# THIAGI GAMELETTER: May 2006

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

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Check It Out

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*Help poor blind computers see.*

*Masthead*

# THIAGI GAMELETTER:
## 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

Editor: Sivasailam (Thiagi) Thiagarajan

Assistant Editor: Raja Thiagarajan

Associate Editor: Jean Reese

Editorial Advisory Board: Bill Wake, Les Lauber, Matt Richter, and <type your name here>

### Copyright Info

### Subscription Info

All registered subscribers receive *Thiagi GameLetter* free of charge.

However, to prevent us from becoming bankrupt, we have decided to adopt a Busker Protocol. If you like what you read, if you find it useful, and if you'd like us to continue publishing the newsletter, please feel free to chip in with any financial contribution. Our estimated annual cost for this newsletter is $30,000. So we suggest an annual contribution of $30 (which is less than one-third the subscription cost of Thiagi's earlier paper-based newsletter). We would appreciate any amount that you send us, but make sure it is less than $30,000 (since we don't want to make a profit). You can mail your check to Thiagi, 4423 East Trailridge Road, Bloomington, IN 47408 or call us at (812) 332-1478 to charge the amount to a credit card. Or you can charge your credit card online, through The Thiagi Group, Inc. Please let us know if you need an invoice for financial record keeping.

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*Roleplay*

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I designed this game for an annual meeting with hundreds of sales people. My challenge was to provide a fast-paced activity for a slightly jaded group whose members were convinced that they had nothing more to learn.

## Key Idea

Participants repeatedly pair up and have several brief roleplay conversations around objections from customers. During the activity, each participant has an opportunity to play the role of a customer and a sales person. Working in teams and pairs, participants reflect on their experience and derive a set of principles for responding to (and

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- To respond appropriately, spontaneously, and clearly to objections.

- To derive a set of principles for effectively responding to (and leveraging) customer objections.

## Participants

16 - 300

(Participants are divided into two groups. Each group is divided into teams of four to seven.)

## Time Requirement

25 - 45 minutes

## Room Setup

This is a stand-up activity. Remove all chairs and other furniture from the room (or move them to the sides, next to the walls).

## Supplies
- Timer

- Whistle

- Pieces of paper

- Pens (or pencils)

## Flow

**Divide participants into two groups of equal size.** Ask participants from one of these groups ("Group A") to temporarily turn their name tags upside down (or remove them) so they can easily recognize members of their own group.

**Assign brainstorming tasks.** Ask members of Group A to organize themselves into teams of four to seven. Ask each team to brainstorm several objections that customers frequently have. After a brief discussion, ask members of each team to select one objection that they want to use. (Group A may end up with several objections, but members of each team will have the same objection.)

While teams in Group A are coming up with objections, ask members of Group B (participants with their name tags) to organize themselves into teams of four to seven. Ask each team to brainstorm several principles for handling (and leveraging) typical objections from clients.

**Conduct the first round of conversations.** Explain that during the next 5 minutes, members of Group A will repeatedly team up with different members of Group B and hold a brief conversation. This conversation will begin with an objection from the Group A member and an immediate response from the Group B member. This conversation must be realistic and must not last for more than 30 seconds. The Group A member may conclude the conversation any time she wants and pair up with another Group B member to repeat the process. These conversations are repeated for a total of 5 minutes.

**Return to the teams.** Ask all participants to return to their teams.

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**Conduct a debrief.** Ask all participants to return to their teams and recall their earlier experiences. Ask each team to come up with a list of five different objections and five practical principles for effectively responding to all types of objections.

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*Online Activity*

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Please go online to experience this experiment.

We will talk more about it in a future issue of *TGL*.

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Training is not important, learning is.

Learning is not important, doing the right thing is.

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Having measured results is not important, having a positive ROI is.

Having a positive ROI is not important, meeting the needs of the budget holder is.

Meeting the needs of the budget holder is not important, increasing your next quarters' funding is.

Increasing next quarters' funding is not important, having revenue next quarter is.

Having revenue next quarter is not important, having profit next quarter is.

Having profit next quarter is not important, having the right people is.

Having the right people is not important, having the right experiences are.

Having the right experience is not important, having the right training is.

