

PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE: March 2004

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

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

Mission

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

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Feedback Request

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

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Editorial

Show and Tell Ask

Whenever someone asks me, "So tell me all about the games you play", I don't.

Instead of telling them, I play a game to demonstrate what it is all about.

Here's an example: A little while back, I had lunch with two founders of a software company dedicated to the design and distribution of computer programs for women. Leslie and Martha wanted me to facilitate their company's first strategic planning meeting. In the course of the conversation, Leslie turned to me and said, "So tell me all about the games you play."

I pulled out three index cards from my pocket (I never leave home without them) and gave one to Leslie, one to Martha, and kept the third one to myself. I said, "Let's play a quick game. If you win, I'll pick up your lunch tab."

I kept the instructions very simple. "Write down five words that you associate with games. Do it fast. Don't let anyone else see what you are writing. I want to play too. So I'll write five words also."

I finished writing before they did, and placed my card in front of me with the written side hidden. After they finished writing, I told them what to do next.

"We are going to play a mind-reading game. Each one of us will take turns guessing one of the words that each of the other two players wrote. We get one point for each correct guess."

Martha wanted to go first. She guessed that that both Leslie and I would have written the word "fun". Leslie had "fun", but I did not. Both women thought that my behavior was strange and began psychoanalyzing my deprived childhood. I reminded them that the play must go on. Leslie decided to take a slightly different approach. She guessed "serious" for me and "rules" for Martha. Martha did have "rules" in her list, but I did not have "serious". I had "rules" also, but since Leslie did not guess that word, I did not volunteer. When it was my turn, I guessed "computers" for Leslie and "fun" for Martha. Martha protested that I should not use a guess that was used by someone else before, but I pointed out that I was in charge of making the rules.

We spent about 3 minutes playing the game and Martha won. Leslie and I were tied for the second place.

So What?

Instead of my telling them "all about games", in the 3-minute demonstration, I let Martha

and Leslie experience the following points:

- You can create a game within minutes by using the framegame approach.
- People get immediately hooked on playing games.
- It's not true that women don't like playing games.
- Not all games require elaborate supplies.
- Players like to chat in the background while playing a game.
- You can play a game just with three people.
- You can play a game in a matter of minutes.
- You learn more about people in 3 minutes of game playing than in 30 minutes of interviewing.
- Most players want to modify the rules of the game.
- Players enjoy a game even if they don't win.
- You can play a game seriously or just for fun.
- You can use the same framegame to explore different content.
- You can play a game with any number of people.
- You can shorten or lengthen a game.
- Effective games have simple rules.
- You should get into a game quickly.
- You can learn the rules of a game "just in time".
- An effective game should have a purpose that is relevant to the players' work.
- The game should produce tangible results.

Do Ask

So did I spend the rest of the lunch meeting pointing out these important principles? No, I just asked questions and debriefed Leslie and Martha. I let them ponder on their experience and come up with applications to their workplace. Sometimes they immediately got the answer and sometimes they did not get it until I gently probed, pulled, and pushed. Sometimes they came up with a brilliant answer that I would have never thought of.

Here are the types of questions that I inserted into our conversation:

- I have discovered some interesting personality differences between the two of you. So what interesting things did you learn about me?
- We played the game on the topic of *games* since Leslie brought up the subject. Could we have played this game on the topic of your corporate strategy? What should we have asked the players to secretly write on their cards?
- This game lasted for 3 minutes. How could we have played it within a minute? How could we have stretched the game for two hours?
- You got into the game with great excitement. But some of my friends tell me that women don't like playing games. What should we do to make this activity more appealing to women?
- Was this really a game? How is it different from the other games you know? How is it similar to the other games?
- You have a great web site. Can you whip out a Java program to play this game on the web? How would you do it?
- Can you use this game in your new employee training session? How would you use it?
- If you play this game with your friends tomorrow, how would you change it?
- Can you play this game with a group of 200 people? How would you do that? And how would you play this game with just two people?
- How important was it to keep score and find out who won and who lost? Can you play this game without keeping score?

No, I did not rattle off these questions and conduct a third degree. I just had a normal conversation and let them talk. (And they did talk.) From time to time, I inserted an appropriate question and let them play with it. Sometimes they asked me questions and I turned them back to Leslie and Martha.

Later in the conversation, Martha glared at me and said, "I know what you are doing. You are brainwashing us about games." I told her, "No, you are brainwashing yourselves."

The Moral of the Story

Telling is not selling. When you want to sell anything—whether it is training games or participatory democracy—resist the temptation to preach. Get to a demonstration quickly. Keep the demonstration brief. Give away the control of your demonstration. After the demonstration, ask questions. Listen with an open mind. Let them get to the point.

How would you use this approach tomorrow?

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Public Workshop

Faster, Cheaper, Better

How To Design Performance-Based Training Within Tight Budgets And Hectic Schedules

It has been several years since I conducted a public workshop. Based on participant demand, I am ready to conduct one of our most popular and practical workshops. I hope that you will be able to join us.

Essential Information

Outcome. Based on 30 years of field work, Thiagi has created a radical approach to training design and has applied it (along with Matt, Raja, and several client groups) to different projects. In a recent project, for example, Thiagi worked with a client for 3 days to design a complete workshop that should have take 3 months in the client's estimate. This workshop has produced measurable performance improvement among participants.

Duration: 2 days

Cost: US\$695

Location: Palo Alto, California, USA

Dates: June 17-18, 2004

Register online

Who Should Attend This Workshop?

- New Instructional Designers who want to apply best practices for rapid instructional design
- Experienced Instructional Designers who want to expand and enhance their toolkits and cope with modern corporate realities
- Performance consultants who want to use training to support other interventions
- Subject-Matter Experts who want to convert their lectures and handouts into interactive training
- Instructors who want to reduce their lesson preparation time
- Training Directors who want reduce the cost, increase the speed, and improve the quality of training packages

***Objectives
(Benefits for individuals)***

- Identify limitations of traditional training design models in dealing with new types of content, new technologies, new generations of learners, and new corporate realities. Identify alternative principles that offer faster, cheaper, and better training design.
- Apply the CCCC (Concurrent Continuous Creative Co-design) model for rapidly designing training packages with greater motivational and instructional impact.
- Apply seven proven principles to the design of high-quality performance-based training materials and methods.
- Rapidly design training packages by ignoring, combining, re-sequencing, and

accelerating steps the process.

