

N A S A G A

North American Simulation and Gaming Association

SIMAGES

Volume 2, Issue 6 - Winter 2000

The NASAGA Organization would like to thank Gail Heidenhain and Randy Hollandsworth for their time and effort in creating this issue of SIMAGES.

Inside this Issue:

- Reflections on NASAGA 2000 - Diane Stoy
 - Web Site Mania - Susan Otto
 - Cool Stuff!!
 - Web Based Resources - Chris Saeger
 - Training, Not As Easy As It Looks - Kim Chiodi
-

Reflections on NASAGA 2000

by Diane Stoy

What happened on Planet Learning when NASAGA.2000 unfolded at The University of St. Thomas? Whew - what a journey it was ! That Wednesday afternoon, as I walked through the halls of Opus Hall, the pre-conferences were well underway. Pow - it suddenly dawned on me - after planning for so long - the conference had really begun.

The blast-off event on Wednesday evening was just that - a blast. People walking down the hall were wondering about who those folks were - all adorned with glow sticks in the Great Room! My storyteller-colleague Loren Neimi, who helped me plan this event - was right: a journey begins by taking a look at where you have been. With the help of many, we looked back in time as we walked through the "learning museum" - filled with some of the tools used in the past to facilitate learning.

At the conclusion of the museum was Thiagi who greeted everyone as they entered the time tunnel. At its end waited Marla Allen with glow sticks and a welcome to the planet, a simple landscape lit with stars and stories of learning yet to be written in the new century. The glow sticks were so appropriate because their luminosity represented the light of learning, which brings everyone to NASAGA. We learn together by doing, by sharing. Thursday morning saw us "Leaving Pleasantville" with keynote speaker Marc Prensky, CEO of games 2train.com.

The big event on Friday evening was "out-of-this-world" with kudos, costumes, great food, and fun, fun, fun. Recognition went to Susan Otto and Andrew Lovett for their creative costumes; Jay Munj and Winnie Mureithi for their superb conference coordination; Joellyn Veninga and Velda Stohr for their hard work as the volunteer coordinators who organized an army of quiet elves in blue t-shirts; Brian Remer whose session on metaphor put him in the NASAGA "starlight"; and Barbara Steinwachs, who was greatly missed at the conference but who was recognized for her enormous contribution to the field. Special recognition went to Lynn Williams-Tonkin who won the Post-it note contest. Contest judge Dr. Mitch Kusy wrote that "Lynn's adaptation of Post-it notes to the strategy formulation process was like a string of pearls - simple and elegant"! And of course, what would a NASAGA banquet be without our famous auctioneer, Kevin Eikenberry, and the annual NASAGA auction? Again this year, NASAGA participants were able to purchase great learning products at Pleasantville prices.

Because of the auction, some of us are not going to Pleasantville in 2001 but to the Eureka Ranch instead! And, to top this all off - the dancing crowd kept another NASAGA tradition alive. Quite a night!

So what's the buzz about NASAGA.2000? We are still working on the formal evaluation and will post the results on the NASAGA web-site. But I can tell you that the support staff at St. Thomas told me that they had never worked with such an enthusiastic, fun group as NASAGA. My colleagues in the School of Education said that the NASAGA conference brought with it a wonderful energy about learning. The hallways were filled with sparks of new ideas, new partnerships, new possibilities. One of the greatest pleasures of my role as the conference chair was being able to share NASAGA with our St. Thomas students. It was a great learning experience for all the student volunteers. The graduate students who participated in the conference as part of their coursework were extremely appreciative of the opportunity to learn with and from such a great group of learning facilitators. The students felt that NASAGA.2000 was a great treasure to have here with us at St. Thomas, and as conference chair, I certainly agree. It was a privilege for us.

The students lamented, however, that next fall there would be no NASAGA conference energizing the halls of Opus Hall. "Don't be sad," I told them, "the NASAGA journey will continue next fall in Indianapolis, and I hope you will come along with me. The captains of the next journey are experienced, and the NASAGA mission remains the same - learning together by doing."