I like this circular reasoning because it prevents people from black-and-white thinking. Based on this approach, I recently created an activity in which I begin with a first line (such as, "Money is not important, happiness is …") and ask teams to construct additional lines to create a loop that ends with the opposite of where it began (such as, "X is not important, money is.").

I called the activity ALDRICH LOOPS after my favorite commentator on the computer simulation gaming scene.

Here's a recent Aldrich Loop:

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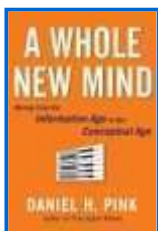Continued learning is not important, effective training is.

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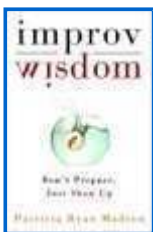[Table of Contents]

*Bookshelf*

# Three Useful Books

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**Key concepts:** We have moved through the agricultural age, the industrial age, and the information age and arrived at the conceptual age. The three factors that brought about this movement are abundance, Asia, and automation. To survive and flourish, we have to review how we are earning a living and ask these three questions: 1. Can someone

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**Sample practical suggestion:** Picture yourself at ninety. Set aside a half hour to put yourself in the mind of ninety-year-old you. What have you accomplished? What are your regrets? This is a difficult exercise, intellectually and emotionally. But the insights are enormously valuable.

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 *Michaelsen, Larry K.; Knight, Arletta B.; & Fink, L. D. (2004).* Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching. *Sterling, VA, Stylus Publishing. (1-57922-086-X)*

**Key concepts:** Although the instructional strategy described in the book is intended for college faculty, it could also be adopted by corporate trainers, especially those who work with complex knowledge. The authors differentiate among the casual use of small groups, cooperative learning, and team-based learning. The principles, procedures, and examples in the book enable the instructor to facilitate deep learning, critical thinking, mastery of knowledge, and collaborative application. The chapter on creating effective assignments provides excellent suggestions for team activities.

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*From Thiagi*

# Thiagi Needs Your Help

Thiagi is planning to publish another collection of training games and activities.

He is currently collecting endorsements to be included in this book. Rather than solicit celebrities and famous authors for endorsements, he would like to ask you, regular readers of his newsletter and frequent visitors to his web site, for your enthusiastic comments.

The endorsement need not be more than two or three sentences in length. We will publish selected endorsements (along with your name and affiliation) in the book. We will also use the endorsements in our web site and in promotional materials.

If you are interested in helping Thiagi, please visit the endorsers' area (http://thiagi.com/oqm/oqm.php?question=115&view=4). You will find a brief job aid, few samples, and a convenient text box to type your endorsement.

*Co-Creation*

# 99 WORDS

Are you familiar with the "99 seconds" approach? It makes a complete and useful presentation in 99 seconds.

We have a printed variant of this concept (called "99 Words"). The idea is to provide useful content using exactly 99 words—no more, no less. (The word count includes the heading.)

To write a 99 WORDS piece, limit the content. Write in a plain, conversational style. Begin with a fast draft, remove unnecessary words, and edit by deleting or adding words to bring it to the required length.

We walk our talk. This piece is 99 words long!

## *Another Example*

### Training Games

Games feature goals, rules, and conflict. In addition, training games help participants achieve training goals.

Nothing irritates participants like a mindless "fun" game that has no training value. *Fun* is not a necessary feature of games, especially training games.

A training game need not be fun, but it should be *engaging*. Players should be totally immersed in the activity.

Effective training games should be relevant to the players' real world jobs. If job relevance is not directly obvious, the game facilitator should bring it out during a debriefing discussion with participants after the play of the game.

Now that you have seen 99 WORDS in action, we invite you to share your examples of this type of crisp prose.

Write a 99 WORDS piece on topic of your choice. It could be the definition of a concept, a step-by-step procedure, a report on a training event, a short story, a poem, or anything else. Make sure that your piece will be of interest to *TGL* readers.

Send your 99 WORDS as an email attachment to thiagi@thiagi.com . We will publish selected contributions in future issues of *TGL*.

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*Check It Out*

# PEEKABOOM (www.peekaboom.org) by Raja Thiagarajan

Lately we have been playing an online game called PEEKABOOM (slogan: "Not just wasting your time…").

