

PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE: September 2001

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

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Masthead

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

I Froze During My Summer Vacation

I spent six delightful weeks in Australia, where I worked with my partner Marie

Jasinski to conduct a series of workshops on the topics of training games, cultural diversity, change management, and online learning in Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, and Sydney. I met my Aussie friends Robby Weatherley, Marty Cielens, Heather Ferguson, Peter Hillery, Greg Webb, and Val Evans. I also talked with Margaret Dix who sends useful feedback notes about each issue of this newsletter.

During the 14-hour long flight from Sydney to Los Angeles, I wrote and rewrote a couple of pieces included in this issue. I also planned what I want to do for the next 10 issues!

My thanks to all my Aussie playmates.

And my thanks to all of you who sent me feedback notes—and occasional checks. Please keep them coming.

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Conference

Don't Miss NASAGA 2001

The mission of the North American Simulation and Gaming Association ([NASAGA](#)) is to facilitate the use of simulations, games, and experiential activities and to collect, develop, and spread information about the principles and procedures of interactive, experiential approaches to education, training, and performance improvement.

NASAGA's annual conference is a major professional event in the field of interactive, experiential strategies. The theme of the conference this year is "Play for Performance". The conference is scheduled for October 24-27, 2001 at the Indiana Memorial Union in Bloomington, IN.

The June issue of this newsletter included [an Event Alert](#) for the NASAGA 2001 Conference. This month, I'd like to give you a sneak preview of the conference program:

Attend Exciting Pre-Conference Workshops

Thiagi and Raja have expanded their game design workshop to offer "How To Design Interactive Training" as a full-day pre-conference workshop. This workshop introduces you to more than 52 interactive training strategies including training games and simulations.

Andrew Kimball, who is doing some exciting work in the area of e-learning, will share his secrets in an exclusive pre-conference workshop. Playfully titled "eLearning—eAsy with eFramegames: Designing effective eLearning that is Fun, Fast, and Cost-Effective", this workshop has some serious advice.

Kat Koppett, author of a new book on improv for training and management will conduct another pre-conference workshop (with Matt Richter), "Training to Imagine: Using Improvisation Techniques in Business". Exciting stuff with a new angle to fun, spontaneity, and interactivity.

Participate In Several Hands-On Sessions

Most NASAGA concurrent sessions have a how-to slant. Here's a sample list of sessions (in a random order):

- "Experiential Methods to Develop Interpersonal Intelligence" by Mel Silberman
- "Spirituality: An Awareness Exercise of the Spirit in Your Life and Others" by Charles F. Petranek
- "Designing Review Games: Making Repetition Less Repetitious" by Kevin L. Eikenberry
- "Managing at the Speed of e-Play to Perform" by Lou Russell
- "Finding Your Way Through Play and Simulation" by Brian Remer & Chris Saeger
- "Creating Games With Stuff You Find In Your Closet" by Katrina Kennedy
- "Decide Already!" by Eva Reynolds Martony
- "Measuring Cooperation" by Ted Wohlfarth
- "Reality in a Box: Principles of Designing Simulations to Model and Teach About Real-World, Complex Systems by" Martin Ramsay & Hill Kemp
- "That's Enough TV for You! Transforming TV Shows into Interactive Training Events" by Becky Mills

Visit The Design Clinic

Bring your half-baked game ideas and prototype games to this special room for free expert advice. The special clinic will be staffed by NASAGA old-timers and your peers. Bring your ideas for a training game and get free design advice.

Play Golden Oldies

This special evening session features "classics" that are facilitated by the original designers of popular experiential activities. This year's playbill includes Charles Petranek's SEX ON THE BEACH and Andrew Kimball's KABOOM.

Enjoy The Post-Conference Workshop

The NASAGA conference officially ends at noon on Saturday. But you can stick

around Saturday afternoon and attend a special half-day workshop. This workshop, conducted by Thiagi, is on facilitation skills. Most importantly, there is no charge for attending this bonus workshop!

For More Information ...

To get travel and accommodation details and to register for the conference, please visit the visit the NASAGA website: <http://www.nasaga.org/> .

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Commentary

Four Misconceptions About Simulation

Most trainers easily understand the concept of a simulation and quickly accept its effectiveness. However, shallow understanding and mindless acceptance of this technique frequently results in its abuse. To prevent such abuse, I would like to probe four common misconceptions about simulation games.

Varieties Of Simulations

Misconception: *All simulations are basically the same. If you have seen one, you have seen them all.*

Actually, simulations come in different shapes and sizes. While it is true that most simulations compress space and time, they may do so at a variety of levels using a variety of technologies and symbol systems.

Here are some simulations at a mega level: Scientists create computer models to explore the impact of the greenhouse effect on the planet Earth. Business people experiment with what-if scenarios of the global marketplace during the next century. Political scientists study the next world war in a simulated setting.

Here are some simulations at a macro level: Benefit specialists collect feedback about a new incentive system by piloting it in a branch office. Trainers present the new corporate sexual harassment policy by discussing simulated case studies. Recruiters assess potential executives by administering in-basket exercises.

Here are some simulations at the micro simulations: Forensic scientists study the impact of a bullet on a Kevlar vest. Marketers examine the behavior of people in a waiting line in the bank. Ergonomics experts create models of the left thumb to explore repetitive stress injuries.

We can categorize simulations into computer and manual simulations. In a computer simulation, players read information displayed on the screen, make decisions, and enter them through a keyboard. Based on their decision, they receive a score and move to the next decision point. In the manual version of a similar simulation, players read a chapter of a novel, analyze the decision requirement at the end of the chapter, and choose among several alternatives. Based on their choice, they are directed to a different page of the book for the next installment of the scenario.

