

THIAGI GAMELETTER: July 2008

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

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

Mission

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

Editorial Roster

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Feedback Request

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

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Construction Game

TEAM PERFORMANCE by Christopher Hunter

Purpose

To demonstrate the significance of a clear team purpose, objectives, and well-defined roles and their impact on overall team performance.

Participants

Minimum: 20

Maximum: 32

Best: 20-30

Participants are divided into teams of 4 teams of 5 to 7 members each.

Time

45-55 minutes

Handouts

Four (4) *Instruction Sheets*, one for each of the teams:

- Team 1: Instructions with a statement of purpose
- Team 2: Instructions with a statement of roles
- Team 3: Instructions with statements of purpose and roles
- Team 4: "We're expecting the best from you. Good luck!"

Debriefing Questions for Discussion

Supplies

- Four 200-piece Tinker Toy sets
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Timer
- Four rulers

Flow

Choose a client. Appoint any randomly selected participant to play the role of the client.

Form teams. Divide participants into 4 teams, each with 5 to 7 members. It does not matter if some teams have an extra member. Make sure groups have a large work surface and are spread far enough apart so that they cannot hear one another.

Explain the background. Use slides during this explanation.

Explain the ground rules. Project these ground rules on the screen and keep them visible the entire time:

- Limit your discussion within your project team only. Don't discuss with other teams.
- Use only the materials in your canister.
- Facilitator will answer questions from this point forward.
- Use the instruction sheets provided.
- You have 20 minutes to complete the task.

Distribute instruction sheets. Give each team one *Instruction Sheet*. Ask team members to review the information and begin the activity. Start timer.

Stop the activity. After 20 minutes, ask teams to stop work. Ask teams to put all remaining materials into the canister.

Conduct team debrief. Distribute copies of the *Debriefing Questions*. Explain that you would like each team to take a few minutes and answer the questions. Have teams record answers on one flipchart page.

Conduct large group debrief. Ask each team to read out their flipchart page. Conduct this activity in order (team 1, then team 2, then team 3, and then team 4). Keep the discussion focused on the flipchart pages.

Explain the differences among teams. Have each team share the components of their information sheets (purpose, objectives, and roles).

Facilitate the discussion. Guide the discussion with the whole group. Record a list of necessary requirements for effective team performance.

Select the winning tower. Ask the client to read the list of criteria for the tower and identify the best tower.

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Handout For Team 1

Team Instructions

Background

The four project teams are being sponsored by the senior leaders of the company. The company builds traditional structures like bridges, tunnels, and towers. Recently, the CEO has decided to form these project teams to explore state-of-the-art building concepts. The CEO wants to lead the industry.

Purpose

Each project team will be responsible for building a miniature prototype of a “state-of-the-art” tower which could ultimately be selected by the client to be built in the client's city.

Objectives

The CEO will present four tower prototypes to the client and the client has agreed to select one to build in the city. The CEO has set the following performance objectives for the project:

- The prototype should be structurally stable. The prototype must stand alone (no team members can be touching it and it cannot lean against any object.)
- Complete production of the prototype in 20 minutes. This would represent a significant reduction in production time to build a prototype. There is no advantage to completing the prototype in less than 20 minutes.

- Build a prototype at least 24 inches in height which, in full scale, would be the tallest structure in the city. Final prototype height may contribute to beauty, but height above 24 inches is not a performance objective.

The client will determine which tower is most state-of-the-art using these criteria:

- Meeting the stability, production time and height requirements
- Unique structural beauty
- Appealing complimentary colors

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Handout For Team 2

Team Instructions

Background

The four project teams are being sponsored by the senior leaders of the company. The company builds traditional structures like bridges, tunnels, and towers. Recently, the CEO has decided to form these project teams to explore state-of-the-art building concepts. The CEO wants to lead the industry.

Roles

1 Project Manager — The project manager has overall authority for managing the execution and logistics of building the prototype. He or she tracks time for the exercise to ensure the project is completed on time. The project manager has authority to make final staffing decisions.

1 Architect — The architect is responsible for determining the overall creative vision of the structure design. The architect sketches a design on paper, meets with project lead and construction lead to explain the vision. He or she has overall decision rights about the height, color, and appearance of the final prototype. The architect is not involved in the

actual construction of the prototype.

1 Structural Engineer — The structural engineer is responsible for ensuring that the prototype is structurally sound. That is, the engineer ensures that the prototype can stand alone with no outside support. The engineer periodically inspects the prototype. The engineer is not involved in the actual construction of the prototype.