It's a new world out there, Marc said, running on twitch speed - connecting with both synchronous and asynchronous connections - moving along with parallel processing and random access - and having fun. Yes, Marc said, there were two camps - the digital immigrants and the digital natives. We all knew which camp we were in, but remain eager to read Marc's new book which has just been released. Check it out on www.twitchspeed.com

Concurrent sessions - the backbone of the NASAGA conference - never fail to give conference participants a real dilemma - choosing which sessions to attend. There were disasters, board games, theater games, masters and slaves, leadership mind games, cocktails, cocktail parties, metaphors, space ships, and stories - just to name a few. E-sims were a hot topic this year - and thanks to Scott Fallows, Owen Hall, Tim Taylor, Jay Schindler and others - we looked at the challenges of on-line simulation design. Always ready for more learning - participants again enjoyed a NASAGA tradition - the Oldies-but-Goodyes night - where re-runs of classics still draw participants who had been playing and learning all day long.

In between these sessions, there were book signings by Mitch Kusy, Steve Brookfield, and Peter Vaill; visits to the NASAGA store; a lot of interest in the silent auction, and the Post-It note contest made possible by our corporate sponsor 3M; and the fantastic opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

So, in closing, I thank you for the privilege of serving as the conference chair, and for all the many efforts that helped make NASAGA.2000 such a success.

Our thanks goes out to Diane Stoy for all of the hard work and organization of such a great conference experience. In keeping with NASAGA's tradition, the conference was fun, challenging, personal and a strong learning experience. Good job Diane!!!

Web Site Mania

By Susan Otto

There are tons of websites on the Internet. Keeping them all straight and finding the right one when you need it can be daunting. I propose we share with each other the most valuable websites that we use.

Here's one of my favorite sites for resources to help me in working with clients. It is the site for the Discian Group in Indianapolis (<http://discian.com>). This is a very large site that includes sections on their services, etc. However, what I like most are all the free resources.

For example, if you are ever looking for a quote to use in a workshop, just click the Quote Collections link. You will be able to sort through all the quotes to choose those that are relevant to your learning and training.

Related to this, the Discian Group also publishes a daily email newsletter called Powerquotes. It contains a quote and questions to reflect on each day. It's great! You can find it and/or subscribe at <http://powerquotes.net>.

The Resources link provides a wide variety of articles, book reviews, training tools, and more. The articles themselves, all focused on training and consulting success, make the site worth a return visit.

Lastly, the site offers something they call the "Compass" which is a tool that allows for peer ranking and review of websites of interest to trainers and consultants. You can search among these links, list them in ranked order, rank a site and add comments yourself, among other things.

Discian also has Vantagepoints, a free monthly email essay about learning from everyday life events. It is written by Kevin Eikenberry, Principal of the Discian Group - many of you know Kevin from his involvement with NASAGA! It has been described as Robert Fulgrum meets Tom Peters.

Kevin is currently developing a book about the top 100 inspirational movies. If that sounds like your "cup of tea," rank your favorite movie...and take the opportunity to be included in his book by making comments about the movies of your choice.

I could go on and on but you should check it out for yourself.

What website has been valuable to you in the training environment? Submit your selection and it will appear in the next Simages. Feel free to "cheat" by looking at sites referenced off the Discian website!

Susan Gamel Otto
Balancing: An Act Towards Progress
(606) 341-0095

Cool Stuff !!

Squares - A Hands On Activity
by Randy Hollandsworth

Sometimes simple is better, when facilitators are trying to engage a group of participants, create discovery opportunities, or reinforce learning objectives. A very simple exercise that I experienced in ropes courses and through the Atlanta firm, Executive Adventure, is one called Squares. I have used this activity over and over in both academic classrooms and corporate training environments with great results.

Squares can be a very deep learning experience with very simple tools and preparation. There are a number of exercises called "Squares" but this particular one involves ropes, blindfolds, and participants. It can be conducted either inside or outside, and is very "ropes course" like in its structure.

Target Audience

Any group of participants that can gain an advantage through discovering the effects of good and bad communications, the need for teamwork, and the barriers typically experienced in organizations or teams.

Target Group Size

You can run this exercise with twenty people but it becomes very intense, specifically from a safety standpoint. A group of seven to ten is a more manageable group.

Time Frame

Approximately 15 minutes for set-up, 20-40 minutes to conduct exercise, and 40 minutes+ to debrief.

Equipment

One rope (approx. 75 to 100 feet, 1/2"+ diameter)

Blindfolds (airline blindfolds, marquee masks with tape over the holes make a great blindfold)-(a great idea used by Andy Kimball).

Activity

Form the participants into a group in an open, controllable location. Ensure that it is a level area, with no obstructions, or other opportunities for anyone to fall. On a safety note, it is a must to monitor those walking while blindfolding, typically you should have one person for every two participants to ensure they are safe while moving about.