Here are some other types of simulations:

- Based on the system delivering the simulation, we can have mathematical simulations (such as a formula), graphical simulations (such as a flow diagram), or physical simulations (such as a working model of an automobile engine).
- Based on whether we emphasize the stimuli or the responses and whether we provide limited response choices or wide open ones, we can classify an activity into a roleplay or a simulation. For example, if we tell a doctor to talk to another doctor, imagining her to be a patient, we have a roleplay. If we provide a doctor with a computer simulation of a CAT scan and ask her to make a diagnosis, it is primarily a simulation.
- Based on how users interact with the simulation, we can have a static or a dynamic simulation. A globe is a static simulation of the Earth. A circular rug on which we attempt to stand increasing numbers of people provides a dynamic simulation of the overcrowding of earth.
- Based on the time span, we can have a historical simulation (such as the exploration of the New World), a current simulation (such as the construction of the space station), or a futuristic simulation (such as the terraforming of the Martian landscape).

Bases Of Simulations

Misconception: *Simulations reflect reality.*

Actually, simulations reflect someone's *model* of reality. There is an important difference between reality and a model of reality. This difference has critical implications for the design and use of training simulations.

Let's assume that you want to simulate the quality-improvement process in a service organization. Exactly what features and processes you select for the simulation will depend on your professional discipline (and personal preferences). For example, if you are a behaviorist, you may interpret the process in terms of stimuli from customers, responses from employees, and reinforcers from managers. If you are a humanist, you may look at the customer-service process in terms of customer expectation, employee empowerment, and manager motivation. If you are a sociologist, you may focus on organizational norms and individual roles. If you are a lawyer, you may emphasize contractual obligations,

legal violations, and policy issues. If you are an accountant, you may compare the costs of providing different levels of service with the short- and long-term payoffs of satisfying a customer.

In addition to these professional filters, your model of reality depends on your personal preferences and personality characteristics. If you are an optimist, you may directly correlate better services with profitable bottom lines. If you are a pessimist, you may introduce such random variables as policy changes, governmental regulations, customer vacillations, and environmentalist agitations.

These concepts of multiple realities and of selective emphasis have important implications in the design of a simulation. You have to explicitly document what variables and relationships are included in your model and why you chose to include them (and to exclude others). You may include alternative models to present a more balanced approach.

Uses Of Simulations

Misconception: *Simulations are used for technical training.*

Actually, simulations can be use in a variety of ways to improve human performance. Here are some examples.

Training. Corporate trainers use simulations to help participants master principles and processes in business, management, and sales. Technical trainers use simulators to provide hands-on experience with equipment and machinery. As a training tool, simulations can help participants to master complex concepts (for example, how production cost, customer demand, delivery channel, promotion strategy, and market position interact with each other and determine the appropriate price of a product). By forcing trainees to cope with several factors at the same time, simulations do a much better job of equipping them to handle complex interactions than other instructional methods that require a linear, one-variable-at-a-time presentation.

Performance assessment. Valid performance tests usually involve some form of simulation. Computerized management simulations assess the ability of an applicant to effectively manage limited resources. High-fidelity cases measure manager's decision-making skills. Appropriate roleplays, involving professional actors to provide standardized triggering behaviors, evaluate different interpersonal skills. In-basket exercises test a candidate's ability to organize and to prioritize.

Teambuilding. Simulations, especially of the non-computerized kind, are used for eliciting, maintaining, and improving the performances of teams. Any simulated project (such as crossing a mine field, surviving a plane crash in a desert, or finding a mythical treasure) that requires a team to plan and implement a strategy produces powerful insights. During and after the simulated

activity, team members improve their performance in such interpersonal areas as giving feedback, setting goals, making decisions, solving problems, resolving conflicts, managing diversity, negotiating roles, and persuading others.

Research. Simulations provide useful research data at a fraction of the usual cost. Sophisticated computer simulations are replacing animal testing of cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Crash dummies provide data useful for saving real dummies who forget to fasten their seat belts. Playing the PRISONER'S DILEMMA identifies basic factors that induce cooperative and competitive behaviors. A focus group's behavior predicts reactions of the customer group.

Therapy. Simulations provide metaphors for different behaviors and their consequences. Participation in simulated activities provides powerful insights. For example, a solitaire game may reflect the consequences of taking inappropriate risks. After playing the game, we can encourage the player to draw analogies between what happened in the game and what happens in real life. The participant can figure out appropriate changes in the game strategy to increase the final score. From there, he or she can transfer the insights to real-life situations to reduce self-defeating behaviors.

Fidelity Of Simulations

Misconception: *High fidelity simulations are more effective than low fidelity simulations.*

Actually, both types of simulation can be effective in different contexts.

High fidelity simulations incorporate a large number of elements and attempt to capture every interaction. The physical artifacts used in these simulations are the same as their real-world counterparts; if not, they are created with a high degree of verisimilitude. A complex model involving huge amounts of quantitative data and thousands of rapid calculations drives the simulation. For example, a virtual reality flight trainer uses the actual cockpit from a fighter plane, complete with all the instruments and controls. A computer-driven rear-screen projector shows an authentic view out of the pilot's window. The computer program responds to the pilot-trainee's every move and dynamically alters the outside view and the inside readings on different indicators. The program produces alternative terrain and weather conditions at the request of the instructor.

Low-fidelity simulations, in contrast, focus on only a few critical elements and use a simplified model of the interactions among them. The physical artifacts and the environment do not correspond to what is being simulated in any detail. For example, a facilitator may say, "Imagine you and the other five people at your table are in a leaky lifeboat in a shark-infested ocean. Your lifeboat can only handle four people...." Participants, left to their own devices, attempt to persuade the others to volunteer to jump in the ocean. Nothing physically changes in the situation, except in the imagination of the players.

You need sophisticated technology and proven principles from hard sciences to design and use high-fidelity simulations. Engineers have appropriate formulas to simulate the landing of a missile, after a flight of hundreds of miles, correct to a nearest meter. You can use these high-fidelity simulations to make accurate predictions. Training devices that employ such simulations result in very reliable transfer and application of skills. A high-fidelity dress rehearsal of a fully-equipped ethnic restaurant with invited guests helps us identify and fix last-minute glitches before opening for business with the general public.

This effectiveness of high-fidelity simulations is obtained at a high cost or at a potentially high risk. In matters of life and death, such costs are more than justified. In other situations, cost-effectiveness considerations may suggest a reduced level of fidelity.

