- Great Activities Maximize Effectiveness (Jana Nelson)
- Great Alternative Method for Education (Roger Greenaway)

Congratulations, Jana and Roger! Each of you will receive $50 gift certificates that can be used for purchasing any Workshops by Thiagi products.

In case Jana's name seems familiar, that's because she won last month's contest. Somebody please stop her by sending in a strong entry for this month's contest.

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Hint

Hint

See the comment in the table of contents. Also, the word YOUR appears more than once.

Back to the puzzle

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Contest

Every month, we challenge our readers with an exciting contest. The winner will receive a $50 gift certificate toward the purchase of any book or game from Workshops by Thiagi, Inc.

Conflicting Advice

Did you read this month's structured sharing activity, BOTH SIDES? The basic idea behind this interactive exercise is that we should carefully accept and explore different guidelines even if they appear to be the exact opposite of each other.

Contest 110 is a challenge to your ability to list several pairs of contradictory advice related to *management*. Here's a sample pair:

- Treat all employees the same.
- Pay careful attention to each employee's cultural and personal preferences.

The Contest

To enter this month's contest, send a list of contradictory pairs of advice to managers. Try to come up with at least a dozen such pairs.

If the judges decide that your list is the best, you win the contest.

The Rules

- Judging criteria include number of pairs of conflicting advice, their relevance to effective management, and frequency with which such advice is likely to be offered.
- Mail your contest entry to Thiagi, 4423 East Trailridge Road, Bloomington, IN 47408-9633, or e-mail it with "Contest 110" on the subject line to thiagi@thiagi.com, or FAX it to 812/332-5701.
- Include your name and e-mail address with your entry.
- We reserve the right to award no prize if we receive no entries of adequate quality.
- The decision of our judges is final.
- Results will be announced in a future issue of *PFP*. All entries become the property of *Play for Performance*. (Of course, you will get full credit.)
- Deadline for the contest is 11:59 PM EST, October 31, 2001. All items must be *received* by the deadline. (Keep this in mind if you send your entry by postal mail.)

Solution

Solution

Change your opinions, keep to your principles; change your leaves, keep intact your roots.

Back to the puzzle

Pithy Advice

Live and Learn

Durch zussammenleben, lernt man zussammenleben.

This is a German proverb that I came across during some of my work with the folks at the organization Experiment in International Living.

Roughly translated, the proverb asserts, "By living together, people learn to live together." In other words, the best way to learn anything is to do it—and then reflect on it.

This is the operating principle behind the reflective teamwork activity strategy in which you learn about teamwork by doing teamwork.