



The Creative Workplace Update

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"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."
William Butler Yeats

Fifteen Tips for Getting Learners Back from Break on Time

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If you have ever had learners show up late or come in from a break after you have restarted a session, you know that they can be disrupting and downright annoying. There are many reasons why I have seen this occur in the past three decades. Some typical reasons are:

- They are on-call (e.g. law enforcement, medical staff, fire fighters, or computer support staff) and receive an alert that requires their attention;
- Your session is held onsite and makes it easy for someone to come in to ask them questions or call them away;
- They make the mistake of returning to their office to check email or voicemail and get distracted;
- Their boss or a client sees them in the hallway and captures them for a meeting or discussion;
- They do not find the content or delivery stimulating enough and take their time to return.

While some of these problems will continue to exist, you can work toward reducing or eliminating many of them. In most cases, if you can hold the session off-site where they do not have access to their office or co-workers, you reduce the chance of them being called away. Secondly, if you plan your delivery and content effectively and enthusiastically approach every session using brain-based learning strategies (e.g. use of novelty, color, sound, motion, learner engagement, music, color, etc) you can generate a desire to come back to see “what’s next” in the session.

Here are some additional strategies for getting learners back to the session on time:

- Create ground rules at the beginning of the session with learner input and make sure that returning on time from breaks is included. Write these on a flip chart and post the sheet for all to see during the session. Remind them of the guidelines before they leave for a break or lunch;
- Make return times visual by writing them on the board or a flip chart or projecting an electronic count down time through your computer or on an overhead projector (these are available at www.presentationresources.net);
- Make sure learners have a clock in the break area and that it is synchronized with the one in your classroom that you will use to restart the session;
- Put a notice on the door that learners are not to be disturbed except for emergencies. Also put a message board that learners can check on their way to break to see if someone has been to the room to contact them;
- Make sure that learners get at least one long (15-20 minute) break if doing a day long session so that they can make calls or check in at their office;
- Break for lunch early if food is not being provided in the classroom so that learners can get ahead of the waiting lines at food establishments. Most people go to lunch at around noon so break at 11:30 or 11:45 depending on how far they must travel to eat. This may preclude them from getting stuck wasting much of their lunch period standing in line at a cash register or to get their food;
- Feed learners in the classroom or an adjoining room to prevent their having to leave or wander too far from the session location;
- Use what newscasters have been doing for decades. Employ a teaser like, “Following our break, I am going to provide those of you who are back with one dynamic technique that will allow you to increase your production/effectiveness by 10% in the area of” Provide this strategy exactly at the scheduled restart time and do not repeat it for those who show up late. In doing this, you provide an intangible incentive to be back on time;
- Prepare a fun activity (e.g. crossword or trivia puzzle) that you announce will be on their chairs when they return. The first person getting the most correct answers within five minutes of the restart time, gets a prize;
- Do something special after each break. For example, tell a humorous story, joke or share a work related tip or perform a magic trick that ties to session content;
- Use peer pressure by forming teams that are used for activities and discussions during a portion of the program. Just before break, announce that the first team with all members returning on time and seated will win a prize. This puts pressure on each person to return so they do not let team members down and they all win;

- Close the door at the announced restart time and begin your session regardless of how many people are in the room. This gives a visual non-verbal cue that you are in control and that their cooperation is expected in making the class a success;
- Use music during your breaks, and at the scheduled restart time, turn the music off to signal that everyone should take a seat as you start the delivery again. It also signals those lingering in the hallway outside the door to hustle back in;
- Give rewards to each person returning on time (e.g. a small toy or prize related to the session content. For example, you might pass out smile face balls or toys for customer service or interpersonal relationship skills sessions;
- Collect money from late returnees. As part of your opening remarks establish in a lighthearted manner that anyone returning late must contribute a sum of money (let them determine the amount up to one dollar or Euro) to a tardy fund. Tell learners that at the end of the session you will have a drawing of one name to receive the fund contents. This encourages people to get back on time and rewards those who do so. It also encourages everyone to monitor tardy behavior and police it for you. Thus, you are taken out of the disciplinarian role.