- Reduce self-doubt, guilt, and anguish by positively associating faster and cheaper instructional design with more cost-effective learning outcomes.

Benefits For The Organization

- Reduce the training budget
- Reduce training development time
- Deliver quality instruction during tough economic times
- Avoid waste of training dollars
- Retrain instructional designers to cope with corporate realities

Workshop Content

An Innovative Alternative To Training Design

- Foundations of the traditional instructional design model from behaviorism and engineering.
- Features of traditional instructional design model that make them unsuited for current realities.
- Foundations of the alternative training design model from creativity, improvisation, and complexity theory.
- Features of the training design model that are aligned with current realities.

Details Of The New Training Design Model

- Concurrent implementation of analysis, design, evaluation, and design
- Continuous process of treating all delivery as an opportunity to improve the training design
- Creative application of principles from innovation, improvisation, and self-organizing social systems

- Co-design approaches that transform learners into teachers and teachers into learners.

Applying Proven Principles Of Training Design

- Stop designing content; start designing activities.
- Use a dose of reality as the final performance test.
- Open minds with open questions.
- Blend everything: online with nonlinear, active with passive, independent with collaborative, and learning with life.
- Let the inmates run the asylum. Let learners teach and test each other.
- Drive the locomotive while laying the track. Design while delivering the training.

Strategies For Speeding Up The Design Process

- Eliminate or combine design steps without sacrificing effectiveness.
- Use electronic recording devices and computer software to speed up the design process.
- Discover training resources in unexpected places.
- Use powerful templates for creating activities and structuring content.

Thiagi's Expertise In Training Design

When the professor of the graduate course in Instructional Development asked him what he wanted to do for his semester assignment, Thiagi answered, "I'd like to redesign and repackage this course!" The professor was an open-minded sort so he humored the promising foreign student in his first semester in the U.S. The following semester, the professor used Thiagi's package as the basis for the course. Two semesters later, Thiagi renounced the model that he had been using in a much-cited article, "Help! I Am Trapped Inside an ID Model!"

Since his graduate school days, Thiagi has developed hundreds of training programs all

around the world for a wide range of target populations using a wide range of technologies. For the past 10 years, Thiago has defined, refined, and applied his CCCC model for design a variety of training for his corporate clients.

Matt's Expertise In Training Design

Having learned from the best, Matt has been applying the CCCC model for several years, designing software programming workshops for high-tech companies, product training for retail organizations, management training for financial institutions, operations training for the government, and communication training for manufacturing businesses.

Raja's Expertise In Training Design

Educated to be an astrophysicist and computer scientist, Raja is skeptical about all exaggerated claims for "scientific" training design approaches. In recent years, however, he has been applying the CCCC model to the design of eLearning programs in a faster, cheaper, and better fashion.

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Guest Gamer

This column features interviews with outstanding designers and users of interactive experiential activities. Our guest this month, Matthew Richter, is an instructional designer, trainer, and performance consultant for [Workshops by Thiago, Inc.](#) He has designed interactive training for a myriad of different clients, including Charles Schwab, Cadence Design Systems, Ralph Lauren, and Olympus. He is a Past President of [NASAGA](#).

This interview was conducted by Les Lauber.

An Interview with Matthew Richter by Les Lauber

Les: Matt, would you begin by telling us a little about the work you do around motivation, both as a designer and trainer?

Matt: Sure. I subscribe to a model developed by two psychologists from the University of Rochester, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. Their work with intrinsic motivation has really changed my life and how I view the world. One of the ways I use their model is to recognize that when people are having fun, they aren't aware of, or at least don't care about :-), any lack of competence they may have. They are too busy playing. Competent people doing a task are motivated people. Now, if they are enjoying themselves, they are more likely to choose to continue the activity. According to Deci and Ryan, autonomy + competence = intrinsic motivation. So, I use those basic principles to guide my designs and delivery.

Les: *What was it like the first time you used a training game?*

Matt: I was doing an internship at a small training and development company in Rochester, NY. A trainer, named Ginny Hronek, who had the dubious task of training me to train, was (and still is) a fantastic experiential facilitator. She was teaching a session using DiSC and gave me an opportunity to run a game. I bombed...I bombed because I was terrified and shaking; and to protect myself, I talked and talked and talked rather than just letting the game flow. And for the debrief, I told them everything they needed to know :-). Then Ginny saved the day, and gently and kindly facilitated me up (I couldn't go down further).

Les: *How did you go about learning how to apply games to performance improvement?*

Matt: A wise, old, and wrinkled guru [Thiagi] said activities are simply excuses for debriefs. That fundamental idea really focused me on the notion that running a game wasn't about participants having fun. In fact, fun was really peripheral to the experience. The facilitator must never, ever, lose sight of the performance objective. Otherwise, the game is just a game. And games are silly.

Les: *What do you think about when you are selecting or designing games for a particular group?*

Matt: What do I want the participants to be able to do at the end of the experience? What is the most effective way to get them there based on who they are? And actually, I try to go into the classroom with several activities that will get me to an objective, and then, based on group needs, group dynamics, the individuality of that specific group, I pick the

appropriate activity.

Les: *What types of learning games are you playing with groups right now?*

Matt: Well, I work for Thiagi, so I have access to approximately 8 trillion games :-). But my favorites are the HELLO GAME, using variations to generate content; THIRTY-FIVE; and ENVELOPES.

Les: *Where do you go to get your ideas for training games?*

Matt: I think my strength is in taking a game someone else designed, and developing an appropriate application for it. For instance, I was running a class recently on Ethics, and developed a simulation that combined several of the attributes of *Survivor* and *Big Brother* (the CBS TV Shows). The CBS producers created the formats; I saw the application to my Ethics class. And to me, that is the skill trainers and designers should have. There are plenty of games and activities out there. Applying them and debriefing them *appropriately and effectively*...well, that's the skill.

Les: *How do you adapt those ideas to make them appropriate for learning?*

Matt: I always start with the end in mind. What is it I want people to be able to do, or realize as a result of the activity? Now, looking at the frame of the game, what steps need to be tweaked to get me there? What frame will I use to debrief? I love [Thiagi's debrief model](#). It's simple and generally keeps me out of trouble. I also try to live by the principle that the game is the mode of transportation, the performance objective is where I am going. So, I try never to get hung up on the rules of the game, or the flow of the game. I remain flexible, willing to cheat, and open to following the participants. Often, they know how to get to the performance objective better than I do. To quote some Zen master, you have to bend like a reed in the wind.

