

# PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE: August 2002

*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.

### ***Editorial Roster***

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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](mailto:thiagi@thiagi.com) . Thanks!

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*Editorial*

## Reflect the Real World

An important instructional design principle that I always practice and preach is, "Keep your training session as close to on-the-job training as possible." In other words, let your training session reflect the real world—with all its chaos and unpredictability—instead of the neatly organized structure of an expert's mind.

This strategy is sometimes called *situated learning* or *cognitive apprenticeship*. Never mind what it is called; it works effectively.

Here's an example: Let's think of a sales training for widget salespeople. From the expert's point of view, knowledge about the widget can be organized into various features that can be logically presented. But the user of the widget is focused on her needs. She wants to know how to use the widget to solve her problems or enjoy the benefits that make sense to her.

Let's get more specific. If you want to learn how to use a word processor, the trainer may want to teach you the system, one menu item at a time: This is how you perform file operations, this is how you use the various items under the *Edit* menu, this is how you use different views, this is how you insert breaks and page numbers and text boxes. But what you are interested in is how to write a letter. You want to know just the operations related to that specific task.

Why am I against training people in a structured, organized fashion? Here are my reasons:

- This approach treats all pieces of content as equally important. It presents too much information to the user.
- This approach focuses on the structure of the content rather than the needs of the user.
- This approach is boring. The user is presented with lots of information before being able to perform anything meaningful.

- This approach encourages trainers to stick to the sequenced presentation. Most of the time, trainers take the users through their collection of electronic slides.
- This approach punishes users for asking questions based on their needs. They end up getting a lecture about things they are not interested in.
- This approach reflects the expert's mind and ignores the beginner's mind.

If all of this is true, then why do we have so much resistance from subject-matter experts, instructional designers, and trainers? Here are some reasons:

- This is the way most people are taught.
- This is the way information about a new product is transmitted from the designer, to the salesperson, to the user.
- Most instructional designers are analytical people. They assume that the whole world is exactly like them.
- From grade schools to instructional-design courses, people are admonished to prepare logical outlines before they begin to write.
- People believe that there are no alternatives to this type of presentation.

We know that there are alternatives. Instead of organizing the content into topics and subtopics, we can organize it in terms of challenges from the field and how experienced practitioners handle them. Instead of mass producing bullet-point slides, we can use the case method, simulations, and roleplays to get people closer to the real world. Instead of making presentations, we can answer questions.

That's what interactive training is all about!

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*Event Alert*

**Coming Soon**

## ***August***

Interactive Learning through Gaming and Simulation

**Organizers:** SAGSET and ISAGA. **Location:** Edinburgh, Scotland. **Dates:** August 26-30, 2002. **Registration fee:** UK£;385 (approximately US\$560). **Web page:** [http://www.eds.napier.ac.uk/isaga\\_sagset/](http://www.eds.napier.ac.uk/isaga_sagset/)

## ***November***

NASAGA 2002

**Organizers:** North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA). **Location:** San Diego, CA **Dates:** November 6-9, 2002. **Registration fee:** Regular conference (November 7-9): \$399. Preconference workshop (November 6, 2002): \$199. **Web page:** <http://www.nasaga.org/conference2002.htm>

Intercultural Competence for Practitioners and Trainers (ICPT)

**Organizers:** Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Winterthur, Switzerland. **Location:** Zurich, Switzerland.

**Session 1:** *How Americans Can Function Effectively in Europe*. Course Number 7. November 24-25, 2002. **Tuition:** SFr. 1180.

**Session 2:** *Interactive Experiential Strategies for Crosscultural Training*. Course Number 8. November 26-27, 2002. **Tuition:** SFr. 1180. **Web page:** <http://www.zhwin.ch/icpt/index.shtml> .

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*Matrix Game*

## **Building a Great Business**

How does one build a great business? Most people focus on the importance of satisfying customers. Some focus on satisfying employees. A few focus on satisfying shareholders.

These three important groups of stakeholders are interlinked to each other when it comes to building a great business. Typically, any action that satisfies one group will have positive impact on the other two groups also. Sometimes, however, an action that delights one group may actually clash with the needs of another group.

### ***Purpose***

- To explore the interrelationship among customers, employees, and shareholders.
- To predict the impact of business-building activities among these three groups.