Critical Skills Needed To Be a Strategic Thinker According To Your Strategic Thinking Business Coach

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Strategic thinking is a process that defines the manner in which people think about, assess, view, and create the future for themselves and others. Strategic thinking is an extremely effective and valuable tool. One can apply strategic thinking to arrive at decisions that can be related to your work or personal life. Strategic thinking involves developing an entire set of critical skills. What are those critical skills? Your Strategic Thinking Business Coach offers the following list of critical skills that the best strategic thinkers possess and use every day.

Critical Skill #1: They have the ability to use the left and right sides of their brain. This skill takes practice as well as confidence. Developing the logic and creative sides of your brain are tremendously valuable.

Critical Skill #2: They have the ability to develop a clearly defined and focused business vision and personal vision. They are skilled at both thinking with a strategic purpose as well as creating a visioning process. They have both skills and they use them to complement each other.

Critical Skill #3: They have the ability to clearly define their goals and develop a strategic action plan with each goal broken down into tasks and each task having a list of needed resources and a specific timeline.

Critical Skill #4: They have the ability to design flexibility into their plans by creating some benchmarks in their thinking to review progress. Then they use those benchmarks to as a guide and to recognize the opportunity to revise their plans as needed. They have an innate ability to be proactive and anticipate change, rather than being reactive to changes after they occur.

Critical Skill #5: They are amazingly aware and perceptive. They will recognize internal and external clues, often subtle, to help guide future direction and realize opportunities for them and their companies or organizations. Great strategic thinkers will listen, hear and understand what is said and will read and observe whatever they can so that they will have very helpful and strategic information to guide them. Strategic thinkers often have those "Ah Ha" experiences while on vacation, walking, sitting and relaxing or during many other activities because they see or hear something that resonates and because they are so aware and perceptive.

Critical Skill #6: They are committed lifelong learners and learn from each of their experiences. They use their experiences to enable them to think better on strategic issues.

Critical Skill #7: They are committed to and reserve time for themselves. The best and greatest strategic thinkers take time out for themselves. Their time out may be in the form of a retreat (some prefer to call it an "advance" since it "advances" their thinking); a walk in a special environment; relaxing in a comfortable chair in the lobby of an historic hotel; or an afternoon in a quiet place with a blank sheet of paper or their lap top computer with "their thinking caps" on.

Critical Skill #8: They are committed to and seek advice from others. They may use a coach, a mentor, a peer advisory group or some other group that they can confide in and offer up ideas for feedback.

Critical Skill #9: They have the ability to balance their tremendous amount of creativity with a sense of realism and honesty about what is achievable in the longer term. This ability to balance does not deter them in their thinking. Sometimes they refer to themselves as realistic optimists.

Critical Skill #10: They have the ability to be non-judgmental and they do not allow themselves to be held back or restricted by judging their own thinking or the thinking of others when ideas are initially being developed and shared. This is especially true during any "brainstorming" exercises to ensure a flow of great ideas. There will be time to test the ideas AFTER the "brainstorming" is concluded.

Critical Skill #11: They have the ability to be patient and to not rush to conclusions and judgments. Great ideas and thoughts require time to develop into great successes in the future to reach your defined vision.

The greatest and most successful organizations in the world, over many years and decades, world think ahead and encourage great strategic thinking at least somewhere in their business plans. However, the challenge to that in too many organizations today is the "self-centered," "greedy," and too often "unethical" focus on the short-term measures of the current year's bonus and dividend. A sustainable successful future requires much more, no matter how big or small your business is, and a major requirement is strategic thinking. Therefore, Your Strategic Thinking Business Coach recommends that you develop the critical skills of a strategic thinker to use in your business and personal life to ensure success.

Glenn Ebersole is the Founder and Chief Executive of two Lancaster, PA based consulting practices - The Renaissance Group and J. G. Ebersole Associates. To find out more about the benefits & rewards of effectively working with a strategic thinking business coach, contact Glenn Ebersole email jgecoach@aol.com or visit <http://www.businesscoach4u.com>.

Anagram of the Month

An anagram is a phrase created by using the letters from other words. These are great for challenging the mind. See if you can unscramble the following words to identify this world famous politician.

Bugger Whose

Answer at the end of the newsletter....**NO PEEKING!**

Activity: Team Energy Circle

Time: 5 Minutes

Group Size: 8-10

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for learners to recognize the importance of teamwork and group synergy.