Les: *OK, this is a "fluffy" question, but...suppose you're stranded on a desert island with your wife, Kat, and only two recreational games. What two would you choose, and why?*

Matt: If my wife is with me, I choose SCRABBLE and YAHTZEE. I love those games. But really, the games I choose are completely dependent on the person I am with. So, with Thiagi, I would choose WORDYACHT and GHOST. With you, I would add PENNY WISE and 99.

With my grandfather, 500 RUMMY and CASINO. Alone, I like SCRABBLE and YAHTZEE on my handheld. I love games and part of playing the game is with whom you are playing.

Les: Matt, tell us about two examples of games you have used to help people learn: first, tell us about a time when things really went south while you were playing a game with a group. Then, tell us about a time when a group took a game in a direction that surprised you because of how much they learned from it.

Matt: I had just met Thiagi, so we are talking about twelve years ago, and saw him deliver the MEANING OF LIFE JOLT at a conference. I was blown away by the power of it. People were crying and emotionally engaged. It was powerful stuff. I thought I could do it. I mean, I was a very experienced trainer, having been in the business for several months :-). So I took a group I was facilitating through it. If you don't know the jolt, it has to do with values, and works really well when trying to get participants to recognize balance of life stuff. It also has to do with cancer and dying. Being cocky and totally unprepared, I never realized that one of the participants had just lost her husband to cancer a few weeks earlier. She ran out of the class. I had simply blown it. That poor woman...and this idiot had to bring the subject up. One of my mentors, Susan Rundle, always said, "Do no harm." I had forgotten that principle. This was an extreme example of being so into an activity that I ignored the performance objective, and more importantly, I ignored the needs and dynamics of the group. Great lesson, horrible experience.

As for the positive experience, I'll use the MEANING OF LIFE JOLT again. This time, I was working with a group of executives for a small manufacturing company. The President of the company worked something like a 110 hours a week. Some obscene amount. This time, I did a little non-descript checking. No recent deaths or illnesses. I ran the activity. Now, I expected we would have a great debrief and a few of the participants would get it, and at least think twice when working so hard away from their families. But the President really took the activity to heart. He walked out during the debrief and called his wife to tell her he loved her. According to the CEO, the President began to work less, became more focused, and spent more time at home. By the way, the CEO thought this was a good thing, too. Again, great lesson, but this time, great experience. Same activity, different group, different circumstances.

Les: What do you think it takes to be successful facilitating games for training and performance improvement?

Matt: Flexibility, a willingness to let go of the game for the sake of learning, trusting the participants to get it, the ability to really see what is happening, the ability to effectively debrief.

Les: What is the most important lesson you've learned?

Matt: This is hard work. And I have been at this for a while now. I've made a lot of mistakes, and I've learned and developed. It frustrates me when I hear people say that with a train-the-trainer program, anyone can do what I do. It ain't as simple as it looks. It takes practice, experience, knowledge, skill, and some level of talent. Mostly, it takes hard work. There's a wonderful story my father-in-law told. I don't know where he heard it, but I love it.

In the little Eastern European village of Chelm lived a young man, who considered himself an atheist. Chaim had heard that the very famous "Moishe the Atheist" lived in the neighboring village. Eager to find a like-minded soul to learn from, Chaim made his way through the woods to find Moishe the Atheist and to study with him. After a few days journey, the young man found Moishe's little cottage. He knocked on the door and received permission to enter. There was an old, bespectacled man hunched over the table, half-hidden behind a pile of books.

"Yes," said the older man.

"I am looking for Moishe the Atheist," said Chaim.

"I am Moishe," said Moishe.

"Sir, I am an atheist too, and I would like to be your apprentice," said the younger man.

Moishe slowly removed his glasses and peered at the stranger. "You are an atheist?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Chaim.

"Have you read the Torah?" Moishe asked.

"No, sir," said Chaim.

"Have you studied the Talmud?"

"No, sir," said Chaim.

"Are you familiar with all our prayers and philosophies?" asked Moishe.

"No, sir!" said Chaim adamantly. "I am an atheist."

"Ach," said Moishe, waving the young man away dismissively. "You are not an atheist. You are an ignoramus."

The lesson for me is study. I read everything I can and realize I haven't dented the pile. I've had leadership roles in large and small organizations. I've managed, and I've studied management. As trainers, we need to be experts in our topics, or we need to have access to the experts. And that learning process is endless. New stuff comes out all the time. Thiagi has been doing this work for 40 years and as good I as think I am, there is so much (it's not quantifiable) to learn from him. And I am always blown away by his passion for his own continuous development.

Les: When you think about the future of games in training and development, what do you see?

Matt: More and more. Hopefully, with the surrounding stuff...good ISD, good debriefing, etc.

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Structured Sharing

4Cs by Matthew Richter

Here's a variation of Thiagi's HELLO GAME that structures participants' interactions and encourages them to explore the training topic. You may use this game as an opener to

discover what the participants already know. Alternatively, you may use this game as a closer to encourage participants to review and summarize what they learned from your training session.

Purpose

To explore key concepts associated with a training topic. For this description, we will use *customer satisfaction* as the training topic.

Participants

Any number, organized into four teams.

Time

30 minutes to 1 hour

Supplies

- Timer
- Whistle
- Flip chart paper
- Markers

Preparation

Prepare four flip chart pages with the following headings:

- Components of great customer satisfaction
- Characteristics of great customer satisfaction
- Challenges for achieving great customer satisfaction
- Characters involved in great customer satisfaction

Flow

Brief the participants. Explain that you would like to find out what the participants already know about customer satisfaction. In order to do this, you are going to play a 4Cs

game that will require participants create detailed lists of different aspects associated with the concept.

Define terms. Write these four terms on a flip chart (or project a slide with these terms on the screen). Define and discuss each term.

- **Components** are parts of the concept. For example, taking an order from the customer is a component of customer satisfaction.
- **Characteristics** are features associated the concept. For example, speed of service is a characteristic of customer satisfaction.
- **Challenges** are obstacle associated with the concept. For example, inability to provide discounts is a challenge associated with customer satisfaction.
- **Characters** are people associated with the concept. For example, a supplier is one of the characters associated with customer satisfaction.

Form four teams. Divide the participants into four roughly equal-sized teams. (It does not matter if some teams have a extra member.)

Brief the teams. Assign a different "C" term to each team. Explain that each team will have the specific task of collecting information about the assigned category associated with the concept of customer satisfaction. In this process, each team should collect items suggested by every person in the room. Also explain that the teams will have 3 minutes to plan, 3 minutes to collect information, and 3 minutes to analyze and organize the information.