Low-fidelity simulations have a few advantages. Let's consider a simulation game, BARNGA, used for increasing participants' awareness factors in cross-cultural communication. In this simulation, groups of participants, seated at different tables, learn to play a simple card game. Unknown to the players, the rules at each table differ slightly from those in the other tables. As a result, an amazing amount of confusion and frustration results when winners from each table are promoted to the next table to play a tournament round. Depending on the personality and perceptions of the participants at each table, they may or may not be able to reconcile their differences and continue playing.

Early rounds of BARNGA simulate the enculturation process, the tournament reflects cross-cultural interactions, and the gag order represents language and communication problems. Admittedly, the correspondence between the simulation and a typical cross-cultural interaction is very low. However, participants invariably report powerful insights from the play of the game. For example, participants claim that they have learned to appreciate the importance of checking their assumptions in any novel situation. Follow-up studies suggest that participants' workplace behaviors include increased number of requests for clarifying assumptions. BARNGA becomes a metaphor to remind people to say, "Let's check what rules we are playing by."

In general, high-fidelity simulations are more suited for teaching procedures while low-fidelity simulations are suited for teaching principles. Both types of simulations have critical roles to play in different situations. The question is not which type of simulation is more effective, but rather which type of simulation is more suited for achieving our objective within our cost constraints.

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Guest Gamer

*This column features interviews with outstanding designers and users of interactive experiential activities. Our guest this month is Roger Greenaway, whose main interest is in "the game after the game" — the debriefing. Roger refers to this stage as "active reviewing" or "dynamic debriefing". According to Roger, "People who put their creative efforts into game design often fail to apply the same level of creativity to the debriefing process. Guidance for debriefing a game is sometimes no more than a list of questions to discuss." Roger's main book on the subject of debriefing is **Playback: A Guide to Reviewing Activities**. This book is no longer in print, but you will find much of the contents at his encyclopedic website <http://reviewing.co.uk/> together with several articles on the subject. Since receiving a doctorate in Management Learning at the University of Lancaster in 1995, Roger has been training trainers in Europe, Africa, and Asia in the art of reviewing/debriefing.*

Interview with Roger Greenaway

Thiagi: Roger, how did you get involved in working with games?

Roger: In the 1980's I worked at Brathay, which is recognized as one of the leading providers of development training in the UK. Our courses were a stimulating mixture of group work, outdoor activities, creative arts workshops, and communication exercises, and drama. A few exercises from the Pfeiffer and Jones manuals were mixed in, but these structured learning experiences from the USA seemed pretty serious compared to the rest of the menu that we offered to course participants. There was a continuing tension between *serious structure* and *fun and freedom*, plus a residential community of about 20 trainers all piling their own ideas into the melting pot. It was a climate in which it was difficult not to be creative!

Thiagi: What kinds of games were you developing?

Roger: Many different kinds. But what characterized many of my games was their *emptiness* — the space given to participants. I felt at the time that courses were getting so packed with simulations that participants needed a bit of breathing space. As it happened, these *breathing spaces* often turned out to be their most intense and relevant experiences during a course.

Thiagi: How did participants respond to these empty games?

Roger: Well, the intensity could take many forms — often a mixture of fun and seriousness. For example, the SOLO CHALLENGE game (also called ANYONE CAN VETO ANYTHING) works mainly because of the contrast that it provides in the middle of a team-based program. Participants get just half an hour on their own, but how they spend this time is typically negotiated in a *sensitive frenzy*. The sharing of stories at the end of the half hour is a very powerful experience for individuals and the group. I call them *empty games* because what people actually do is decided within the structure of the game.

Thiagi: Is SOLO CHALLENGE an example of a debriefing game?

Roger: Not really, but maybe this is a good opportunity to make the connection. The research I carried out at Brathay took me much further down the road that I was already traveling. I won't attempt to fit my thesis into this interview, but it did raise issues about the value of design versus the value of debriefing. The road I have been traveling is away from activity design and open debriefs towards open activities and more imaginative debriefing. I pay a lot of attention to the design of the debriefing process — especially because this tends to be the part of the learning process where participants lose interest or where facilitators lose touch.

Thiagi: What has made you so interested in debriefing?

Roger: It was originally the positive evaluations from participants about debriefing games. And since I have started training other trainers in debriefing skills and methods, I keep finding more reasons to be interested. Many training books say that effective debriefing is vitally important, but then provide very little guidance about how to do it well. I now see debriefing as so important that I will sometimes get trainers to design all the debriefing sessions before choosing the activities. I also argue that trainers should usually be training the participants themselves in debriefing skills.

Thiagi: What is the most embarrassing moment you have had in conducting debriefing games?

Roger: I once used a 10-minute game with a group of trainers in Japan. After 50 minutes responding to their questions about the game they were puzzled about why such a simple game should have led to such a long discussion. The answer was that it shouldn't have done: it was really just an introductory game that wasn't worth much discussion or debriefing. The discussion was taking us round and round in circles and turned out to have been a time-consuming demonstration of how not to debrief. Fortunately, there was another 3 days training time in which to involve trainers in more effective and dynamic debriefing.

Thiagi: What advice do you have for designing debriefing games?

Roger: Encourage facilitators to *start* a session with a debriefing game — so that debriefing is not always left to the end of a session when time is short or when people are impatient for a break. Also, for all games (including debriefing games) leave enough space and opportunity for participants' own creativity. Most of my own designs for debriefing games start with the facilitator demonstrating the technique and then handing over some of the responsibility as soon as learners see how it works. I also work the other way round - building games around ideas or phrases from participants.

Thiagi: What advice do you have for using debriefing games?

Roger: Have a range of tools and techniques up your sleeve so that you can provide contrast, variety, and stimulation. Vary the pace. Use speed and search techniques to find areas to explore in greater depth and detail. Give participants suitable preparation time if you want something more considered than instant reactions. Be as open as you can about what you are asking people to do and why. And if you feel stuck, try to enlist the help of participants in getting things unstuck. Don't let games get in the way. At its best, free-flowing discussion is a brilliant debriefing technique. At its worst it gives debriefing a bad name.