Objectives: Through use of this activity, learners will be able to:

- Work more cohesively as a team.
- Coordinate efforts in order to reach a common goal.

Process:

- Explain that it is important for all members on a team to contribute 100% towards achieving goals and that unless all members work cohesively towards a common goal, no one succeeds.
- Give each group of 8-10 learners a UFO Energy Ball (see Creative Product Review in this issue).
- When ready to begin the activity, have one person hold the ball and place their right index finger on one of the chrome metal strips on the ball, then take the right hand of the person next to them with their left hand.
- Each person in the group joins hands (left to right) until the last person, who places their left index finger on the opposite metal chrome strip of the ball being held by the first member of the team.

- Once contact is made and an electrical body circuit has been made, the light should come on and make a sound.

NOTE: There are some cases when a person in the group does not conduct an electrical energy and “grounds out” the group; causing the ball not to function. In such cases, explain that in some instances, no matter how hard a team tries to reach a goal, they may not succeed as planned. Stress that they should still continue to work on the goal and look for alternative ways to complete a task. The important thing is that everyone DID contribute and work as a member of the team.

Debrief:

ASK: What does this activity demonstrate?
How do the concepts identified contribute to the workplace?
Why?

Spend time discussing the importance of teamwork in any situation and how it takes a concerted effort to reach established goals.

Materials Needed:

One UFO Ball per group.

For more ideas on engaging learners see Lucas, Robert W., *Creative Learning: Activities and Games That REALLY Engage People*, Jossey Bass/Pfeiffer, San Francisco, CA. 2007. Visit www.presentationresources.net for creative products.

Fact Me – Distance Learner Profile

Have you ever wondered what types of people are drawn to distance learning and take that type of courses in college? New River Community College in Dublin, Virginia has published the following description on their website:

- Majority have dependents
- Average age of 34
- Over 80% employed
- 75% also enrolled in on-campus courses
- Over 50% employed full-time
- 65% have some college experience
- 50% could not have taken course in traditional format
- 25% have difficulty enrolling in traditional in-class format course

Source: <http://de.nr.edu/de/profile.asp>

Just for the Fun of It – Investment Tips

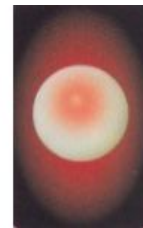
For all of you with any money left, be aware of the next expected mergers so that you can get in on the ground floor and make some BIG bucks.

Watch for these consolidations in late 2008:

1. Hale Business Systems, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Fuller Brush, and W. R. Grace Co. Will merge and become: Hale, Mary, Fuller, Grace.
2. Polygram Records, Warner Bros., and Zesta Crackers join forces and become: Poly, Warner, Cracker.
3. 3M will merge with Good Year and become: MMMGood.
4. Zippo Manufacturing, Audi Motors, Dofasc o, and Dakota Mining will merge and become: ZipAudiDoDa
5. FedEx is expected to join its competitor, UPS, and become: FedUP.
6. Fairchild Electronics and Honeywell Computers will become: Fairwell Honeychild.
7. Knotts Berry Farm and the National Organization of Women will become: Knott NOW!

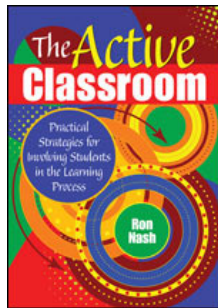
Creative Product Review – UFO Energy Ball

This is the coolest thing I have seen in a while. It looks like a small ping pong ball with one hole in the top and two small chrome strips on either side of the hole. By placing one finger on one of the strips and then placing another finger from your other hand on the opposite strip, the energy of your body cause it to light up and sound with no battery assist.



For more information or to order, visit www.presentationresources.net

Book Resource – The Active Classroom: Practical Strategies for Involving Students in the Learning Process by Ron Nash



Getting learners students involved in the learning process is a crucial strategy for any teacher or trainer. By actively engaging them in the learning process, you are able to stimulate their brains and help ensure that they effectively gain, retain, recall and use what they are taught.