Conduct the planning period. Ask teams to spend the next 3 minutes to plan how they are going to survey the room and gather responses from all participants. Keep track of the time and give a 1-minute warning after 2 minutes.

Conduct the data-collection period. At the end of 3 minutes, announce the conclusion of the planning period. Ask team members to go around the room, interview members of the other teams, and collect information associated with the team's task. Get out of the way and, as before, keep track of the time.

Conduct the data-analysis period. At the end of 3 minutes, ask teams to stop collecting

data and return to their original location. Each team should analyze the data, organize the information in suitable categories, and record their findings on a convenient flip chart.

Conduct the presentation period. Invite teams to take turns to present their findings to everyone in the room. Select the teams in any order. After each team's presentation, ask clarifying questions and encourage other teams to add additional information.

Debrief the participants. At the end of all four presentations, discuss the information with the group. Ask for common themes, differences, surprises, and missing items. If any of the items in the lists suggest misconceptions, correct them by asking leading questions. Relate this activity to the rest of your training session.

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Debriefing

When To Debrief

Debriefing is the process of helping participants to reflect on their experiences and gain insights. For a description of a six-phase model for debriefing, see [the previous issue](#).

You must debrief after a simulation game in order to gain maximum effectiveness from the training activity. The more abstract, complex, and emotionally intensive the simulation is, the more participants will gain from debriefing.

You can also debrief other types of experience activities. You can apply the debriefing procedure to a variety of planned and unplanned events. You can debrief an individual in a coaching mode. You can even debrief yourself.

Here are some unconventional applications of the debriefing process:

- Conduct a debrief after completing a project, losing a bid, downsizing the workforce, or other significant organization events.
- Debrief new employees a week after they join the organization.

- Debrief long-term employees a week before their retirement.
- Debrief participants after they watch a movie about a culturally different group.
- Debrief participants after they read a complex case study.
- Debrief a group of employees returning from an overseas assignment.
- Debrief victims of sexual harassment or job discrimination.
- Rather than doing an annual performance review, debrief your direct reports.
- Keep a personal debriefing journal related to your workplace activities.
- On the evening before your next birthday, debrief your experiences during the past 12 months.

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Cognitive Simulation

AUDIO TIC TAC TOE

Everybody knows how to play TIC TAC TOE. Recently, I designed a variation of this universal paper-and-pencil game to play with one of my older friends.

My friend is worried that her declining ability to recognize faces, remember telephone numbers, recall words, and to concentrate on the content of conversations are all precursors to Alzheimer's. I think that this is just a minor symptom of age-related cognitive decline that can be halted and reversed by exercising one's brain. An effective way to exercise the brain is to play games that require the use of your memory.

You don't have to be old to play AUDIO TIC TAC TOE, but you need three people to play it. This is how the game goes:

One player is the *recorder* and has a piece of paper with a 3 x 3 grid that has spreadsheet-like labels for each box:

A1	B1	C1
A2	B2	C2
A3	B3	C3

The recorder marks every move made by the other two players (called *contestants*) in this grid but keeps the grid hidden.

Contestants visualize the 3 x 3 grid with its numbered boxes. They take turns calling out the box where they want to put their symbol in.

EXAMPLE:

She says, "My first X goes in box C1."

I say, "My first O goes in box B2."

She responds with, "My second X goes in box A3."

I say, "My second O goes in box A1."

She says, "Box C3."

I say, "Aha! My third O goes in box C2."

She says, "My fourth X goes in box B3. And I win!"

The recorder does not say anything until all the boxes are filled or a contestant claims victory.

A contestant *wins* if she she places her symbol in three boxes in a straight line (as in the usual game of tic tac toe) *and announces that she has won.*

A contestant *loses* if

- She tries to place her symbol in a box that is already occupied
- She incorrectly claims victory

- She gets three in a straight line and fails to announce that she has won

At the end of each game, the next player assumes the role of recorder. Game proceeds as before.

This is just the game to play during long drives. Make sure, however, that the driver is not the recorder.

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Announcement

Learn, Play, Perform **by Brian Remer**

Keene, New Hampshire, USA—A one-day conference titled *Play, Learn, Perform* will be held at Keene State College on April 27 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

According to organizers, the hands-on conference is designed to meet the needs of educators and trainers who want to make learning in their classes and workshops more dynamic. *Play, Learn, Perform* will showcase games, simulations, and other interactive strategies that educators can use to enhance their trainings and make learning stick.

Internationally recognized game inventor, Dr. Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan, is the featured presenter. An inventor of hundreds of games used to enhance learning, Thiagi is the president of [Workshops by Thiagi, Inc.](#), an organization with the mission of helping people improve their performance effectively and enjoyably.

Other highlights of the program include *Powerplay: Inspired By Improvisation*. Cathy McNally, trainer and consultant, will use the techniques of improvisational theater to build teamwork, positive attitudes, listening skills, and flexible thinking.

In *Wrap it Up!* trainer and facilitator Brian Remer will demonstrate a variety of games and activities to summarize and bring to closure any educational event so that participants can return to work with a specific plan for new action.

Conference attendees will come away from *Play, Learn, Perform* with experience and insight into the use of interactive learning designs, novel interactive techniques that participants can use immediately, a support network for trying out new ideas, and fresh energy from the day's excitement.

The registration fee is US\$75; US\$50 for educators, students, and non-profit participants. Pre-registration is encouraged. More information is available at www.mds-nh.org or by calling Brian Remer at Monadnock Developmental Services, (603) 352-1304.

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Online Tool

Debriefing: An OQ

OQ is a web-based tool that presents an open question requiring reflection or creative thinking. The OQ page provides you with a convenient form to type your answer and to submit it.

What makes OQ unique is an array of buttons on top of the web page:

Expert Answers. When you click on this button, you see the answers from one or more experts.

Peer Answers. When you click on this button, you see earlier answers from other people. You can compare your answer to these answers.

Exit. When you click this button, you return to your original web page location.

A New OQ

Did you read the article, "[When to Debrief](#)" in this issue? This article listed several unconventional uses for the debriefing technique. Think of other situations that can provide learning insights through debriefing. Go to [this month's OQ page](#) and add one or more unconventional applications of the debriefing technique.

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PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE: March 2004

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.