Thiagi: What advice do you have for getting acceptance of debriefing games?

Roger: Emphasize learning from success and positive feedback. Get people to look at what is working well. This provides a very useful starting point that is non-threatening for most people. Participants will almost certainly let you know when they are ready for more critical debriefing.

Thiagi: What do you think is the most important characteristic of a facilitator?

Roger: Sensing what is missing and providing it — or creating a situation in which what is missing gets found.

Thiagi: What is one thing that you hate the most in a facilitator?

Roger: I once saw a facilitator looking and sounding very bored while saying “beep” as participants stood on the wrong square in a maze. I couldn't see anything to hate, but I did feel that the facilitator could have done a little more to get himself out of a rut — especially if training people to do just that! So, yes, I hate to see facilitators working as robots. It's a creative and empowering job — one of the best around!

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

Roger: Debriefing games.

Thiagi: What is your favorite debriefing game?

Roger: It would have to be ACTION REPLAY (with no technology). This extremely versatile game is useful for recalling and clarifying what happened, for reliving the original experience, and for analyzing key moments. It can be used for changing history and adapted for trying out alternative courses of action. (This game is described below.)

Thiagi: Who are your favorite game designers?

Roger: Terry Orlick (through *The Co-operative Sports and Games Book*) showed me how one simple rule change can convert a competitive game into a co-operative one. Our children's parties have never been the same since. And one of my most popular debriefing games, REVOLVER, can be traced back to an Orlick inspired rule change in a game of volleyball. You are the only other person I know who designs debriefing games — so you are the clear winner in this special category!

Thiagi: Do you have any book recommendations?

Roger: *The Well Played Game* by Bernie DeKoven. Like Terry Orlick's book, it dates back to the new games era, but it really gets to the heart of what makes a good game. My own *Active Reviewing Tips* newsletter (distributed by email) will eventually be published as a book, but is currently a free service.

Thiagi: What is your prediction about the future of games?

Roger: My prediction is that learning to learn will overtake all other kinds of learning and that games that make people better learners will be sought after above all others. Maybe there will be a new generation of games that gives as much attention to the *game after the game* as to the game itself.

Thiagi: Any last words, Roger?

Roger: Thank you for this opportunity to think through what I do from an entirely new perspective. It reminds me that interviews are also a useful kind of "debriefing game"!

Web References

Guide to Active Reviewing by Roger Greenaway (and Active Reviewing Tips): <http://reviewing.co.uk/>

SOLO CHALLENGE: <http://reviewing.co.uk/toolkit/solo.challenge.htm>

REVOLVER: <http://reviewing.co.uk/discuss/discuss2.htm>

Playback (summary): <http://reviewing.co.uk/pbk.htm>

The Well Played Game by Bernie DeKoven: <http://www.deepfun.com>

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Debriefing Game

ACTION REPLAY

by Roger Greenaway

Description

ACTION REPLAY involves re-enacting an activity as if a video of the activity is being replayed. Just as on television, the action is “played back” either to examine an incident more closely or to replay an event worth celebrating. In the age of TV and video, action replay needs little explanation (you don't need to be a drama expert, and the learners don't need a complicated briefing).

Benefits

Compared to video work, action replay ...

- is cheaper and needs no equipment
- is quicker to set up, edit and replay the “highlights”
- is more convenient — it can be used almost anywhere
- is more versatile and (usually) more fun
- keeps involvement and energy high
- is an exercise in memory, creativity, and teamwork
- brings out humor and honesty
- provides opportunities for leadership (as director)
- provides opportunities for interviewing and commentating
- brings the worlds of talk and action closer together
- can be used as a search technique to find incidents or issues to review more thoroughly

Application

ACTION REPLAY is best suited to the debriefing of games in which there was plenty of action! If the “action” was repetitive, it may be too difficult for participants to synchronize their replay. Games that involve getting the whole group from A to B are often well suited to Action Replay. Games in which there is little movement (e.g. mental puzzles or board games) are less suitable. Blindfold games can be re-enacted with the help of observers — this allows blindfolded people to “see” what was happening for the first time.

Selected Highlights

This is a good way to introduce ACTION REPLAY for the first time. Ask participants to suggest highlights that they would like to see again. If the people involved agree, ask them to reconstruct the highlight and enjoy the moment again. Although there may be some value in repeating the game itself, it is generally better (for ACTION REPLAY) to carry out the replay in a different place and without the original props. (Keep things simple and quick.)

The Dummy Microphone

A dummy microphone adds extra purpose (and interest) to the replay. As well as this being a memory exercise and an opportunity for celebration, this is also an opportunity for noticing interesting details that may have been missed at the time. Any group member (actor or audience) can pick up the dummy microphone to interview someone involved in the action. They can ask questions from any point of the learning cycle, e.g.

- to clarify what was happening
- to give people a chance to express their feelings (especially any that were unknown to others)
- to analyze the situation (Why were you doing that? How did that happen?)
- or to look to the future (What would it take to improve on this? Does this have anything to do with your job?)

Unedited Replays

Instead of pre-selecting which moments to replay (as in "Selected Highlights" above) just ask for the whole game to be replayed. If you ask for a replay on "Fast Forward", give a guide time e.g. "Your challenge is to present an ACTION REPLAY on 'Fast Forward' at four times the speed of the original game. The game took 20 minutes, so your replay should take 5 minutes."

The Dummy Remote Control

While watching a replay you or a participant may wish to slow down the replay at a particular moment or see it again. So introduce a dummy remote control before the replay starts. Describe some of the buttons that you will be using and warn that you may invent a few buttons that no-one has ever heard of before. Once you have demonstrated the possibilities of using the remote control, participants can take it in turns to direct the action. The director has some or all of these "controls" to play with: REWIND, REPLAY, FAST FORWARD, PAUSE/FREEZE, CUT TO A DIFFERENT SCENE, CUT AND RE-TAKE A SCENE, PROVIDE COMMENTARY/VOICE OVER, SLOW MOTION (with deep voices), WITH/WITHOUT SOUND, IN THE STYLE OF ... (Capable groups and directors imitate a particular film or TV style, and replay the same incident from a range of perspectives — each bringing out a different "side" of the story.)