1 Prototype Construction Lead — Provides management and leadership to the builders to ensure the operation is completed on time and according to specifications. The construction lead can assist in the actual building of the prototype. However, the construction lead does not make creative decisions or change the architect's design.

2 or 3 Builders — The building crew actually constructs the prototype according to specification. They do not make creative decisions or change the architect's design.

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Handout For Team 3

Team Instructions

Background

The four project teams are being sponsored by the senior leaders of the company. The company builds traditional structures like bridges, tunnels, and towers. Recently, the CEO has decided to form these project teams to explore state-of-the-art building concepts. The CEO wants to lead the industry.

Purpose

Each project team will be responsible for building a miniature prototype of a “state-of-the-art” tower which could ultimately be selected by the client to be built in the client's city.

Objectives

The CEO will present four tower prototypes to the client and the client has agreed to select one to build in the city. The CEO has set the following performance objectives for

the project:

- The prototype should be structurally stable. The prototype must stand alone (no team members can be touching it and it cannot lean against any object.)
- Complete production of the prototype in 20 minutes. This would represent a significant reduction in production time to build a prototype. There is no advantage to completing the prototype in less than 20 minutes.
- Build a prototype at least 24 inches in height which, in full scale, would be the tallest structure in the city. Final prototype height may contribute to beauty, but height above 24 inches is not a performance objective.

The client will determine which tower is most state-of-the-art using these criteria:

- Meeting the stability, production time and height requirements
- Unique structural beauty
- Appealing complimentary colors

Roles

1 Project Manager — The project manager has overall authority for managing the execution and logistics of building the prototype. He or she tracks time for the exercise to ensure the project is completed on time. The project manager has authority to make final staffing decisions.

1 Architect — The architect is responsible for determining the overall creative vision of the structure design. The architect sketches a design on paper, meets with project lead and construction lead to explain the vision. He or she has overall decision rights about the height, color, and appearance of the final prototype. The architect is not involved in the actual construction of the prototype.

1 Structural Engineer — The structural engineer is responsible for ensuring that the prototype is structurally sound. That is, the engineer ensures that the prototype can stand alone with no outside support. The engineer periodically inspects the prototype. The

engineer is not involved in the actual construction of the prototype.

1 Prototype Construction Lead — Provides management and leadership to the builders to ensure the operation is completed on time and according to specifications. The construction lead can assist in the actual building of the prototype. However, the construction lead does not make creative decisions or change the architect's design.

2 or 3 Builders — The building crew actually constructs the prototype according to specification. They do not make creative decisions or change the architect's design.

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Handout For Team 4

Team Instructions

Background

The four project teams are being sponsored by the senior leaders of the company. The company builds traditional structures like bridges, tunnels, and towers. Recently, the CEO has decided to form these project teams to explore state-of-the-art building concepts. The CEO wants to lead the industry.

Message

The company's senior leaders say, "We are expecting the best from you. We've picked the best people to be on your team. Good luck!"

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Debriefing Questions

Debriefing Questions for Discussion

Agree on the answer to each question and record the answer on a flipchart page:

1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest rating and 10 being the highest), rate your team's overall performance.
2. What worked well with your team?
3. What could your team have done differently?
4. What information did your team need—but not have? How would that information have helped your team?
5. What common elements need to be in place for any successful team? How could these elements drive the success of the team?

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Jolt Principles

***Jolts** are interactive experiential activities that lull participants into behaving in a comfortable way and then suddenly delivering a powerful wake-up call. Jolts force participants to re-examine their assumptions and revise their habitual practices. A typical jolt lasts only a few minutes but provides enough insights for a lengthy debriefing. Not all jolts entrap the participants; some of them suggest thought experiments and activities to provide enlightening insights.*

I am currently working on a book of jolts in collaboration with Tracy Tagliati. This book will contain a collection of jolts interspersed with short articles exploring different principles related to their design and delivery. Here's one of those articles:

Control Group Jolts

Back in my graduate school days, I enjoyed designing convoluted research projects that involved all kinds of control-group studies. The principle behind this type of experiments is that different groups receive different “treatments”—and produce different outcomes. For example, if you invite one group of participants to come to the front of the room and sing to the audience for the payment of 10 cents and another group to perform the same task for the payment of \$100, you would see a difference in the number of volunteers.

You can then debrief the group to explore the impact of different levels of financial incentives.