Editorial Roster

Editor: Sivasailam (Thiagi) Thiagarajan

Assistant Editor: Raja Thiagarajan

Associate Editor: Matt Richter

Editorial Advisory Board: David Gouthro, Diane Dormant, Kat Koppett, Les Lauber, Steve Sugar, and <type your name here>

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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

Show and Tell Ask

Whenever someone asks me, "So tell me all about the games you play", I don't.

Instead of telling them, I play a game to demonstrate what it is all about.

Here's an example: A little while back, I had lunch with two founders of a software company dedicated to the design and distribution of computer programs for women. Leslie and Martha wanted me to facilitate their company's first strategic planning meeting. In the course of the conversation, Leslie turned to me and said, "So tell me all about the games you play."

I pulled out three index cards from my pocket (I never leave home without them) and gave one to Leslie, one to Martha, and kept the third one to myself. I said, "Let's play a quick game. If you win, I'll pick up your lunch tab."

I kept the instructions very simple. "Write down five words that you associate with games. Do it fast. Don't let anyone else see what you are writing. I want to play too. So I'll write five words also."

I finished writing before they did, and placed my card in front of me with the written side hidden. After they finished writing, I told them what to do next.

"We are going to play a mind-reading game. Each one of us will take turns guessing one of the words that each of the other two players wrote. We get one point for each correct guess."

Martha wanted to go first. She guessed that that both Leslie and I would have written the word "fun". Leslie had "fun", but I did not. Both women thought that my behavior was strange and began psychoanalyzing my deprived childhood. I reminded them that the play must go on. Leslie decided to take a slightly different approach. She guessed "serious" for me and "rules" for Martha. Martha did have "rules" in her list, but I did not have "serious". I had "rules" also, but since Leslie did not guess that word, I did not volunteer. When it was my turn, I guessed "computers" for Leslie and "fun" for Martha. Martha protested that I should not use a guess that was used by someone else before, but I pointed out that I was in charge of making the rules.

We spent about 3 minutes playing the game and Martha won. Leslie and I were tied for the second place.

So What?

Instead of my telling them "all about games", in the 3-minute demonstration, I let Martha

and Leslie experience the following points:

- You can create a game within minutes by using the framegame approach.
- People get immediately hooked on playing games.
- It's not true that women don't like playing games.
- Not all games require elaborate supplies.
- Players like to chat in the background while playing a game.
- You can play a game just with three people.
- You can play a game in a matter of minutes.
- You learn more about people in 3 minutes of game playing than in 30 minutes of interviewing.
- Most players want to modify the rules of the game.
- Players enjoy a game even if they don't win.
- You can play a game seriously or just for fun.
- You can use the same framegame to explore different content.
- You can play a game with any number of people.
- You can shorten or lengthen a game.
- Effective games have simple rules.
- You should get into a game quickly.
- You can learn the rules of a game "just in time".
- An effective game should have a purpose that is relevant to the players' work.
- The game should produce tangible results.

Do Ask

So did I spend the rest of the lunch meeting pointing out these important principles? No, I just asked questions and debriefed Leslie and Martha. I let them ponder on their experience and come up with applications to their workplace. Sometimes they immediately got the answer and sometimes they did not get it until I gently probed, pulled, and pushed. Sometimes they came up with a brilliant answer that I would have never thought of.

Here are the types of questions that I inserted into our conversation:

- I have discovered some interesting personality differences between the two of you. So what interesting things did you learn about me?
- We played the game on the topic of *games* since Leslie brought up the subject. Could we have played this game on the topic of your corporate strategy? What should we have asked the players to secretly write on their cards?
- This game lasted for 3 minutes. How could we have played it within a minute? How could we have stretched the game for two hours?
- You got into the game with great excitement. But some of my friends tell me that women don't like playing games. What should we do to make this activity more appealing to women?
- Was this really a game? How is it different from the other games you know? How is it similar to the other games?
- You have a great web site. Can you whip out a Java program to play this game on the web? How would you do it?
- Can you use this game in your new employee training session? How would you use it?
- If you play this game with your friends tomorrow, how would you change it?
- Can you play this game with a group of 200 people? How would you do that? And how would you play this game with just two people?
- How important was it to keep score and find out who won and who lost? Can you play this game without keeping score?

No, I did not rattle off these questions and conduct a third degree. I just had a normal conversation and let them talk. (And they did talk.) From time to time, I inserted an appropriate question and let them play with it. Sometimes they asked me questions and I turned them back to Leslie and Martha.

Later in the conversation, Martha glared at me and said, "I know what you are doing. You are brainwashing us about games." I told her, "No, you are brainwashing yourselves."

The Moral of the Story

Telling is not selling. When you want to sell anything—whether it is training games or participatory democracy—resist the temptation to preach. Get to a demonstration quickly. Keep the demonstration brief. Give away the control of your demonstration. After the demonstration, ask questions. Listen with an open mind. Let them get to the point.

How would you use this approach tomorrow?

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Public Workshop

Faster, Cheaper, Better

How To Design Performance-Based Training Within Tight Budgets And Hectic Schedules

It has been several years since I conducted a public workshop. Based on participant demand, I am ready to conduct one of our most popular and practical workshops. I hope that you will be able to join us.

Essential Information

Outcome. Based on 30 years of field work, Thiagi has created a radical approach to training design and has applied it (along with Matt, Raja, and several client groups) to different projects. In a recent project, for example, Thiagi worked with a client for 3 days to design a complete workshop that should have take 3 months in the client's estimate. This workshop has produced measurable performance improvement among participants.

Duration: 2 days

Cost: US\$695

Location: Palo Alto, California, USA

Dates: June 17-18, 2004

Register online

Who Should Attend This Workshop?

- New Instructional Designers who want to apply best practices for rapid instructional design
- Experienced Instructional Designers who want to expand and enhance their toolkits and cope with modern corporate realities
- Performance consultants who want to use training to support other interventions
- Subject-Matter Experts who want to convert their lectures and handouts into interactive training
- Instructors who want to reduce their lesson preparation time
- Training Directors who want reduce the cost, increase the speed, and improve the quality of training packages

***Objectives
(Benefits for individuals)***

- Identify limitations of traditional training design models in dealing with new types of content, new technologies, new generations of learners, and new corporate realities. Identify alternative principles that offer faster, cheaper, and better training design.
- Apply the CCCC (Concurrent Continuous Creative Co-design) model for rapidly designing training packages with greater motivational and instructional impact.
- Apply seven proven principles to the design of high-quality performance-based training materials and methods.
- Rapidly design training packages by ignoring, combining, re-sequencing, and

accelerating steps the process.