From Play To More Purposeful Uses

Yes, you (and they) can have a lot of fun with this debriefing game, but where does it go? The dummy controls are not only fun to play with, they also provide the opportunity for some very focused and controlled debriefing. Here are some more purposeful variations and applications of this debriefing game:

- "FANTASY REPLAY" or CHANGING HISTORY: If only it had been like this!

This is a way of checking, demonstrating, reinforcing or practicing what has been learned — by individuals or by the group as a whole.

- INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM: Bringing out issues which participants have found difficult to recognize or confront during the activity — with or without using the dummy microphone.
- REPLAYING SCENES FROM THE WORKPLACE: Use the replay technique (with or without dummy controls) to help people re-construct, re-live and re-examine situations that they would like to handle differently.
- BACK TO THE FUTURE: Not strictly a “RE-play”, but the method is readily adapted for rehearsing future scenarios. There is no need for people to get back in their seats as soon as you start looking ahead!

Web References

The Active Reviewing Cycle (tutorial): <http://reviewing.co.uk/learning-cycle/index.htm>

Active Reviewing (article): <http://reviewing.co.uk/actrev.htm>

Action Replay (more variations): <http://reviewing.co.uk/stories/replay.htm>

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Research

Effectiveness of Interactive Strategies

When discussing the benefits of collaborative learning and interactive lectures, I frequently refer to a piece of ancient action research. Many people ask me for a citation to the original research paper but unfortunately this is an unpublished study. I have now decided to write it up for the benefit of those who need ammunition to persuade others. I feel guilty about reconstructing an old and sloppy piece. So please be extremely careful about generalizing from these results.

Cast Of Characters

The study was conducted in the early 70's by my colleague Alan Sheppard at Indiana University. (No, not the astronaut. Alan is currently teaching mathematics in a community college in St. Louis.) The study involved the use of the TEAM QUIZ interactive lecture strategy. The subjects were 30 high school students conveniently and randomly divided into three groups.

Procedure

The teaching content was selected from a unit on the U.S. Civil War. Before the study, Alan constructed a criterion test on the content consisting of 10 short-answer closed questions and one open question.

This procedure was used with the first group of 10 students:

Presentation. Alan gave a 12-minute presentation using a traditional, non-interactive approach. Students were told that a quiz would follow the lecture and encouraged to take notes.

Members of this group waited for the other two groups to finish before taking the criterion test.

Alan gave the presentation on the same content for the same time for students in the second group. Immediately after the presentation, the second group undertook the following activity:

Question construction. The group was divided into three teams (of 3, 3, and 4 members). Each team was asked to spend the next 5 minutes in collaboratively coming up with two sets of questions: The first set was to include three or four fact-recall, short-answer, closed questions for which there was a single correct answer. The second set was to include one or two open-ended questions that required higher-level cognitive processing of the content from the presentation. These open-ended questions did not have a single correct answer, but permitted several acceptable alternatives.

After the teams constructed their questions, Alan asked them to wait for the next group.

Alan gave a similar presentation to the third group (as in the case of the first two groups). This group then undertook the question-construction activity (as in the case of the second group). In addition, Alan conducted the following activity with students from the third group.

Quiz contest. The three teams took turns to read one of the closed questions. The questioning team then selected an individual member from either of the other two teams. This person's answer resulted in score points for the team according to the following formula:

- Gain 2 points for giving the correct answer without consulting with other team members.
- Gain 1 point for giving the correct answer after consulting with other team members.
- Lose 1 point for giving an incorrect answer without consulting with other team members.
- Lose 2 points for giving an incorrect answer after consulting with other team members.

After each team had two turns at asking closed questions, the quiz contest moved to the open questions: Each team read one of its open questions and after a pause of 30 seconds selected one of the other teams. A spokesperson from this team provided an answer. Then a representative from the other team provided an alternative answer. The questioning team split 5 points between the two answers to reflect their relative merits.

Testing

Shortly after the third group completed the quiz contest, Alan gave the criterion test to all students.

Criterion Test Results

For the purposes of the study, Alan ignored the responses to the open question. We analyzed the answers to the 10 closed questions, awarding each correct answer 10 points.

These were the average scores of the three groups:

Group 1: 19

Group 2: 71

Group 3: 95

Discussion

The results suggest that the most significant amount of learning took place during the question construction activity during which members of small teams collaboratively reviewed the content and came up with closed and open questions. This activity required students to discuss the content both for specific details and for overall relationships. Since the teams engaged in this review activity immediately after listening to the presentation, this activity perhaps offset typical memory loss.

The quiz contest contributed to some additional learning by probably giving students an opportunity to learn from other teams' questions and answers.

These results, however, do not lend themselves to generalization because the study was of limited duration and dealt with a limited topic. It is possible that the differential results in this study were due to a combination of the following factors:

Time on task. The third group spent significantly more time in processing than the other two teams. The first team spent the least amount of time.

Content. The results were limited to the recall of factual information. They may not apply to procedural or conceptual content.

Limited time. The presentation of 12 minutes was an atypically short period of time.

Waiting periods. The first group had to wait for approximately 20 minutes and the second group for approximately 15 minutes before students in the third group completed their activities. There was no control over what the participants were doing (and thinking) during these waiting periods.

Presentations. Although Alan tried to keep the presentations to the three teams similar, it is possible that there were differences in the content and emphasis among these presentations.

Replications

One of my friends in Chennai, India informally replicated this study with a group of high school students. She used a 15-minute audiotape recording on photosynthesis to standardize the presentation to the three groups. Another friend conducted a similar study with a group of undergraduate students at Cuttington College in Gbarnga, Liberia. The results from these studies were similar to Alan's study but less impressive.

Your Turn

Teachers and trainers become so intrigued with the Team Quiz strategy that they seldom have the patience to conduct a controlled experiment. Perhaps you could conduct a much more scientifically rigorous study around the use of training games.