Advise the participants that they are to place their blindfolds on and that they must form a perfect square with the rope while blindfolded. Provide no guidance on who should lead the group since this typically occurs naturally. You may set a time limit if you choose, but the most important thing is that the group has an opportunity to be successful, even if this means more than one attempt.

Start the group with a tangled pile of rope and maybe one person holding one piece of the rope. A very strict quality standard should be used, and the activity should not be declared complete until an absolute perfect square is formed. It is always interesting to have them stop and see how distorted some attempts are and then try again.

Debriefing

As you can see, there are many opportunities for discovery by the participants on communications, motivation, customer service, quality, planning, teamwork, leadership, organizational systems, and others. Just remember to be safe and allow participant discovery.

Web Based Resources

by Chris Saeger

Help I have a program coming up next week and I need some ideas for activities! Here are some web resources with ideas you can put to use immediately.

John Sleigh, a trainer in Australia provides a collection of activities on his web site. He says some material that I have put together for a range of clients, that I am happy to share, provided that you tell me how you used it, and how it went. Some of it is not complete, but may give you some ideas that you can take further. @ John presented at North American Simulation and Gaming Association in 1991 his session! Making Learning Fun. ([link](#))

Whether you're facilitating a formal 3-day session or an impromptu lunch-hour workshop, Training McGraw-Hill gives you the ready-to-use tools you need to create top-notch training programs on virtually any topic. They have a number of FREE 100% reproducible games -- complete with objectives, step-by-step procedures, materials and time required. McGraw-Hill is the publisher of NASAGA member, Mel Silberman's, Team and Organization Development Sourcebooks. ([link](#))

Cardboard Cognition is a compendium of 200 games designed by previous students of the course, Exploratory Learning through Simulations and Games, at the Educational Technology Department San Diego State University. These are excellent student projects that will give you a starting point for a game of your own. There is a content and age matrix to help you sort through the many gems at this site. ([link](#))

Finally, you know you have come along way when your nickname becomes a dot-com. NASAGA chairman, Sivasailam "Thiagi" Thiagarajan's web site has many fine and free resources for the trainer needing an activity for a session. Point your browser to <http://www.thiagi.com>.

Training - Not As Easy As It Looks

by Kim Chiodi

Every time I tell someone what I do for a living, I get an extremely positive response . . . "Oooh - that sounds like fun!" Of course, as we all know, training is fun. But it's not all Danish and mints. I'd like to dispel a few myths that the general population holds about our profession.

"8:30 to 4:30 - What terrific hours!" Those are terrific hours for our participants, many of whom regularly work 50 and 60 hour weeks. But what trainer do you know who works an 8 hour day? You're in the training room an hour ahead of time setting up. And you're still there an hour after training tearing down. Even lunch and breaks don't belong to you. You typically spend them either preparing for the next module or listening to participants' workplace issues. Haven't you even had participants ask you training-related questions in the restroom? Trainers are "on" every minute of the long days they work.

"You get to wear casual clothes every day!" And thank goodness we do. The thought of pushing a VCR between training rooms wearing three- inch high heels is daunting. And what trainer hasn't had to crawl on the floor to check the cabling on a computer or locate an outlet for the overhead. Try doing that in a three-piece suit.

"I'd be a great trainer - I love to talk." Well, that person may make a great speaker but would probably be a crummy trainer. As you and I know, trainers speak little and facilitate lots. Our goal is to support adult learners in their development or enhancement of useful knowledge, skills and awareness. Generally, a "talking head" won't meet that goal. Instead, good trainers make connections between learning points, set up application scenarios and basically help the learner "own" the learning process.

"What fun - all those training games!" Yes, the games are fun. And important too because, as every trainer knows, you have to get them engaged before you can get them to learn. But training is actually very skilled and very exhausting work. Think of all you do in the course of just one hour of training:

- manage time
- ask clarifying questions
- build esteem read non-verbals
- ask for input
- re-focus the group
- present content
- check for understanding

Whew! No wonder we're beat at the end of a session..

Despite these challenges, most of us love our jobs and can't imagine doing anything else. Misconceptions aside, our profession is rewarding, stimulating, and downright fun. So the next

time my second cousin George says, "Oooh, you're in training . . . that must be fun," I'll just smile and respond, "Oh, yes. It's great fun, and more!"

Contributed by Kim Chiodi of Chiodi Consulting, helping clients maximize organizational talent to reach business goals. Kim can be reached at 513.841.9911 or electronically at [**chiodi@fuse.net**](mailto:chiodi@fuse.net)