- Reduce self-doubt, guilt, and anguish by positively associating faster and cheaper instructional design with more cost-effective learning outcomes.

Benefits For The Organization

- Reduce the training budget
- Reduce training development time
- Deliver quality instruction during tough economic times
- Avoid waste of training dollars
- Retrain instructional designers to cope with corporate realities

Workshop Content

An Innovative Alternative To Training Design

- Foundations of the traditional instructional design model from behaviorism and engineering.
- Features of traditional instructional design model that make them unsuited for current realities.
- Foundations of the alternative training design model from creativity, improvisation, and complexity theory.
- Features of the training design model that are aligned with current realities.

Details Of The New Training Design Model

- Concurrent implementation of analysis, design, evaluation, and design
- Continuous process of treating all delivery as an opportunity to improve the training design
- Creative application of principles from innovation, improvisation, and self-organizing social systems

- Co-design approaches that transform learners into teachers and teachers into learners.

Applying Proven Principles Of Training Design

- Stop designing content; start designing activities.
- Use a dose of reality as the final performance test.
- Open minds with open questions.
- Blend everything: online with nonlinear, active with passive, independent with collaborative, and learning with life.
- Let the inmates run the asylum. Let learners teach and test each other.
- Drive the locomotive while laying the track. Design while delivering the training.

Strategies For Speeding Up The Design Process

- Eliminate or combine design steps without sacrificing effectiveness.
- Use electronic recording devices and computer software to speed up the design process.
- Discover training resources in unexpected places.
- Use powerful templates for creating activities and structuring content.

Thiagi's Expertise In Training Design

When the professor of the graduate course in Instructional Development asked him what he wanted to do for his semester assignment, Thiagi answered, "I'd like to redesign and repackage this course!" The professor was an open-minded sort so he humored the promising foreign student in his first semester in the U.S. The following semester, the professor used Thiagi's package as the basis for the course. Two semesters later, Thiagi renounced the model that he had been using in a much-cited article, "Help! I Am Trapped Inside an ID Model!"

Since his graduate school days, Thiagi has developed hundreds of training programs all

around the world for a wide range of target populations using a wide range of technologies. For the past 10 years, Thiago has defined, refined, and applied his CCCC model for design a variety of training for his corporate clients.

Matt's Expertise In Training Design

Having learned from the best, Matt has been applying the CCCC model for several years, designing software programming workshops for high-tech companies, product training for retail organizations, management training for financial institutions, operations training for the government, and communication training for manufacturing businesses.

Raja's Expertise In Training Design

Educated to be an astrophysicist and computer scientist, Raja is skeptical about all exaggerated claims for "scientific" training design approaches. In recent years, however, he has been applying the CCCC model to the design of eLearning programs in a faster, cheaper, and better fashion.

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Guest Gamer

This column features interviews with outstanding designers and users of interactive experiential activities. Our guest this month, Matthew Richter, is an instructional designer, trainer, and performance consultant for [Workshops by Thiago, Inc.](#) He has designed interactive training for a myriad of different clients, including Charles Schwab, Cadence Design Systems, Ralph Lauren, and Olympus. He is a Past President of [NASAGA](#).

This interview was conducted by Les Lauber.

An Interview with Matthew Richter by Les Lauber

Les: Matt, would you begin by telling us a little about the work you do around motivation, both as a designer and trainer?

Matt: Sure. I subscribe to a model developed by two psychologists from the University of Rochester, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. Their work with intrinsic motivation has really changed my life and how I view the world. One of the ways I use their model is to recognize that when people are having fun, they aren't aware of, or at least don't care about :-), any lack of competence they may have. They are too busy playing. Competent people doing a task are motivated people. Now, if they are enjoying themselves, they are more likely to choose to continue the activity. According to Deci and Ryan, autonomy + competence = intrinsic motivation. So, I use those basic principles to guide my designs and delivery.

Les: *What was it like the first time you used a training game?*

Matt: I was doing an internship at a small training and development company in Rochester, NY. A trainer, named Ginny Hronek, who had the dubious task of training me to train, was (and still is) a fantastic experiential facilitator. She was teaching a session using DiSC and gave me an opportunity to run a game. I bombed...I bombed because I was terrified and shaking; and to protect myself, I talked and talked and talked rather than just letting the game flow. And for the debrief, I told them everything they needed to know :-). Then Ginny saved the day, and gently and kindly facilitated me up (I couldn't go down further).

Les: *How did you go about learning how to apply games to performance improvement?*

Matt: A wise, old, and wrinkled guru [Thiagi] said activities are simply excuses for debriefs. That fundamental idea really focused me on the notion that running a game wasn't about participants having fun. In fact, fun was really peripheral to the experience. The facilitator must never, ever, lose sight of the performance objective. Otherwise, the game is just a game. And games are silly.

Les: *What do you think about when you are selecting or designing games for a particular group?*

Matt: What do I want the participants to be able to do at the end of the experience? What is the most effective way to get them there based on who they are? And actually, I try to go into the classroom with several activities that will get me to an objective, and then, based on group needs, group dynamics, the individuality of that specific group, I pick the

appropriate activity.

Les: *What types of learning games are you playing with groups right now?*

Matt: Well, I work for Thiagi, so I have access to approximately 8 trillion games :-). But my favorites are the HELLO GAME, using variations to generate content; THIRTY-FIVE; and ENVELOPES.

Les: *Where do you go to get your ideas for training games?*

Matt: I think my strength is in taking a game someone else designed, and developing an appropriate application for it. For instance, I was running a class recently on Ethics, and developed a simulation that combined several of the attributes of *Survivor* and *Big Brother* (the CBS TV Shows). The CBS producers created the formats; I saw the application to my Ethics class. And to me, that is the skill trainers and designers should have. There are plenty of games and activities out there. Applying them and debriefing them *appropriately and effectively*...well, that's the skill.

Les: *How do you adapt those ideas to make them appropriate for learning?*

Matt: I always start with the end in mind. What is it I want people to be able to do, or realize as a result of the activity? Now, looking at the frame of the game, what steps need to be tweaked to get me there? What frame will I use to debrief? I love [Thiagi's debrief model](#). It's simple and generally keeps me out of trouble. I also try to live by the principle that the game is the mode of transportation, the performance objective is where I am going. So, I try never to get hung up on the rules of the game, or the flow of the game. I remain flexible, willing to cheat, and open to following the participants. Often, they know how to get to the performance objective better than I do. To quote some Zen master, you have to bend like a reed in the wind.

