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It’s that time of year when we realize the summer solstice has passed, signifying the long daylight hours and reduced traffic will not last forever. That fact might be depressing were it not for the realization that the NASAGA annual conference is that much closer. The Board had our mid-year meeting at the site of the upcoming conference in Washington, D.C. and I can tell you that the venue is terrific! All the meeting rooms are in one central location with plenty of informal meeting space as well. There are several food options (as well as a bar) in the facility so no one will starve or dehydrate. But I will stop here as Chris and Becky Saeger have their own update on the conference plans elsewhere in the newsletter.

Getting back to the Board meeting, I want to share several highlights with you. First, the Board appointed Becky Saeger to fill the vacancy left by David Jones’ resignation. We are delighted to have Becky officially on board, although she was already working energetically on the 2004 conference plans. Not only has Becky been designing and facilitating games for many years, she is a most capable organizer and implementer, a wonderful addition to the Board. We regret the loss of David Jones who has decided to focus his tremendous talent on improvisation, his first love. In parting, David suggested we consider providing financial aid to assist Board members in attending the required mid-year meeting. And we did just that! While there is not full reimbursement, Board Members can now recover some of their out of pocket expenses. In this way we hope to make Board participation more viable for all our members.

As an organization, NASAGA is committed to functioning in ways that support our values, particularly the value of learning. The Board spends considerable time discussing actions related to this theme. I am happy to say that from proceeds of the auction at the Montreal 2003 conference, $1,500 (Canadian) was donated to an organization serving breakfast to school children. Additionally, one third of the proceeds were allocated to our Scholarship Fund. After much discussion, the Board decided to increase the proportion of auction earnings dedicated to the Scholarship Fund to 75% of the auction proceeds. Anyone interested in learning more about the Scholarships, which are intended to assist students who want to attend the annual conference, should contact Sonia Ribaux at ribaux@sympatico.ca.

The annual conference requires long range planning so we were pleased (and relieved) to select the 2005 location and conference organizer. Brian Remer will be hosting the 2005 event in Manchester, N.H. You’ll hear more about that in D.C.

And now you know the headlines of the outcomes from the meeting. They are certainly substantive and worthwhile. But as an O.D. professional, what really thrilled me about the Board meeting was the process! This group included a healthy mix of gender, age, nationality, background, sexual preference, education and employment. (Unfortunately, we still have a way to go in racial, ethnic, and differently-abled diversities.) Each person contributed their best ideas as well as their honest opinions. Differences were spoken with respect and everyone took time to listen. It was actually (dare I say it?) fun! So hang on to your ideals—the possibilities are great when people come together with a common purpose. Perhaps you might want to join the Board someday and see for yourself.
In the next few weeks you will be receiving an email inviting you to Join the Party in Washington DC. In this preview we would like to introduce a few of our “candidates”—top facilitators and designers from around the world.

**Pre-Conference Workshops**

**High Performance Teamwork (Featuring Mattel’s™ Break the Safe)**

Corporate teams today are different from teams in your parents’ times. Teams are now rapidly assembled from cross-functional and cross-cultural groups to work under tight time pressures in an unpredictable environment with ambiguous information. In this workshop, we replace traditional teambuilding approaches (such as white water rafting and rappelling) with a low-threat board game and constantly debrief participants to explore and apply—principles of high-performance partnership.

*Presenters*—Thiagi, Matthew Richter, and Raja Thiagarajan. Thiagi is the Resident Mad Scientist at The Thiagi Group, an organization that provides faster, cheaper, and better training design. Matthew Richter is president of The Thiagi Group. He specializes in the design and delivery of computer games and simulations. Build it Now – Developing Great New Simulations and Games, Quickly!

Ever been asked to design a learning event with high expectations but little time? Ever wanted to be a presenter at an International Conference? Want to take home something you can apply right away? Come to this session and achieve these three things and more! In this session we will introduce you to some approaches and tactics for rapid design and testing. Then, you will put these approaches into practice. Working in teams you will create a simulation or game on a topic of your choice. Before the end of the session you will have tested this game/simulation on others in the room and received feedback from your peers and a panel of experts! In addition, all designs from the day will be reviewed by Mel Silberman for inclusion in the 2005 Training and Development Sourcebook!