This is how the game works: When you sign in, you are randomly matched with another player who is also signed in. A countdown begins. You and the other player take on the roles of peeker and boomer.

When you are the boomer, you are presented with an image and a word associated with it. You reveal parts of the image (by clicking your mouse at different locations) to help your partner guess the word.

When you are the peeker, you don't see the complete image, but only the parts that the boomer has clicked on.

After each image, you and your partner swap roles. This is an intensely cooperative game between you and your partner—whom you have never met!

Why is this not a waste of time? The results of your play help researchers at Carnegie

Mellon University teach computers to "see".

From a training game design perspective, this type of cooperative game suggests a frame that can be used to explore communication skills. Indeed, there are two other games linked on the website: THE ESP GAME, and VERBOSITY. They aren't as polished, but Thiagi actually prefers THE ESP GAME. VERBOSITY is too hard to play, in my opinion. Well, maybe not just my opinion: When Thiagi and I visited the website, we were always paired with each other, suggesting that nobody else likes the game.

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This is a stand-up activity. Remove all chairs and other furniture from the room (or move them to the sides, next to the walls).

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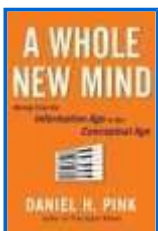Continued learning is not important, effective training is.

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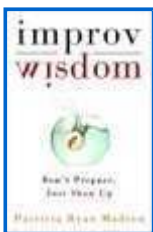


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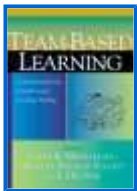
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*SERIOUSLY FUN ACTIVITIES FOR TRAINERS, FACILITATORS, PERFORMANCE CONSULTANTS, AND MANAGERS.*

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*Help poor blind computers see.*

*Masthead*

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Editorial Advisory Board: Bill Wake, Les Lauber, Matt Richter, and <type your name here>

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However, to prevent us from becoming bankrupt, we have decided to adopt a Busker Protocol. If you like what you read, if you find it useful, and if you'd like us to continue publishing the newsletter, please feel free to chip in with any financial contribution. Our estimated annual cost for this newsletter is $30,000. So we suggest an annual contribution of $30 (which is less than one-third the subscription cost of Thiagi's earlier paper-based newsletter). We would appreciate any amount that you send us, but make sure it is less than $30,000 (since we don't want to make a profit). You can mail your check to Thiagi, 4423 East Trailridge Road, Bloomington, IN 47408 or call us at (812) 332-1478 to charge the amount to a credit card. Or you can charge your credit card online, through The Thiagi Group, Inc. Please let us know if you need an invoice for financial record keeping.

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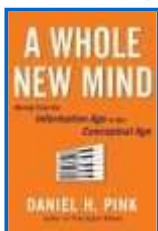Continued learning is not important, effective training is.

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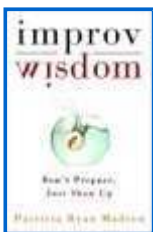[Table of Contents]

*Bookshelf*

# Three Useful Books

**Pink, Daniel H. (2005). A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age. *New York, NY: Riverhead Books*. (ISBN: 1-57322-308-5)**

**Key concepts:** We have moved through the agricultural age, the industrial age, and the information age and arrived at the conceptual age. The three factors that brought about this movement are abundance, Asia, and automation. To survive and flourish, we have to review how we are earning a living and ask these three questions: 1. Can someone

overseas do it cheaper? 2. Can a computer do it faster? 3. In this age of abundance, is there a demand for what I am offering? In the conceptual age, we need to complement our left-brain reasoning with right-brain aptitudes: Complement function with design, argument with story, focus with symphony (synthesis), logic with empathy, seriousness with play, and accumulation with meaning. The book contains portfolios of exercises related to these six "senses".

**Sample practical suggestion:** Picture yourself at ninety. Set aside a half hour to put yourself in the mind of ninety-year-old you. What have you accomplished? What are your regrets? This is a difficult exercise, intellectually and emotionally. But the insights are enormously valuable.