Les: *OK, this is a "fluffy" question, but...suppose you're stranded on a desert island with your wife, Kat, and only two recreational games. What two would you choose, and why?*

Matt: If my wife is with me, I choose SCRABBLE and YAHTZEE. I love those games. But really, the games I choose are completely dependent on the person I am with. So, with Thiagi, I would choose WORDYACHT and GHOST. With you, I would add PENNY WISE and 99.

With my grandfather, 500 RUMMY and CASINO. Alone, I like SCRABBLE and YAHTZEE on my handheld. I love games and part of playing the game is with whom you are playing.

Les: Matt, tell us about two examples of games you have used to help people learn: first, tell us about a time when things really went south while you were playing a game with a group. Then, tell us about a time when a group took a game in a direction that surprised you because of how much they learned from it.

Matt: I had just met Thiagi, so we are talking about twelve years ago, and saw him deliver the MEANING OF LIFE JOLT at a conference. I was blown away by the power of it. People were crying and emotionally engaged. It was powerful stuff. I thought I could do it. I mean, I was a very experienced trainer, having been in the business for several months :-). So I took a group I was facilitating through it. If you don't know the jolt, it has to do with values, and works really well when trying to get participants to recognize balance of life stuff. It also has to do with cancer and dying. Being cocky and totally unprepared, I never realized that one of the participants had just lost her husband to cancer a few weeks earlier. She ran out of the class. I had simply blown it. That poor woman...and this idiot had to bring the subject up. One of my mentors, Susan Rundle, always said, "Do no harm." I had forgotten that principle. This was an extreme example of being so into an activity that I ignored the performance objective, and more importantly, I ignored the needs and dynamics of the group. Great lesson, horrible experience.

As for the positive experience, I'll use the MEANING OF LIFE JOLT again. This time, I was working with a group of executives for a small manufacturing company. The President of the company worked something like a 110 hours a week. Some obscene amount. This time, I did a little non-descript checking. No recent deaths or illnesses. I ran the activity. Now, I expected we would have a great debrief and a few of the participants would get it, and at least think twice when working so hard away from their families. But the President really took the activity to heart. He walked out during the debrief and called his wife to tell her he loved her. According to the CEO, the President began to work less, became more focused, and spent more time at home. By the way, the CEO thought this was a good thing, too. Again, great lesson, but this time, great experience. Same activity, different group, different circumstances.

Les: What do you think it takes to be successful facilitating games for training and performance improvement?

Matt: Flexibility, a willingness to let go of the game for the sake of learning, trusting the participants to get it, the ability to really see what is happening, the ability to effectively debrief.

Les: What is the most important lesson you've learned?

Matt: This is hard work. And I have been at this for a while now. I've made a lot of mistakes, and I've learned and developed. It frustrates me when I hear people say that with a train-the-trainer program, anyone can do what I do. It ain't as simple as it looks. It takes practice, experience, knowledge, skill, and some level of talent. Mostly, it takes hard work. There's a wonderful story my father-in-law told. I don't know where he heard it, but I love it.

In the little Eastern European village of Chelm lived a young man, who considered himself an atheist. Chaim had heard that the very famous "Moishe the Atheist" lived in the neighboring village. Eager to find a like-minded soul to learn from, Chaim made his way through the woods to find Moishe the Atheist and to study with him. After a few days journey, the young man found Moishe's little cottage. He knocked on the door and received permission to enter. There was an old, bespectacled man hunched over the table, half-hidden behind a pile of books.

"Yes," said the older man.

"I am looking for Moishe the Atheist," said Chaim.

"I am Moishe," said Moishe.

"Sir, I am an atheist too, and I would like to be your apprentice," said the younger man.

Moishe slowly removed his glasses and peered at the stranger. "You are an atheist?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Chaim.

"Have you read the Torah?" Moishe asked.

"No, sir," said Chaim.

"Have you studied the Talmud?"

"No, sir," said Chaim.

"Are you familiar with all our prayers and philosophies?" asked Moishe.

"No, sir!" said Chaim adamantly. "I am an atheist."

"Ach," said Moishe, waving the young man away dismissively. "You are not an atheist. You are an ignoramus."

The lesson for me is study. I read everything I can and realize I haven't dented the pile. I've had leadership roles in large and small organizations. I've managed, and I've studied management. As trainers, we need to be experts in our topics, or we need to have access to the experts. And that learning process is endless. New stuff comes out all the time. Thiagi has been doing this work for 40 years and as good I as think I am, there is so much (it's not quantifiable) to learn from him. And I am always blown away by his passion for his own continuous development.

Les: When you think about the future of games in training and development, what do you see?

Matt: More and more. Hopefully, with the surrounding stuff...good ISD, good debriefing, etc.

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Structured Sharing

4Cs by Matthew Richter

Here's a variation of Thiagi's HELLO GAME that structures participants' interactions and encourages them to explore the training topic. You may use this game as an opener to

discover what the participants already know. Alternatively, you may use this game as a closer to encourage participants to review and summarize what they learned from your training session.

Purpose

To explore key concepts associated with a training topic. For this description, we will use *customer satisfaction* as the training topic.

Participants

Any number, organized into four teams.

Time

30 minutes to 1 hour

Supplies

- Timer
- Whistle
- Flip chart paper
- Markers

Preparation

Prepare four flip chart pages with the following headings:

- Components of great customer satisfaction
- Characteristics of great customer satisfaction
- Challenges for achieving great customer satisfaction
- Characters involved in great customer satisfaction

Flow

Brief the participants. Explain that you would like to find out what the participants already know about customer satisfaction. In order to do this, you are going to play a 4Cs

game that will require participants create detailed lists of different aspects associated with the concept.

Define terms. Write these four terms on a flip chart (or project a slide with these terms on the screen). Define and discuss each term.

- **Components** are parts of the concept. For example, taking an order from the customer is a component of customer satisfaction.
- **Characteristics** are features associated the concept. For example, speed of service is a characteristic of customer satisfaction.
- **Challenges** are obstacle associated with the concept. For example, inability to provide discounts is a challenge associated with customer satisfaction.
- **Characters** are people associated with the concept. For example, a supplier is one of the characters associated with customer satisfaction.

Form four teams. Divide the participants into four roughly equal-sized teams. (It does not matter if some teams have a extra member.)