*Presenters*—Kevin Eikenberry, Brian Remer. Kevin is a consultant, trainer, author, and President of the Kevin Eikenberry Group (http://KevinEikenberry.com)—a learning consulting company. A long-time NASAGA member, Kevin believes in the power of experience in the learning process. Brian is an independent consultant and NASAGA Vice Chair who specializes in the use of interactive strategies for training and facilitation. His passion is helping other trainers capitalize on the experiences of their participants to enhance learning.

**Concurrent Session Previews**

Here are a selection of five sessions now a part of the conference concurrent sessions.

**Bingo, Revisited: The 5 Best Designs**

Come play the world’s most familiar format in five exciting designs, including a board game, a wall game, a team activity, and two paper-and-pencil games. Each game will be played and then evaluated on its playability (is it fun to play), balance (play versus content) and flexibility (adaptability). Finally, each participant will take home a resource guide that includes game templates and notes on how to adapt these games to your audience and content.

*Presenter*—Steve Sugar, well known author of Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer books: *Games That Teach, Games That Teach Teams, Primary Games, Retreats That Work,* and *Games That Boost Performance.*

**Quit Horsing Around: Recognizing and Building on The Try in Learners**

What if your participants could not talk? This workshop incorporates...
activities that are vital towards building trusting relationships with horses. The fun and insightful exercises used in training wild horses have been adapted to training and educational environments to create and understand when meaningful learning starts occurring. The emphasis on recognizing when the try takes place in learners will help reduce the unproductive impact of when trainers/educators use preconceived ideas of how learning should “look” which impede learners.

Presenter—Ellen Gehrke, professor of International Business and Management at Alliant International in San Diego, integrates interactive teaching in her courses in cross cultural management, organizational behavior, and entrepreneurship. She also adopts and trains wild horses using natural horsemanship methods.

Immunity as a Gaming Metaphor for Learning to Learn

In their transit to the knowledge economy, organizations should master and sustain, the creation and understanding of successful novelty; a myriad of new organizational behaviors are needed. Learning and inquiry (L&I) are the leading process requiring the interplay between improvement (continuous, first loop learning) and innovation (discontinuous, second loop learning). IMMUNE is a gaming field designed to approach this problematic; its purpose is to integrate teams needing to L&I collectively.

Presenters—Enrique Campos-López and Alena Urdiales-Kalinchuk, Aprendizaje Sistémico, Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico.

Design What? By When? That’s “Ethical”?

Attend this session and get ideas on how to design, develop, and document training modules. Susan and Lynn will share how they go from start to finish, including such things as where to begin, how to get organized, what makes it effective and “fun,” time needed for development, guide format, and more. Participants will create the specific elements needed for an “Ethics” module. Then download the Ethics Facilitator and Participant Guides in January 2005.

Presenters—Susan Otto and Lynn Smith. Susan is president of a consulting organization that partners with clients to design, develop, and document instructor-led training needs. Susan’s niche is creating facilitator and participant guides, which internal trainers use to facilitate. Lynn is the president of a training company that focuses on e-learning, design, and implementation of training programs. Lynn’s niche is collaborating, brainstorming, and strategizing with clients.

It’s All In the Cards: Rapid Needs Analysis

You need it when? In this session participants will work with a rapid instructional design process. Participants will produce a “Needs analysis” deck of cards and use it as a “real-life” starting point for a training to be designed with games and simulations. This is instant needs assessment and design methodology you can put to use today.

Presenter—Adriano Pianesi creates learning solutions for Members Only Software, an association management solutions provider in Washington DC. He is a Board Member of the ISPI Potomac Chapter.

But wait there’s more!

Interactive keynotes, game nights and many other surprises await. Watch your email for an update soon.
JOLT: TEAMWORD!

By Les Lauber

More often than not, businesses, organizations, and learners have the answers they need to their problems. TEAMWORD! uses a word puzzle to reinforce this concept in a quick, fun way.

Purpose
♦ To surface team assumptions and behaviors that prevent open sharing of knowledge and information.
♦ To examine how hoarding information inhibits results while sharing it promotes them.

Participants

Time
10 minutes plus debrief.

Supplies
♦ TEAMWORD! puzzle pages handouts
♦ Timer
♦ Whistle

Preparation
Copy the puzzle pages and separate the puzzles. Prepare enough puzzle handouts that each participant can receive one puzzle. You will need a number of each puzzle equal to one-fourth the number of participants. Example: Chris will have 20 participants; Chris prepares by making 5 copies of each puzzle.

