



Make your training Appetising!

Marc Ratcliffe

In training, “the appetiser” relates to the opening. This is where the trainer gets to make their first impressions and is also their opportunity to focus the participant to what is coming next, both in terms of content and experience.

As such, the appetiser represents a bite-sized taste of what is to follow and is the trainer’s chance to whet the student’s appetite. So give them a TASTER of what they can expect:

T – Take them on the journey

Participants come to training and learning events with all kinds of distractions. Successful trainers recognise this and look to take them on a new journey, by breaking pre-occupation. Pre-occupation relates to all those things that keep participants from fully-focusing on the training and includes worries about work, family and other personal issues. The key to breaking pre-occupation is involvement. So involve your participants early and often to lead them to the learning destination you need to be at.

A – Allow networking

Adults usually come to learning events with some experience in the topic. The good presenter will want to tap into that experience throughout the presentation. To accommodate this, the presenter will get the participants acquainted with and comfortable with each other. Then throughout the session, the presenter will have them share ideas and experiences with each other, thus enhancing the learning for all. Most adults don’t want to attend a “sit and get” event, they want to take part, think, contribute and learn. Networking also reduces tension.

S – Support Self-esteem

Participants come into a learning environment wondering if they are capable of completing the training successfully. In a mixed group, participants will often compare themselves to other candidates rather than comparing their capabilities to the requirements of the course. This can lead to them second-guessing their abilities

and choice in undertaking the training.

Therefore, the trainer must provide the participants with opportunities to have success at the beginning of the training in order to build their confidence and encourage them to take risks later in the learning process. The faster they become comfortable with each other, the content and their place in the group, the faster they will open up to learning.

Self-esteem can be built using activities where there are no-wrong answers. For example; small group discussions, brainstorming or poster creation. Additionally, the use of word searches, simple puzzles and collaborative crosswords can help participants to enjoy the early success needed to motivate them to continue with confidence.

T – Tickle their curiosity

If the trainer provides some kind of anticipatory device at the beginning of the training, this will help them to attract and maintain interest in their session. This could be done with puzzles, cartoons, music, short video clips, magic tricks, creative posters or tactile items on the tables.

E – Engage responses

By involving the audience early, the trainer sets the scene for interactivity. It also helps them to identify the students’ present level of knowledge. As such, this provides valuable information that the trainer can use to modify their presentation, so it is pitched at the right level.

Remember, the participants will retain more of the content that they are activity involved with. So use pair-shares, triads, table groups and whole group discussion to create regular interaction between both participant and trainer as well as between participants.

R – Relate to the subject

The million dollar question in training is “what’s it for me”? Most participants want something practical that they can take-away and use in their own situations. Therefore, to deliver on this expectation, great trainers use opening activities that relate to content and context. Poor presenters often open with a random activity that has little to do with the content of the event or the workplace requirements. Make sure that your opener has a connection to the topic at hand and this will help to draw your audience in.

There are so many great teachable moments in the introduction of training. However, many trainers fill these with ‘house-keeping’ or long-winded introductions of themselves. Do yourself and your participants a favour and look to commence the training with something memorable, impactful and engaging. This will set the scene, draw them in and inspire them to get their teeth into the later content. Bon appétit! ■

This article is a modified excerpt from the forthcoming book – *The Trainer’s Cook Book* by Marc Ratcliffe.

Marc Ratcliffe is the founder of MRWED Training and Assessment, a registered training organisation, specialising in trainer training. He continues to push the boundaries of “edu-tainment” and believes that participant interaction and fun are integral to the learning experience. He has been involved in Workplace and Vocational Education for 22 years and has conducted more than 300 Training and Assessment courses. He continues to be an in-demand speaker and workshop facilitator, boasting more than 50 appearances at conferences throughout the world. Contact via www.mrwed.edu.au, mratliffe@mrwed.edu.au or @MRWED_CEO. Marc will be speaking at the AITD National Conference in May.