Brief the teams. Assign a different "C" term to each team. Explain that each team will have the specific task of collecting information about the assigned category associated with the concept of customer satisfaction. In this process, each team should collect items suggested by every person in the room. Also explain that the teams will have 3 minutes to plan, 3 minutes to collect information, and 3 minutes to analyze and organize the information.

Conduct the planning period. Ask teams to spend the next 3 minutes to plan how they are going to survey the room and gather responses from all participants. Keep track of the time and give a 1-minute warning after 2 minutes.

Conduct the data-collection period. At the end of 3 minutes, announce the conclusion of the planning period. Ask team members to go around the room, interview members of the other teams, and collect information associated with the team's task. Get out of the way and, as before, keep track of the time.

Conduct the data-analysis period. At the end of 3 minutes, ask teams to stop collecting

data and return to their original location. Each team should analyze the data, organize the information in suitable categories, and record their findings on a convenient flip chart.

Conduct the presentation period. Invite teams to take turns to present their findings to everyone in the room. Select the teams in any order. After each team's presentation, ask clarifying questions and encourage other teams to add additional information.

Debrief the participants. At the end of all four presentations, discuss the information with the group. Ask for common themes, differences, surprises, and missing items. If any of the items in the lists suggest misconceptions, correct them by asking leading questions. Relate this activity to the rest of your training session.

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Debriefing

When To Debrief

Debriefing is the process of helping participants to reflect on their experiences and gain insights. For a description of a six-phase model for debriefing, see [the previous issue](#).

You must debrief after a simulation game in order to gain maximum effectiveness from the training activity. The more abstract, complex, and emotionally intensive the simulation is, the more participants will gain from debriefing.

You can also debrief other types of experience activities. You can apply the debriefing procedure to a variety of planned and unplanned events. You can debrief an individual in a coaching mode. You can even debrief yourself.

Here are some unconventional applications of the debriefing process:

- Conduct a debrief after completing a project, losing a bid, downsizing the workforce, or other significant organization events.
- Debrief new employees a week after they join the organization.

- Debrief long-term employees a week before their retirement.
- Debrief participants after they watch a movie about a culturally different group.
- Debrief participants after they read a complex case study.
- Debrief a group of employees returning from an overseas assignment.
- Debrief victims of sexual harassment or job discrimination.
- Rather than doing an annual performance review, debrief your direct reports.
- Keep a personal debriefing journal related to your workplace activities.
- On the evening before your next birthday, debrief your experiences during the past 12 months.

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Cognitive Simulation

AUDIO TIC TAC TOE

Everybody knows how to play TIC TAC TOE. Recently, I designed a variation of this universal paper-and-pencil game to play with one of my older friends.

My friend is worried that her declining ability to recognize faces, remember telephone numbers, recall words, and to concentrate on the content of conversations are all precursors to Alzheimer's. I think that this is just a minor symptom of age-related cognitive decline that can be halted and reversed by exercising one's brain. An effective way to exercise the brain is to play games that require the use of your memory.

You don't have to be old to play AUDIO TIC TAC TOE, but you need three people to play it. This is how the game goes:

One player is the *recorder* and has a piece of paper with a 3 x 3 grid that has spreadsheet-like labels for each box:

A1	B1	C1
A2	B2	C2
A3	B3	C3

The recorder marks every move made by the other two players (called *contestants*) in this grid but keeps the grid hidden.

Contestants visualize the 3 x 3 grid with its numbered boxes. They take turns calling out the box where they want to put their symbol in.

EXAMPLE:

She says, "My first X goes in box C1."

I say, "My first O goes in box B2."

She responds with, "My second X goes in box A3."

I say, "My second O goes in box A1."

She says, "Box C3."

I say, "Aha! My third O goes in box C2."

She says, "My fourth X goes in box B3. And I win!"

The recorder does not say anything until all the boxes are filled or a contestant claims victory.

A contestant *wins* if she she places her symbol in three boxes in a straight line (as in the usual game of tic tac toe) *and announces that she has won.*

A contestant *loses* if

- She tries to place her symbol in a box that is already occupied
- She incorrectly claims victory

- She gets three in a straight line and fails to announce that she has won

At the end of each game, the next player assumes the role of recorder. Game proceeds as before.

This is just the game to play during long drives. Make sure, however, that the driver is not the recorder.

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Announcement

Learn, Play, Perform **by Brian Remer**

Keene, New Hampshire, USA—A one-day conference titled *Play, Learn, Perform* will be held at Keene State College on April 27 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

According to organizers, the hands-on conference is designed to meet the needs of educators and trainers who want to make learning in their classes and workshops more dynamic. *Play, Learn, Perform* will showcase games, simulations, and other interactive strategies that educators can use to enhance their trainings and make learning stick.

Internationally recognized game inventor, Dr. Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan, is the featured presenter. An inventor of hundreds of games used to enhance learning, Thiagi is the president of [Workshops by Thiagi, Inc.](#), an organization with the mission of helping people improve their performance effectively and enjoyably.

Other highlights of the program include *Powerplay: Inspired By Improvisation*. Cathy McNally, trainer and consultant, will use the techniques of improvisational theater to build teamwork, positive attitudes, listening skills, and flexible thinking.

In *Wrap it Up!* trainer and facilitator Brian Remer will demonstrate a variety of games and activities to summarize and bring to closure any educational event so that participants can return to work with a specific plan for new action.

Conference attendees will come away from *Play, Learn, Perform* with experience and insight into the use of interactive learning designs, novel interactive techniques that participants can use immediately, a support network for trying out new ideas, and fresh energy from the day's excitement.

The registration fee is US\$75; US\$50 for educators, students, and non-profit participants. Pre-registration is encouraged. More information is available at www.mds-nh.org or by calling Brian Remer at Monadnock Developmental Services, (603) 352-1304.

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Online Tool

Debriefing: An OQ

OQ is a web-based tool that presents an open question requiring reflection or creative thinking. The OQ page provides you with a convenient form to type your answer and to submit it.

What makes OQ unique is an array of buttons on top of the web page:

Expert Answers. When you click on this button, you see the answers from one or more experts.

Peer Answers. When you click on this button, you see earlier answers from other people. You can compare your answer to these answers.

Exit. When you click this button, you return to your original web page location.

A New OQ

Did you read the article, "[When to Debrief](#)" in this issue? This article listed several unconventional uses for the debriefing technique. Think of other situations that can provide learning insights through debriefing. Go to [this month's OQ page](#) and add one or more unconventional applications of the debriefing technique.

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