Flow
Brief participants. Divide the participants into four roughly equal-sized groups. Explain that you will distribute a word puzzle to each group to solve. They will have 2½ minutes to solve their team’s puzzle.

Begin the first round. Allow the group to work on the puzzle. After time has expired, blow the whistle.

First debrief. If the group has realized that they all have different parts of the same puzzle, but has not yet completed it, announce an additional 3-minute round.

If the group has not already realized they each have part of the same puzzle, conduct a quick debrief around their experience. Suggest to them that all the information they need to succeed at the task is in the room.

Begin the second round. Now that the participants realize the answers to their puzzles are in the room, announce an additional 3-minute round during which the participants may solve the puzzle. Allow the participants to collaborate to solve the puzzle.

Second debrief. Conduct a debriefing to bring out the learning points. Potential debriefing questions include:
♦ How did you feel during the first round?
♦ How did you feel when you realized the other teams had the same puzzles with different clues?
♦ How did your group begin solving the puzzles?
♦ What roles did people take in the puzzle-solving process (facilitator, scribe, etc.)?
♦ What assumptions did you make about the puzzle? The other groups? What I meant when I said “your team has 2½ minutes to solve the puzzle?”
♦ Why do we automatically assume the small group is a team and the large group is not?
♦ What principles of teamwork can be derived from this activity?
♦ How does this reflect the way teams work in the workplace?

Puzzle Solution. “Individuals succeed only when they combine their knowledge and resources for a common goal.”

Adjustments
Too simple? Some participants clue into the fact that there are only letters and blanks as letters and begin looking at other group’s puzzles right away. To discourage this, use the old cipher a=1, b=2, c=3, etc. and put numbers under the lines for the appropriate letters. Or place random numbers under the lines to increase the difficulty further. In this case, the debrief can include discussions about the assumptions we make (that a code was being used) or how we fall into the traps of seeing one way to accomplish a task and fail to look for more efficient, faster ways.

Wrong statement? Write your own statement to fit your context or content. Simply make sure each page has one-fourth the letters, randomly distributed.

Participants get it too fast? Even when the participants realize quickly the other groups have corresponding clues, they usually begin by focusing on trying to guess words, create patterns, etc. in their own group before teaming with others. Simply move directly to the second round and allow them to finish the puzzle, then focus the debrief on those initial assumptions and how participants decided to seek other groups’ help.

Participants don’t get it? If the participants still don’t catch on after you say “the answers are in the room,” quietly suggest to one or two that another group has some interesting information and they may want to compare with a member of that group.
TEAMWORD!
Puzzle 1

I V S C E N W
E O M R K E
N O S O M G

TEAMWORD!
Puzzle 2

D L S C Y E
T C N H O E
D E S U F A M O L
Puzzle 3

TEAMWORD!

H N E U A A E U D O A N

H E E E E E E I I L G

A R C A R A C N

A .

Puzzle 4

TEAMWORD!

H L I I E L

H Y B I T E E N W D

R E A O O O

O .
“PLP could transform the way you look at teaching and learning!”

That enthusiastic comment came from a participant in Play Learn Perform (PLP), a one-day workshop on the use of interactive strategies for teaching and training held in Keene, New Hampshire at the end of April. The event was sponsored by NASAGA and hosted by Brian Remer, an independent training consultant and Vice-Chair of NASAGA.

Play Learn Perform featured presentations by Dr. Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan, Cathy McNally, Rob Peck, and Brian Remer. The goal was to bring a love of games for learning to this mostly rural section of New England that includes western Massachusetts, southern Vermont, and southwestern New Hampshire.

The conference brought consultants, trainers, mediators, professors, and graduate students together for learning and networking in an informal but energetic setting. “It is essential to meet and talk with other trainers and find out about different styles and aspects of training,” said one participant. “The best thing about PLP was the energy, exchange of ideas, and the great and simple activities,” said another.

In his workshop, Thiagi emphasized that learning is a process, which draws upon not only the trainer’s knowledge but also the learners’ experiences. “Training doesn’t have to be all about what you know,” said a participant. “It’s more about how you convey the information.” The games Thiagi shared demonstrated that balance between his goals and the learning needs of the participants.