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Creativity Technique

FIVE IDEAS

Teambuilding activities create high-performance teams whose members are extremely loyal to each other and to their team. Sometimes, however, the emphasis in teamwork results in reduced collaboration across teams. Similar problems occur when employees become so focused on their departmental goals that they ignore or downplay the strategic goals for the total organization.

FIVE IDEAS is an activity that encourages participants to go beyond what is good for their team or their department and work on cooperatively achieving common goals.

Key Concept

During the first round of this activity, participants from each division of an organization identify what they need from the other divisions. During the second round, participants are organized into heterogeneous groups with one member from each division. These groups come up with collaborative ideas for reaching a common goal.

Purpose

To come up with ideas for inter-team and inter-departmental collaboration for achieving common goals in an organization.

Participants

Two to 10 members representing each different department.

Our sample activity used for illustrative purposes below involves five members representing these three departments: service, parts, and sales.

Time

45 minutes to 3 hours (depending on the number of participants, number of divisions they represent, and amount of detail required)

Supplies

- Flip charts
- Felt-tipped pens
- Timer
- Whistle

Flow

Specify a common goal. At the beginning of the activity, announce a goal that requires collaboration among the different divisions. Briefly discuss how the achievement of this goal can be measured.

*Paul, who is facilitating participants from three different departments, has a choice of several common goals: **making a record profit for the next quarter**, **reducing employee turnover**, and **developing new service lines**. He eventually decides to stick with the mundane (but important) goal of **providing excellent customer service**. During the discussion of this goal, participants suggest that a reduction in the waiting time and an increase in positive customer feedback could be used as measures for checking the achievement of this goal.*

Organize participants into homogeneous groups. Assign everyone from the

same department to the same group. (However, if there are more than seven people from each department, divide them into more than one group.)

Paul has a simple task. He organizes three groups of service, parts, and sales, and assigns the five members from each department to the appropriate group. (If there were 11 people from each department, Paul would have created one group of six and another group of seven.)

Assign tasks to the homogeneous groups. Ask members of each group to brainstorm a list of ideas in response to the question, "How can employees from the other departments help us better achieve the common goal?" Encourage groups to come up with a long list and shrink it down to the top five ideas. Announce a suitable time limit.

Pam is a member of the service department. She suggests that the sales group should provide them with a clearer picture of what each customer wants. Someone else in the group suggests that the sales group should stop making rash promises to the customer. The group also decides that they want better coordination with the parts group to avoid service delays. The other two groups work out similar lists of what they want from the remaining groups. Each group records its ideas on a flip chart.

Get ready to conclude the first round of the activity. Five minutes before the end of the allotted time, blow a whistle to get participants' attention. Ask each group to identify its top five ideas for achieving the common goal. Ask individual participants to take notes about the final list. Explain that every participant would need this information during the next phase of the activity.

Reorganize participants into heterogeneous groups. Blow the whistle at the end of the allotted time. Now, reorganize the participants into several groups that contain one member from each of the previous (homogeneous) groups.

Paul divides participants into five groups of three members each. Pam ends up in a group with Alan from sales and Kathy from parts.

Assign tasks to the heterogeneous groups. Ask members of the group to brainstorm a list of ideas in response to the question, "How can employees from different departments work with each other to achieve our common goal?" Encourage participants to use their ideas from the previous round in a flexible fashion. As before, encourage each group to begin with a long list and whittle it down to the top five ideas.

Pam is somewhat irritated by the unreasonable expectations of the other two members of her new group. After some debate, all three group members focus on the common goal, compromise their initial demands, and come up with creative strategies.

Get ready to conclude the activity. Five minutes before the end of the assigned time, blow the whistle and ask the groups to identify the top five ideas. Also ask each group to list the final set of ideas on the flip chart and get ready to make a presentation.

Share the ideas. Select a group at random and ask its spokesperson to present the final set of five ideas. Encourage members of the other groups to listen carefully. Repeat the procedure until all groups have made their presentation.

Conduct individual action planning activity. Give an index card or a piece of paper to each participant. Ask participants to write down five ideas in response to the question, "How can I individually contribute to the achievement of the common goal?" Tell participants that they could record earlier ideas from their groups, or ideas from other groups, or new ideas. Announce a suitable time limit.

Pam's action plan contains four items from the list created by her group. In addition, she comes up with a bright idea of her own: "Frequently remind other members of my group about the importance of helping the sales groups to come up with realistic time estimates."

Adjustments

Want an alternative ending? Instead of concluding with the individual action-planning round, reassemble participants into their original homogeneous groups. Now ask them to brainstorm ideas in response to the question, "How can we support the *other* departments in their attempts to reach the common goal?"

Not enough time? You can speed up the activity by asking the groups to come up with just two ideas during each rounds.

Not enough participants? This should not be a problem, since you can conduct the activity with as few as four participants (two participants each from two different departments).

Too many participants? It could be a problem if you have hundreds of participants. To handle this situation, simply divide the larger group into medium-sized groups (of about 20) with equal representation from different departments. Then conduct parallel versions of the activity with each subgroup.

Unbalanced number of participants? What if you have 20 sales people, 15 support staff, and 4 trainers? The way we handle this situation is to redistribute participants from the larger groups to the other groups and ask them to role-play membership of the other groups. In our example, several of the sales people and a few of the support staff will pretend to be trainers so each group will have 13 members.

Too few departments? Recently we conducted FIVE IDEAS with employees

from two merging organizations. Each organization sent 10 representatives. We set up two homogeneous groups of five from each organization for the first round. For the second round, we redistributed the participants into five heterogeneous groups of four. Each of these groups had two representatives from two different homogeneous groups.

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Book Review

What Smart Trainers Are Reading

Obviously, I am not as smart a trainer as I thought I was. I did not know many of the secrets contained in a new book, *What Smart Trainers Know*, edited by Lorraine Ukens. This book would have been extremely valuable if I had copy of it when I started my career as a trainer. Even now, after several years in the field, the book helps me acquire useful working knowledge in unfamiliar domains--and new ideas in familiar ones.