### ***Participants***

10 to 30, divided into teams of five.

### ***Time Requirement***

30 minutes

### ***Supplies***

- Flip chart and felt-tip markers
- Pads of Post-It® notes
- Timer
- Whistle

### ***Flow***

**Prepare a 3 x 3 grid.** Draw the grid on a flip chart. Label the three columns *customers*, *employees*, and *shareholders*. Label the three rows with the same words.

**Organize participants into teams.** Assign five members to each team. (It does not matter if some teams have one more or one fewer member.) Ask team members to sit around a table and introduce themselves to each other, if necessary.

**Identify the three stakeholder groups.** Explain that building a great company involves satisfying three important groups of people: *customers*, *employees*, and *shareholders*. Briefly explain who the members of these three groups are. Point out that it is possible for the same person to belong to more than one group.

**Explain what goes in the grid.** Point out that the grid has the same labels for the columns and rows. Point to the three boxes along diagonal line from the top left to the bottom right. These boxes have the same label for both the column and the row. (The other six boxes have different labels for the column and the row.)

**Explain what goes in the diagonal boxes.** Tell participants that they will place ideas for satisfying members of each of the three groups in each box. Point to the top-left box and write, "Manufacture high-quality products" as an example of what goes in this box.

**Explain what goes in the boxes above the diagonal.** Point out that sometimes actions that satisfy one group may also satisfy another group. Point to the three boxes above the diagonal. Tell participants that they will place ideas for mutually satisfying the two groups associated with each box. Point to the top-right box (that belongs to the *shareholder* column and the *customer* row) and write, "Give discounts to frequent customers to gain their loyalty" as an example of a mutually satisfying idea. Explain that this action will please both the customers and the shareholders because loyal customers buy more products.

**Explain what goes in the boxes below the diagonal.** Point out that sometimes what satisfies one group may clash with the needs of another group. Point to the three boxes below the diagonal. Tell participants that they will place clashing ideas that may satisfy one group at the expense of the other. Point to the bottom-left box (that belongs to the *customer* column and the *shareholder* row), and write "Give excessive discounts to customers" as an example of a clashing idea. Explain that deep discounts may delight customers but may displease shareholders because profit margin will go down.

**Explain the contest procedure.** Distribute pads of Post-It® notepaper to each team. Tell all participants that they will have 10 minutes to write different items to be placed in the nine different boxes of the grid. Each piece of the sticky notepaper should contain only one item. A team may not write a second item for a box until they have written at least one item for each of the nine boxes. After the 10-minute interval, a judge will identify the best item in each box. The team that wrote the most "best" items will win the contest.

**Pause for 10 minutes.** Encourage teams to discuss various ideas, write each of them on a piece of sticky notepaper, and post it on the appropriate box of the grid.



**Conclude the activity.** At the end of 10 minutes, blow the whistle and ask teams to stop writing and finish posting their notes. Ask participants to review the ideas on various boxes in the grid. At the same time, ask the judge to review the items and select the best item from each box.

**Announce the results.** Ask the judge to read the best idea from each box. Ask each team to keep track of how many times its ideas were selected. At the end of the judge's announcements, identify the team with the highest number of selected ideas. Declare the team to be the winner and congratulate its members.

**Debrief participants.** Have a discussion about the relationship among the three groups of stakeholders and the impact of different activities on these groups. Ask participants for guidelines to increase mutually satisfying actions and reduce conflicting actions.

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*Debriefing*

## **ARTFUL CLOSER**

This activity begins with reflection, proceeds through nonverbal communication, and ends in a discussion. You can use ARTFUL CLOSER to debrief participants after an experiential activity. You may also use it as the final activity at the end of a workshop. You may even use it as an opening ice-breaker by asking participants to think about common personal experiences. For example, I began a recent session on presentation skills by asking participants to process their experiences with the most inspiring speech they had ever heard.

### ***Purpose***

To reflect on a common experience and share insights with each other.

### ***Participants***

Any number. Best for 8 to 30 participants.