In this reader-friendly book, Nash has revisited some sound concepts of brain-based learning and examines strategies such as creating a positive learning environment, incorporating structured conversations, effectively managing movement, using music to enhance the experience, using visual aids and technology effectively and a multitude of other techniques. Readers come away with ideas for incorporating what they found in the text into their own learning events in order to help ensure learner success.

Available on www.presentationresources.net

Reader's Challenge

These activities are provided for individual challenge or for use in class as a mental break from learning or team or individual activity.

Last Month's Challenge:

What common English word is nine letters long, and each time that you remove a letter from it, an English word remains...from nine letters down to a single remaining letter?

Answer(s) to Last Month's Challenge:

Startling

Remove the **L** and you are left with **Starting**
Remove the **T** and you are left with **Staring**
Remove the **A** and you are left with **String**
Remove the **R** and you are left with **Sting**
Remove the **T** and you are left with **Sing**
Remove the **G** and you are left with **Sin**
Remove the **S** and you are left with **In**
Remove the **N** and you are left with **I**

Here's the September Reader's Challenge: (Answers in next month's publication)

Can you find the hidden cities in each sentence?

1. Will the transport land on time?
2. The lion leaves his den very often.
3. Mom, I am in the basement.
4. We'll have rain today, tonight and tomorrow.
5. He can get a tune from a harp.

Anagram of the Month Answer: George W. Bush

Professional Resources

- *ASTD International Conference and Exposition* will be in Washington, DC from May 31-June 3, 2009. Get additional details at www.astd.org.
- *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)*. ASCD is a community of educators, advocating sound policies and sharing best practices to achieve the success of each learner. Their national conference is in Orlando, Florida March 14-16, 2009. For more information or to register, visit www.ascd.org.

- *Central Florida ASTD*. Monthly networking meeting and presentation for trainers, presenters and educators. For more information and visit www.astd-cf.org to register.
- *Central Florida International Customer Service Association (ICSA) Chapter*. Monthly meetings for call center professionals at various locations around Central Florida. Visit www.centralfloridaicsa.com for details.
- *Central Florida Human Resources Association*. Meets on alternating Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays each month. For dates and locations, visit www.cfhra.org.
- *CustomerServiceKnowledge.com*. A resource website dedicated to sharing information and ideas to improving the quality of customer service within your organization. Articles and resource concepts written by Robert W. Lucas, author of *Customer Service Skills for Success*. Visit www.customerserviceknowledge.com
- *Free newsletter on Self-Publishing*. If you have written a book or ever thought about doing so and are interested in self-publishing, here is a great free monthly e-newsletter that might prove valuable for you - DanPoynter@ParaPublishing.com.
- *Greater Orlando Organization Development (GOOD) Network* is an organization for Organization Development (OD) professionals who are dedicated to continuous learning and sharing of best practices, tools, and techniques. Meetings are held bi-monthly. For additional information visit www.goodnetwork.us.
- *International Alliance for Learning (IAL) Conference*. The International Alliance for Learning is a non-profit professional membership organization for Accelerated Learning practitioners and others who wish to improve the quality of learning for all. Their international conference is in Houston, Texas from January 15-18, 2009. For more information visit <http://www.ialearn.org/conference.php>.
- *International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI)*. The 2009 ISPI Conference will be held at Walt Disney World Dolphin Hotel Orlando, Florida from April 17 - 22, 2009. For more information, visit <http://www.ispi.org/AC2009>.
- *National School Supply and Equipment Association (NSSEA)*. If you market products to schools or educational institutions, you may want to become a member of NSSEA and attend their annual conference and exposition or toy expo. See www.nssea.org for more information.
- *National Business Educators Association (NBEA)*. The NBEA is an excellent resource for secondary and post-secondary educators, trainers and organizations affiliated with these groups. For more information about the organization and their annual conference, visit www.nbea.org.

- [National Speakers Association/Central Florida](#). Typically meets the third Saturday of each month. Call (407)622-5305 for information and registration or visit www.nsacentralflorida.com.
- [Senior Discounts](#). Provides information, ideas and links to various locations providing useful material for seniors. You can also sign up for a free monthly discount e-newsletter. www.SeniorDiscounts.com.
- [Training 2009 Conference & Expo](#). Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, GA February 9-11, 2009. For more information visit <http://www.trainingconference.com/learninggroup/training/2009>

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