Lorraine Ukens is a creative game designer and a prolific author of several game collections. However, this is not a book of training games (although it contains a chapter on training games and activities by an author with a strange name) but rather a collection of chapters on competencies and concepts associated with the areas of training, performance improvement, and HRD.

Forty-six outstanding experts have contributed 35 chapters to this brilliant collection. Let me summarize the table of contents of the book to give you feel for its rich contents:

The first part of the book provides a conceptual framework for strategic training and development with an introductory article on shifting from training to performance (by James Robinson and Dana Gaines Robinson). Other important chapters in this part include professional trends (by Joe Willmore), HRD in the Internet world (by Patricia McLagan), learning organizations (by Michael J. Marquardt), change management (by Jay Conger), organizational culture (by Edgar Schein) and legal issues (by Linda Byars Swindling).

For a practical overview of assessment and evaluation techniques, the second part of this book covers needs assessment (by Seth Leibler, Ann Parkman, and Karen VanKampen), intervention selection (by Judith Hale), performance analysis (by Allison Rossett and Catherine Tobias), competency modeling (by Richard Lepsinger and Antoinette Lucia), evaluation (by Donald Kirkpatrick), transfer of learning (by Mary Broad), and performance appraisal (by Gary Latham and Deborah MacKenzie).

The third part of the book gives practical guidelines for training and development design. In this part you will about recent trends in instructional design (by William Rothwell), learning styles (by Maxine Arnold Dalton), adult learning (by Ron Zemke and Susan Zemke), training programs (by Karen Lawson), the training process (by Bob Pike), and motivation (by Larry Proman).

The fourth part of the book is about training methods. It contains expert advice on active learning (by Mel Silberman), transformational learning (by Robert Hargrove), learner involvement (by Fran Rees), training games (by Sivasailam Thiagarajan), self-directed learning (by George Piskurich), multimedia training (by Kevin Kruse) and communication technology (by Zane Berge).

The fifth part expands the book into the areas of employee and organizational development. Excellent advice is provided on diversity (by Julie O'Mara), leadership (by James Kouzes and Barry Posner), team training (by Lorraine Ukens), development planning (by Robert Brinkerhoff and Nicholas Andreadis), new employee orientation (by Jean Barbazette), mentoring (by Beverly Kaye and Marilyn Greist) and rewards and recognition (by Barbara Glanz).

All the chapters in the book are extremely readable. Here are some of the important ideas that I picked up from the book during a long flight from San Francisco to Sydney:

Edgar Schein emphasizes that the culture of an organization should not be analyzed or changed for its own sake. Culture cannot be assessed with individual questionnaires because it is a group phenomenon.

Mary Broad points out that managers are most powerful in supporting transfer of learning in the workplace. They should communicate the importance of the new knowledge and skills before and after training. They should also make learners accountable for applying their new knowledge and skills to their job.

Ron Zemke and Susan Zemke remind us of these elements of effective facilitation in most adult-learning contexts: engaging the learner in setting their own goals for learning, using learners' experience and opinions as an important part of the content, and encouraging participants to reach conclusions.

Fran Rees suggests that the facilitation process can be used to help participants stimulate thinking about a topic, assess their knowledge, reflect on a topic, apply a skill to real-world situations, and further develop their skills.

Julie O'Mara reminds us that the most effective approaching to diversity takes into account the three overlapping areas of workforce, structure, and marketplace. An organization whose employees have developed the diversity skills, attitudes, and competencies is ready to meet the needs of local and global customers and markets with different divisions and departments working seamlessly.

Details: *What Smart Trainers Know: The Secrets of Success from the World's Foremost Experts.* Lorraine L. Ukens (Editor). Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. 350 Sansome Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94104-0443 Telephone: (800) 274-4434. URL: <http://www.pfeiffer.com/> . ISBN: 0-7879-5386-5.

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Trends

Online Simulation Games

If you are not already paranoid enough, for a mere \$9.99 per month you can join hundreds of people who play MAJESTIC (<http://www.majesticthegame.com/>), an online simulation about a government conspiracy. Played in real time, the game sends you email, fax, and voice messages with clues. You also have access to a special search engine that is linked to thousands of real and specially-created conspiracy sites.

Online simulations represent the fastest growing area in simulation design. This type of simulation has important implications for online learning. Here are some of the factors that have contributed to the rapid growth of online simulations:

Information presentation. You can use, store, and present large amounts of information in an online simulation. You can present the information in text, graphic, audio, and video formats. As a part of the simulation, you can refer the player to different websites. Players can use search engines to explore different blocks of information and selectively retrieve the most appropriate content.

Number of players. If you are an introverted player, you can play a simulation game against a virtual opponent represented by the computer. In this situation, you can make all your embarrassing mistakes in total privacy. If you are an extrovert, you can play the newer multiplayer online simulation games with real partners and opponents around the world, everyone making their moves in real time.

Quantitative models. The heart of a simulation is a model that reflects interactions among relevant variables. For example, if you are introducing basic concepts of aquaculture to your learners, you may use a complex formula as your model and employ it to compute the amount of dissolved oxygen in a pond depending on such factors as amount of sunlight, temperature, algae growth, source of water, and weather conditions. Your computer can undertake complex calculations in the background and continuously update the information about the available oxygen.

Automatic scorekeeping. Before the arrival of computers, a major hassle in simulation game design was devising a scoring system that did not require complex, time-consuming computations. As a result, earlier scoring systems made use of just one or two factors. With current computer programs, you don't face these constraints any more. You can, for example, design a retail-store management simulation that requires learners to make a series of rapid decisions. After each decision, your computer program can calculate impact of the decision on different scores related to such criteria as customer satisfaction, inventory control, employee satisfaction, and profit—and all of these on both a short-term and long-term basis. Players can see their scores completely updated at the bottom of the screen.

Continuous improvement. You can automatically capture data from the play of online computer simulations. You can analyze these data to identify popular preferences and frequent misconceptions related to training concept. Based on the analysis, you can continuously improve the instructional and motivational effectiveness of your simulation.