### ***Time***

20 to 45 minutes

### ***Supplies***

- Large sheets of drawing paper
- Crayons of different colors
- Timer
- Whistle

### ***Flow***

**Form teams.** Divide participants into equal-sized teams of 4 to 6 members each. Seat team members around a table.

**Review the experience.** Specify a common experience. Ask participants to silently think back on what happened during that experience. Invite them to close their eyes and visualize the highlights of the event. After a suitable pause, ask participants to silently focus on one or more lessons they learned from the experience.

**Distribute supplies.** Place sheets of drawing paper and boxes of crayons in the middle of each table. Ask each participant to take a sheet of paper and to share the crayons.

**Time to draw.** Invite participants to draw an abstract picture that captures the essence of major insights from the experience. Discourage them from focusing on artistic quality and encourage them to flow with their intuitive thoughts and feelings. Announce a 10-minute time limit for this artistic activity.

**Time to stop.** At the end of 10 minutes, blow the whistle and ask participant-artists to stop their activity. Reassure them that it does not matter if their artwork is not yet complete.

**Interpret other people's pictures.** At each table, ask participants to take turns holding up the picture. While doing this, ask each person to perform the difficult task of keeping her mouth shut. Invite other participants around the table to treat the picture as a Rorschach inkblot and report what they see in it. It is not necessary that participants take turns in presenting their interpretation. Anyone may call out her insights whenever she

feels inspired.

**Interpret your own picture.** After all pictures have been interpreted, ask the table teams to repeat the process. This time, however, each person should hold up the picture and describe what insights she meant to convey.

### ***Debriefing***

After the sharing of insights, encourage a discussion at each table. Use questions similar to these to structure this discussion:

- What insights were the most frequently mentioned?
- What insights were unexpected and unique?
- What was the most powerful insight that affected you?
- How do you expect this insight to change your future behavior?

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### *Bookshelf*

## **Conflict Management**

This regular column will feature short reviews of several books every month. Here's a collection of seven books with practical ideas about conflict management.

***Evans, Sybil, & Cohen, Sherry Suib. (2000). Hot Buttons: How To Resolve Conflict and Cool Everyone Down. New York: Cliff Street Books/HarperCollins (0-06-019699-8).***

A hot button is an emotional trigger that upsets you. In this book, Sybil Evans, the "Conflict Coach," provides a five-step formula for turning off hot buttons. Loaded with self-test quizzes and written with humor and empathy, the book helps you manage conflicts in different environments, including the workplace. Sample practical suggestion: Think of differences between people not as deficits but as assets.

***Fisher, Roger, Kopelman, Elizabeth, & Schneider, Andrea Kupfer. (1994). Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict. New York: Penguin Books (0-14-024522-7).***

Based on the authors' first-hand experiences, this book presents guidelines that can be used to produce checklists, analytical tools, and action plans. Although most examples deal with international disputes, the principles presented in the book can be used to manage workplace conflicts. Sample practical suggestion: Analyze your message into these elements: demand, threat, or offer. Compare the message that you intended to send with the message that the other party probably received.

***Landau, Sy, Landau, Barbara, & Landau, Daryl. (2001). From Conflict to Creativity: How Resolving Workplace Disagreements Can Inspire Innovation and Productivity. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (0-7879-5423-3).***

Written by three experts in the field of workplace conflict resolution, this book focuses on the creative value of conflict. The first part of the book examines unproductive conflicts and presents a model for resolving them. The second part shows how organizations can use conflict to foster creativity. Sample practical suggestion: Too little conflict produces artificial consensus and implementation problems. To avoid this, encourage participants to play a devil's advocate. Also, allow people to reflect for a day or more before a final decision is made.

***Lickson, Charles P. (1996). Ironing It Out: Seven Simple Steps to Resolving Conflict. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Learning (1-56052-379-4).***

Using several examples and cases, this book explores the basic concept of conflict and walks the readers through a seven-step process for managing conflicts. Sample practical suggestion: Think of a mask that you have worn earlier in your life. Think of the way your mask would play out in the current conflict. Think of the way the real you would play out. Decide which way has a better chance of resolving the conflict.

***Rosenberg, Marshall B. (1999). Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion. Del Mar, CA: PuddleDancer Press (1-892005-02-6).***

Using stories and sample dialogues, this book presents guidelines for breaking communication patterns that lead to anger, depression, and violence. It also provides ideas for transforming potential conflicts into compassionate dialogues. Sample practical

suggestion: Avoid these three ways that alienate us from compassionate communication: judging moralistically, making comparisons, and denying responsibility.