The best way to conduct this jolt is to print equal numbers of instruction cards with two different treatments. The first paragraph in all these instruction cards invited participants to come to the front of the room and sing for 2 minutes at the top of their voice. The second paragraph in some of the cards offer \$100 for performing this task. An equal number of cards contain a second paragraph that offers 10 cents for performing the same task. You shuffle the cards and randomly distribute a card to each participant. After a suitable pause, you can ask volunteers to raise their hands. You can then explain the two different levels of financial incentives and show that the higher incentives entice more volunteers.

My friend Matt adds a powerful twist to this jolt: He asks one of the \$100 volunteers to come to the front of the room and sing. He pays \$100 to this person (Matt can afford it). He then asks how many of the 10-cent volunteers are still willing to sing for the measly incentive offered to them. (Most 10-cent volunteers would refuse.) Matt then discusses the impact of unfair reward systems.

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NASAGA 2008

NASAGA 2008 Conference Program Evolving Nicely

Don't miss NASAGA 2008 conference in Indianapolis (October 15-18). Visit the [conference website](#) for more information.

Pre-conference Workshops

On October 15, 2008 you will have a choice of three pre-conference workshops:

- **Designing** Games, Activities, and Simulations
- **Facilitating** Games, Activities, and Simulations

- **E-Learning** Games, Activities, and Simulations

Keynotes

Each day of the regular conference (October 16-18) will begin with an important, inspiring, and intriguing keynote presentation from a thought leader in our field:

- **Scott Rigby:** Motivational Roadmap of Players
- **Pierre Corbeil:** Play Pride
- **Rosalyn Chan:** Art, Simulation, and the Work Environment

Conference Sessions

The conference will feature more than 30 concurrent sessions conducted by knowledgeable practitioners. You can read up-to-date descriptions of these sessions on the [Program Preview](#) section of NASAGA 2008 website. In the meantime, here's a peek at a few selected sessions:

Judee Blohm and Chuck Needlman: Readers' Theater: Bringing Unheard Voices to Courageous Conversations

Debi Bridle: Brilliant Ideas to Fuel the Imagination

Michelle Cummings: A Teachable Moment: Processing the Experience

Matt DeMarco: The Gift of Teamwork

Tim Gustafson: Why Won't They Let Me Use Techniques That Work?

Greg Koeser: Twist and Bond - Using twisting balloons for various games and modeling

Chuck Needlman and Judee Blohm: Nested Boxes Simulation

David Piltz: TOOLS: Tactile, Overt, Operational Learning Strategies

David Piltz: Facilitating Meaningful Insights

David Piltz: Controversy: Facilitating with EASE

Brian Remer: Briefly Stated: 99 Words that Teach

Brian Remer: The Board Game Body Shop

Nick Smith: Money for Old Rope?

John Steiner: Quick and It'll-Stick Instructional Design (On The Fly)!

Tracy Tagliati: Facilitating Large Groups

Sivasailam Thiagarajan: Integrating Training Activities with Content

Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva Chung: Culture Shock: How Much Shock Can You Take?

Marian H. Williams: Physical Webbing - Building Knowledge and Creating Understanding Through Mindmapping Structures

One More Time

Don't miss NASAGA 2008 conference in Indianapolis (October 15-18). Visit the [conference website](#) for more information.

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Learning Activities

Learning Activities Revisited - 5

Content and *activity* are the yin and yang of training. You need both of them to produce effective and engaging learning. Content without activity produces sterile knowledge. Activity without content results in wasted effort.

It is not enough if you have both content and activity. These two elements have to be carefully aligned and integrated.

We have access to different sources of training content. Some of them are in a stable and

recorded form as in the case of books and video recordings. Other sources of content are in a live and spontaneous form as in the case of lectures from subject-matter experts and discussions with fellow participants.

Over the past several years, we have been exploring 18 different types of training activities that can be used with different sources of existing content.

I discussed two or three learning activities in greater detail during each of the past four months. This month, I explore learning activities associated with *graphics content* and *job aids*.

11. Graphics Game

(Content Source: Illustrations or photographs)

Graphics games involve photographs, paintings, drawings, or cartoons as essential elements. Some graphic games require participants to create these graphics. In others, participants review the graphic, analyze its elements, discover relationships, and discuss their findings. Training objectives for these games are not limited to graphics; they can relate to other types of skills and concepts.

Sample Graphics Game: PHOTO ANALYSIS

The training objective for this graphics game is to explore how being judgmental affects what we observe.

1. Select a photo that shows a cluttered scene such as a busy street or crowded railway station.
2. Prepare two different questionnaires: One asking participants to write down *everything they see* and the other to write down the *interesting things they see*.
3. Begin the session by randomly distributing one of the questionnaires to each participant. Distribute equal numbers of the two questionnaires.
4. Ask each participant to read the instruction and write responses on the questionnaire.
5. Pause for about 2 minutes.