Maintaining a flow state. A powerful motivation strategy is to maintain an optimum level of challenge so that the player is neither bored (because the task is too simple) nor frustrated (because it is too hard). With computer and online simulations, it is possible for you to increase the difficulty level (for example, by requiring players to process more information, make more complex decisions, and work under tighter time pressures) or to decrease it (by doing the opposite). You can create different versions of the same simulation game at different levels of difficulty and offer the version that is best suited to the competency level of a specific group of players. With online simulation games, you can also permit players to select their own level of difficulty. Finally you can program the computer to maintain the simulation game at a predetermined level of difficulty by continuously adjusting the challenge level based on player performance.

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Humor

A Longer Story

Funny things keep happening to my name.

Last year, the Wine Country Chapter of ISPI invited me to make a presentation.

"We cannot pay you anything," the chapter president explained. "But we will make you an honorary life member of our chapter!"

A couple of weeks before my trip to Petaluma, California (where the chapter meeting was to be held), I received a Federal Express package. Inside there was a nice name tag which had the chapter logo and proclaimed "Honorary Life Member". It looked great, except for a single minor imperfection.

You see, the name tag spelled my name "Sivasailam Thiag". It abruptly stopped in the middle of my last name. Obviously the tag was computer generated. Equally obviously, the culturally-insensitive programmer had decided to truncate any name with more than 110 alphanumeric characters.

I called the chapter president's office. He was not there, but I spoke to his secretary.

"I appreciate the Honorary Life Member name tag," I said. "But it has a minor problem. My name is printed as 'Sivasailam Thiag'. 'Thiag' is not my last name. It is longer"

The secretary immediately reassured me that she would fix the problem.

Nothing happened about the name tag until I went to the chapter and did my session. At the conclusion of the session, the president proudly presented the new and improved version of the name tag.

It had my name spelled as "Sivasailam Longer"!

For a moment, I did not understand what happened. There was a look of confusion on my face. The chapter secretary rushed to my side.

"I kept telling them again and again," she told me. "I bet you spell your name L-A-N-G-E-R!"

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Contest Results

The World's Worst Salesperson

In middle of a sales call, the customer explains that he has another meeting in 5 minutes.

How would the world's worst salesperson respond to this situation?

Here's what our readers suggested:

And I know you want to get away to your appointment, and I to

golfing, so you can ring our office to book another appointment. —
Cheryl Goodale

I'll follow you. — *Larry Lipman*

Oh really? Where are we going in 5 minutes? — I'm not too formal, am I? — *Luke Hendricks*

Maybe I should come along. Are you meeting with any rich people? —
Mark Morgan

Well you are going to be late, but better late than never I always say.
— *Jana Nelson*

(With a big grin as you stand in front of the door:) Well that's just
enough time for you to sign on the dotted line. — *Toni Webster*

These are excerpts from entries for Contest 107 in which we presented eight different situations during an imaginary sales call and asked readers to come up with a blundering statement for each situation.

See the July 2001 issue for [details of the contest](#). For an explanation of how to use this improv game as an instructional strategy, read the article, "[The World's Worst](#)", also in the July issue.

Our panel of three judges decided that Jana Nelson's statements were the most stupid and comical. So Jana wins the \$50 gift certificate. Congratulations, Jana!

Here's the complete set of Jana's statements:

Greeting the customer: Nice to meet you. Are you ready to give up your first born?

Analyzing customer's needs: Just by looking at you, I can tell you need one of every product we offer.

Describing your product: Here is our brochure on that type of account. Isn't the picture pretty? You know the account must be good!

Customer yawns: Must have had a long night last night, huh? (Wink, wink)

Customer interrupts with a question: I will answer your question this time, but next time you have to raise your hand.

Customer has an appointment in 5 minutes: Well you are going to be late, but better late than never I always say.

Customer claims the price is too high: You will find that we are the Cadillac compared to our competition. If you can't afford us you will end up with a Ford with Firestone tires.

Concluding sales call without an order: These accounts are going fast, if you come back tomorrow there may not be any left.

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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.

Lost Consonant

During my recent trip to Australia, my friend Robby Weatherley introduced me to a delightfully funny Australian illustrator, Graham Rawle. His book, *Lost Consonants*, is a collection of picture postcards, each with a sentence in which a consonant is missing. The corresponding picture aptly illustrates the resulting ridiculous statement.

Here's an example: The picture shows a number of employees in different types of uniforms. The sentence reads, "During the take-over the workers were left uniformed." (Get it? The last word in the sentence should have been *uninformed* but it lost the second *n* and ended up as *uniformed*, resulting in the comical imagery.)

Here's another example: The picture shows a man exposing the hairs in his arm to a roaring fireplace. The sentence reads, "On cold evenings he'd pull his armhair nearer the fire."

Rawle's book got us thinking about sentences with lost consonants from imaginary business books. Each sentence should miss only one consonant. The spell checker would ignore the loss because the resulting combination of letters is an acceptable English word.

Here are some examples that we came up with:

- Strategic panning is of limited management value during times of turbulent change.
- It is important to clearly resent the corporate vision to all employees.
- Managing an orchestra or a heater group involves principles that can be applied to any high-performing professional team.

(Apologies to our Aussie readers for using US spelling in the last sentence.)

Surely you can do better than that!

The Contest

To enter this month's contest, send one or more lost-consonant sentences from an imaginary business book. Use a format similar to the examples printed above. Remember that each sentence should have only one missing consonant, and that the result should still be a correctly-spelled English word.

If the judges decide that your entry to be the best, you win the contest.

The Rules

- Judging criteria include humor, creativity, relevance, and appeal to the readers of this newsletter.
- Mail your contest entry to Thiagi, 4423 East Trailridge Road, Bloomington, IN 47408-9633, or e-mail it with "Contest 109" 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.
- You may send more than one 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, September 30, 2001. All items must be *received* by the deadline. (Keep this in mind if you send your entry by postal mail.)

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Pithy Advice

Safe Play

To play it safe is not to play.
—Robert Altman

Risk taking is an important element of playing—and of learning. Stop worrying about making mistakes. Begin to play without hesitation, reservation, or inhibition. Don't worry if you are going to lose or make a fool of yourself.

Just play!

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