

13 ideas to ignite training

Training doesn't have to be a drag. Spice it up with these ideas

BY PHIL FOGARTY



Training is an ongoing effort, and it's easy to get in a slump. Keep your sessions creative, energetic and focused on improving by using any of these ideas.

1. Play music. Get a boom box and use some energizing sounds – the theme from the Lone Ranger, country rock or salsa – whatever appeals to people.

2. Get hands-on. Develop training sessions around something employees do, like pruning, planting or loading a truck.

3. Get feedback from everyone. Challenge everyone to fill out a card answering, "What is the best thing you have learned from the sessions?" Next week, everyone makes a one-minute presentation on their answers. Applaud every presentation, and award the most energetic.

4. Check posture. Check how everyone sits and ask them to sit as if they were bored. Ask them to sit as if it was the most exciting thing they have ever heard. Now challenge them to stay that way for the entire session. Dis-

cuss how we can apply posture to control our attitude at the job site.

5. Videotape it. Allow the presenter to take the session home to study how well they did or how they can improve.

6. Role play. This is great for customer service and team-building. Have a scene written out with the setting and specific roles. Don't be afraid of role playing — it is the number-one training technique

and the best way to build leadership skills. (For a role-play sample, e-mail us at jjpaluch@jphorizons.com)

7. Grab some charts. If you chart what you have spent on training to date (program cost, meeting time, etc.), employees will see your commitment to training. If possible, show comparisons from last year, like turnover, equipment repair costs or other facts that show training makes a difference.

8. Do a conference call. Arrange with another "training challenge" company to have a speaker phone set up so both companies can talk to each other while a training session is taking place.

9. Develop in-house certification. Give certificates for attendance, teaching, spirit, etc. They're easy to create on the computer.

10. Get some good press. The Skills Development Series orientation package has a sample news release, or try your own. Send out several until you get a call from a paper. Then invite them out to see how your company is approaching the problem

of providing consistent training. When they come, make it a great show.

11. Develop competition. Have a 'field day' atmosphere. Put several teams together to identify plants, change oil, plant a plant, edge a bed, etc. Use your creativity and create five-minute, educational competitions in a fun atmosphere. Award a traveling trophy that the team keeps for a week.

12. Do a planning session. Use a training session to plan. If you are covering bulb planting or irrigation troubleshooting, use some time to brainstorm how your organization can become more efficient or improve on the topic. Take good notes and then as a management team, work to implement those ideas. The team will be more likely to participate when they see results coming from the sessions.

13. Make a mission statement. Have competitions on who can say your company's mission statement the quickest. Have groups of six say it, with each person saying a word and going to the next person. This is an excellent team building session. Have a serious discussion on "How are we doing in pursuit of this mission?" Be open to the negative as well as the positive. The mission must be discussed in each meeting.

—The author leads the Skills Development Series, a year-long training program co-sponsored by American Cyanamid and Landscape Management. For more information about applying the SDS system to your organization, call him at JP Horizons, 440/254-8211 or email: pfogarty@stratos.net.