 *Madson, Patricia R. (2005). Improv Wisdom: Don't Prepare, Just Show Up. New York, NY: Bell Tower. (ISBN: 1-4000-8188-2)*

**Key concepts:** Life is something that we make up as we go along. This book introduces 13 improv maxims that help people to loosen up, think on their feet, and take on everything life has to offer with skill, chutzpah, and a sense of humor. The maxims include "Start anywhere", "Be average", "Wake up to the gifts", "Make mistakes", and "Act now". In extremely readable chapters, Patricia Madson explains each principle with real-world examples, points out common obstacles, and offers several "try this" exercises. Each chapter ends with a summary of key points.

**Sample practical suggestion:** Attend one thing at a time. Choose an ordinary activity (such as sorting laundry) and pay attention only to what you are doing while you are doing it. Avoid multitasking. If you notice that your mind has wandered, bring it back to what you are doing.

 *Michaelsen, Larry K.; Knight, Arletta B.; & Fink, L. D. (2004). Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching. Sterling, VA, Stylus Publishing. (1-57922-086-X)*

**Key concepts:** Although the instructional strategy described in the book is intended for college faculty, it could also be adopted by corporate trainers, especially those who work with complex knowledge. The authors differentiate among the casual use of small groups, cooperative learning, and team-based learning. The principles, procedures, and examples in the book enable the instructor to facilitate deep learning, critical thinking, mastery of knowledge, and collaborative application. The chapter on creating effective assignments provides excellent suggestions for team activities.

**Sample practical idea:** Asking different teams to present their conclusions one after another reduces the energy level of participants and increases repetition of the conclusions of the earlier teams. Instead, require simultaneous presentations from all teams by asking them to summarize their conclusions on flip-chart paper and posting them on the wall. Participants can review these posters and conduct a follow-up discussion.

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*From Thiagi*

# Thiagi Needs Your Help

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He is currently collecting endorsements to be included in this book. Rather than solicit celebrities and famous authors for endorsements, he would like to ask you, regular readers of his newsletter and frequent visitors to his web site, for your enthusiastic comments.

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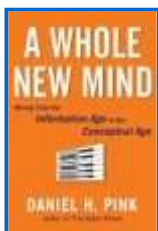Continued learning is not important, effective training is.

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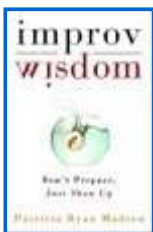*Bookshelf*

# Three Useful Books

 **Pink, Daniel H. (2005). A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age. *New York, NY: Riverhead Books*. (ISBN: 1-57322-308-5)**

**Key concepts:** We have moved through the agricultural age, the industrial age, and the information age and arrived at the conceptual age. The three factors that brought about this movement are abundance, Asia, and automation. To survive and flourish, we have to review how we are earning a living and ask these three questions: 1. Can someone

overseas do it cheaper? 2. Can a computer do it faster? 3. In this age of abundance, is there a demand for what I am offering? In the conceptual age, we need to complement our left-brain reasoning with right-brain aptitudes: Complement function with design, argument with story, focus with symphony (synthesis), logic with empathy, seriousness with play, and accumulation with meaning. The book contains portfolios of exercises related to these six "senses".

**Sample practical suggestion:** Picture yourself at ninety. Set aside a half hour to put yourself in the mind of ninety-year-old you. What have you accomplished? What are your regrets? This is a difficult exercise, intellectually and emotionally. But the insights are enormously valuable.

 *Madson, Patricia R. (2005).* Improv Wisdom: Don't Prepare, Just Show Up. *New York, NY: Bell Tower. (ISBN: 1-4000-8188-2)*

**Key concepts:** Life is something that we make up as we go along. This book introduces 13 improv maxims that help people to loosen up, think on their feet, and take on everything life has to offer with skill, chutzpah, and a sense of humor. The maxims include "Start anywhere", "Be average", "Wake up to the gifts", "Make mistakes", and "Act now". In extremely readable chapters, Patricia Madson explains each principle with real-world examples, points out common obstacles, and offers several "try this" exercises. Each chapter ends with a summary of key points.

**Sample practical suggestion:** Attend one thing at a time. Choose an ordinary activity (such as sorting laundry) and pay attention only to what you are doing while you are doing it. Avoid multitasking. If you notice that your mind has wandered, bring it back to what you are doing.