***Scott, Gini Graham. (2000). Work with Me! Resolving Everyday Conflict in Your Organization. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black (0-89106-137-1).***

The author presents her ERI (Emotion-Reason-Intuition) model and guides readers to manage conflicts in the workplace by handling emotions and using logic and intuition. Sample practical suggestion: Use the compromising style when the solution depends on both you and the other person giving something up.

***Stone, Douglas, Patton, Bruce, & Heen, Sheila. (1999). Difficult Conversations: How To Discuss What Matters Most. New York: Penguin Books (0-14-028852-X).***

This book presents a step-by-step procedure for dealing with conversations that usually cause anxiety and frustration. The procedure involves preparing yourself, starting the conversation without defensiveness, and keeping the conversation progressing positively even when the other person responds negatively. Sample practical suggestion: Accept these facts: Feelings are normal and natural. Good people can have bad feelings. Your feelings are as important as theirs.

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*Invitation*

## **Contribute a Book Review**

Tatiana Kolovou, a regular and active reader of *PFP*, recently came up with a great idea. She suggests that *PFP* readers should contribute short 50-word reviews of books that excited and delighted them. We will include these reviews in our monthly [Bookshelf](#) feature.

Tatiana prefers shorter reviews of more books. She wants to use reader reviews to wade through so many of the books out there and select the useful ones.

So if you have read a good book recently, please send a short review to [thiagi@thiagi.com](mailto:thiagi@thiagi.com) . You may use the format from this month's [Bookshelf](#) as a model. Provide sufficient information to permit readers to locate the books.

And Tatiana, we are waiting for your first review. We know you're a voracious reader.

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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.*

## **Change Another Name**

*Video Vitamins* enhance the instructional value of training videos. In a typical video vitamin, participants watch a videotape and then play one or more games that help review and apply the new concepts and skills.

I don't like the label *Video Vitamins* for this interactive format. Among other things, I have difficulty pronouncing the v sound. But I have not come up with a suitable alternative name for this type of game.

Last time I had a similar problem, I ran a PFP contest. Readers suggested wonderful alternatives to *Read.Me Games*. The winning entry from Roger Greenaway was *Textra Games*. That's the official new name for this interactive format.

So here's the challenge for this month's contest: Create a suitable replacement for *Video Vitamins*. Come up with a name for the type of game that can be used to review and reinforce what participants learn from a training video. Make sure that the name is meaningful and memorable. Send in your creations to enter this contest.

### ***The Rules***

- Mail your contest entry to Thiagi, 4423 East Trailridge Road, Bloomington, IN 47408-9633, or email it with "Contest 208" on the subject line to [thiagi@thiagi.com](mailto:thiagi@thiagi.com), or FAX it to 812/332-5701.

- You may submit more than one entry at a time.
- Include your name and email address with your entry.
- The decision of our judges is final.
- If the same entry is submitted by more than one person, and if this entry wins, the prize will go to the person whose entry reached us earlier.
- We reserve the right to award no prize if we receive no entries of adequate quality.
- 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, August 31, 2002. All items must be *received* by the deadline. (Keep this in mind if you send your entry by postal mail.)

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### *Puzzle*

## **Tic Tac Trivia**

We have combined a trivia puzzle with an online game format.

Here's the basic frame: You see a tic-tac-toe grid with topical labels in each of the nine boxes. Click on a box, read the question that pops up, and type your answer. If you are right, the box shows an "X". If you are wrong, it shows an "O". The goal is to get three "Xs" in a row before you get three "Os" in a row. And you have to work fast because the timer is counting down to zero.

You can [solve the puzzle online](#). (Your browser must support Macromedia Flash.) If you want more directions, click the (?) button in the puzzle.

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*Pithy Saying*

## **Wasting Time**

***People waste time when they play games. That's what is right about it.***

We recently read a quote from William Gibson: "The 'Net is a waste of time, and that's exactly what's right about it." We have borrowed it and applied it to playing games. (After all, Gibson also wrote: "[T]he street finds its own uses for things.")

Waste some time pondering the deeper meaning of this message.

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