6. Ask participants to count the total number of responses they wrote down. Invite participants to announce these totals.
7. The results will fall into two groups. Those who were asked to write down *everything* will have a significantly longer list than those who were asked to write down the *interesting* things.
8. Debrief the participants by revealing the two different sets of instructions. Ask questions to emphasize the learning point that any type of judgment (such as looking for *interesting* things) reduces what you notice in a situation.

Application Activity

(Content Source: Job aids)

This activity involves supplying participants with copies of a job aid for performing a specific procedure. In a typical application activity, different participants learn different procedure steps and organize themselves into teams to share their step and learn the other steps.

Sample Application Activity: ROI

The training objective for this application activity is to compute the return on investment for a performance-improvement project.

1. Prepare a step-by-step job aid on how to calculate the return on investment for a project.
2. Divide participants into as many teams as there are steps in the calculation procedure.
3. Distribute sections of the job aid to participants to enable equal numbers of participants to learn a different step.
4. Reorganize participants into mixed teams so that each person in this new team knows how to perform a different step and the team as a whole can perform all the steps.
5. Give data about different performance-improvement projects to each team. Ask

team members to work collaboratively to compute the ROI for the project.

6. Encourage each participant to teach her step to the other participants in the team—and to learn the other steps.
7. Give the final assignment to each participant. This assignment should require the participant to independently compute the ROI for a new project.

Coming Next Issue

In the next issue of *TGL*, we will explore two other types of learning activities that incorporate *information tables* and *test instruments*.

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Brian's Words

*Brian Remer will be facilitating a [NASAGA 2008 conference](#) session, **Briefly Stated: 99 Words That Teach** at the NASAGA 2008. In addition to being a master of the 99-words format, Brian invents games and interactive strategies to expand learning and deepen insights. To find out more about him, read his [Guest Gamer](#) interview.*

Please Go Practice by Brian Remer

Please go practice!

When we tell our daughter it's time to practice the clarinet, she reluctantly makes several trips to bring her music, instrument, music stand, and chair all the way down from her room to the living room where her mother and I are sitting. I couldn't figure out this behavior. Why not practice in her room?

When I read the work of psychologist Edward Deci I finally got it. Who wants to be all alone while doing something they didn't choose and can't do well? The three keys to intrinsic motivation had been missing: relationships, autonomy, competence!

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99 Words Tip

We continue exploring the broad concept of blended learning with another how-to suggestion presented in exactly 99 words.

Teaching and Testing

An effective training session blends teaching and testing. Usually a training session ends with a final test. Why not begin the session by giving this test first, find out what participants have already mastered, and teach what they don't know? If pre-testing reveals that different groups of participants know different things, why not task them to teach what they know and learn what they don't know? How about an interactive lecture approach in which you stop the lecture presentation once every 10 minutes and test the participants' mastery of the current segment and the previous segments?

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Check It Out

FREE RICE

I strongly suggest that you play the Internet vocabulary game, FREE RICE. Simply go to <http://www.freerice.com/> .

Here are the reasons for my recommendation:

- This is a fun way to increase your vocabulary. We all know how useful an extensive vocabulary can be.
- FREE RICE features a simple but sophisticated online game design. You can play the game at 55 different levels. The computer monitors how easily you earn score points and automatically adjusts the difficulty level. (I play at Level 42.)

- FREE RICE helps combat world hunger. Every time you click an answer, you earn 20 grains of rice and this is donated to poor hungry people around the world through United Nations' World Food Program. The cost of the rice is paid for by the advertisers whose names you see on the bottom of your screen.
- I come from a region where rice is the staple food.
- The program was created by John Breen who lives in Bloomington, Indiana. (Do you know anyone else who lives there?)

You can get more information about this charity website from [the Wikipedia](#) (of course!).

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Single Item Survey

What's Your Principle?

In last month's issue of *TGL*, we listed the latest set of principles that enable us to produce faster, cheaper, and better training.

Here are a few examples:

- Build the airplane while flying it. Design training while delivering it.
- Change the role of participants. Ask them to play the roles of trainers, coaches, and testers.
- Conduct just-in-time analyses. Let analysis and design proceed simultaneously.

What is a principle (or technique) that you use for rapidly, inexpensively, and effectively producing training products and procedures?

Please let us know about your favorite rapid instructional design principle.

To contribute your response, visit [this survey page](#) (opens in a new window). You may include your name along with your suggestion or keep it anonymous. You may send more

than one response.

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