 *Michaelsen, Larry K.; Knight, Arletta B.; & Fink, L. D. (2004).* Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching. *Sterling, VA, Stylus Publishing. (1-57922-086-X)*

**Key concepts:** Although the instructional strategy described in the book is intended for college faculty, it could also be adopted by corporate trainers, especially those who work with complex knowledge. The authors differentiate among the casual use of small groups, cooperative learning, and team-based learning. The principles, procedures, and examples in the book enable the instructor to facilitate deep learning, critical thinking, mastery of knowledge, and collaborative application. The chapter on creating effective assignments provides excellent suggestions for team activities.

**Sample practical idea:** Asking different teams to present their conclusions one after another reduces the energy level of participants and increases repetition of the conclusions of the earlier teams. Instead, require simultaneous presentations from all teams by asking them to summarize their conclusions on flip-chart paper and posting them on the wall. Participants can review these posters and conduct a follow-up discussion.

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*From Thiagi*

# Thiagi Needs Your Help

Thiagi is planning to publish another collection of training games and activities.

He is currently collecting endorsements to be included in this book. Rather than solicit celebrities and famous authors for endorsements, he would like to ask you, regular readers of his newsletter and frequent visitors to his web site, for your enthusiastic comments.

The endorsement need not be more than two or three sentences in length. We will publish selected endorsements (along with your name and affiliation) in the book. We will also use the endorsements in our web site and in promotional materials.

If you are interested in helping Thiagi, please visit the endorsers' area (http://thiagi.com/oqm/oqm.php?question=115&view=4). You will find a brief job aid, few samples, and a convenient text box to type your endorsement.

*Co-Creation*

# 99 WORDS

Are you familiar with the "99 seconds" approach? It makes a complete and useful presentation in 99 seconds.

We have a printed variant of this concept (called "99 Words"). The idea is to provide useful content using exactly 99 words—no more, no less. (The word count includes the heading.)

To write a 99 WORDS piece, limit the content. Write in a plain, conversational style. Begin with a fast draft, remove unnecessary words, and edit by deleting or adding words to bring it to the required length.

We walk our talk. This piece is 99 words long!

## *Another Example*

### Training Games

Games feature goals, rules, and conflict. In addition, training games help participants achieve training goals.

Nothing irritates participants like a mindless "fun" game that has no training value. *Fun* is not a necessary feature of games, especially training games.

A training game need not be fun, but it should be *engaging*. Players should be totally immersed in the activity.

Effective training games should be relevant to the players' real world jobs. If job relevance is not directly obvious, the game facilitator should bring it out during a debriefing discussion with participants after the play of the game.

Now that you have seen 99 WORDS in action, we invite you to share your examples of this type of crisp prose.

Write a 99 WORDS piece on topic of your choice. It could be the definition of a concept, a step-by-step procedure, a report on a training event, a short story, a poem, or anything else. Make sure that your piece will be of interest to *TGL* readers.

Send your 99 WORDS as an email attachment to thiagi@thiagi.com . We will publish selected contributions in future issues of *TGL*.

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*Check It Out*

# PEEKABOOM (www.peekaboom.org) by Raja Thiagarajan

Lately we have been playing an online game called PEEKABOOM (slogan: "Not just wasting your time…").

This is how the game works: When you sign in, you are randomly matched with another player who is also signed in. A countdown begins. You and the other player take on the roles of peeker and boomer.

When you are the boomer, you are presented with an image and a word associated with it. You reveal parts of the image (by clicking your mouse at different locations) to help your partner guess the word.

When you are the peeker, you don't see the complete image, but only the parts that the boomer has clicked on.

After each image, you and your partner swap roles. This is an intensely cooperative game between you and your partner—whom you have never met!

Why is this not a waste of time? The results of your play help researchers at Carnegie

Mellon University teach computers to "see".

From a training game design perspective, this type of cooperative game suggests a frame that can be used to explore communication skills. Indeed, there are two other games linked on the website: THE ESP GAME, and VERBOSITY. They aren't as polished, but Thiagi actually prefers THE ESP GAME. VERBOSITY is too hard to play, in my opinion. Well, maybe not just my opinion: When Thiagi and I visited the website, we were always paired with each other, suggesting that nobody else likes the game.

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