Cathy McNally, trainer, comedian, and actress, used improv theater warm-up games to teach about creativity, teambuilding, spontaneity, classism, and cultural sensitivity. Her games were immediately applicable in contexts as varied as teaching, training, mediating, and even interpersonal situations.

Rob Peck used his expertise as a juggler and motivational speaker to challenge and inspire participants in their role as educators. “The best thing about PLP was being around such spontaneous, creative teachers.” said a participant. “I learned about the concepts of flexibility and playfulness and also about specific games.”

Brian Remer brought the day to a close by demonstrating a series of activities for summarizing a workshop. These wrap-up games were designed to help participants review the important points of the day and commit to a plan of action. One participant said, “I’m taking away some concrete ideas for innovative training interventions. It was a very full and helpful experience.”

This was the second successful year for NASAGA and Play Learn Perform in New England. The result has been a growing community of trainers who are enthusiastic about using games to teach. In the words of one participant, “PLP fuels a hothouse environment of creative fun, professional growth, and joyful comradery!”
The Origins ’04 International Games Expo (http://www.originsgames.com) is a game conference sponsored by the Game Manufacturer’s Association (GAMA). It was held at the Columbus (Ohio) Civic Center, June 23-27, 2004.

This is a huge conference. It used a lot of small conference rooms and ballrooms, and three cavernous rooms (each the size of a football field). Two of these large rooms were full of tables for gamers; the other was host to a sales floor with about 225 vendors.

As you might expect, there were a huge number of simultaneous events (more than 100 in certain hours). Events were divided into several categories: special events, CCGs (Collectible Card Games, e.g., Magic the Gathering), LARPs (Live Action Role Plays), Miniatures (including the “Origins War College”), RPGs (Role-Playing Games, e.g., Dungeons & Dragons), Seminars, and Tabletop (board and card games).

I tried many games, and had fun with each, including: Freight Train (an easy-to-learn train game), National Security Decision Making (a LARP, though the organizers perhaps wouldn’t like that label), Hex Hex (a “hate your neighbor” card game), Bridge (the classic), Aquarius (a domino-style card game), Cargo (a strategy board game), Yu Yu Hakusho (a CCG), and others.

I took advantage of the vendor’s area to pick up a bunch of games (not all new, but mostly new to me). So far, my family has enjoyed all the ones we’ve played: Aquarius (Looney Labs), Bang (Mayfair), A Dog’s Life (Euro Games), Early American Chrononauts (Looney Labs), Hex Hex (Smirk & Dagger), Killer Bunnies and the Quest for the Magic Carrot (my high-schoolers’ favorite) (Playroom), Sherlock (Playroom), and Trans America (Rio Grande).

WizKids had huge lines for their click-base miniatures. (These build formulas into the figure’s base in a very clever way). But their Pirates of the Spanish Main was even more popular: it’s a miniature “war-game,” but you first punch your ship out of a plastic sheet and assemble it.

There were a number of party games (ala Cranium or Pictionary), but none appealed to me very much. There were almost no word games, except Palabra (a rummy-style word card game) and Super Scrabble (with a bigger board and quadruple-score tiles). CCGs and RPGs seemed to be the dominant categories.

This was a good conference. Some of the logistics were tricky for a first-timer, and it was too big to have an intimate feel. But I had a lot of fun, and I learned a lot about the breadth of games that are out there. I’d consider attending again next time: June 30-July 3, 2005, in Columbus, Ohio.
**CORNER CORRAL: BELIEVING IN YOURSELF**

**BY ELLEN GEHRKE**

**Ellen:** I have some sad news from the Corner Corral. This past February 29th, Franklin’s physical presence on earth unexpectedly passed away. All the humans, horses, dogs, cats and stuffed toy animals on Rolling Horse Ranch are still devastated about his leaving. In a sense, a very important part of us died with him. I, personally, realized how dependent on Franklin I had become through the years. He served as my teacher and mentor in working with all the horses who came through Rolling Horse Ranch. He helped me train new horses, retrain troubled horses and was always there to welcome new arrivals. I learned much watching him interact with our growing herd of horses—discovering how simply he used his personality to get what he wanted without using aggressive behavior. Other horses hung out with him because they felt safe and enjoyed his company - he rarely threatened them in order to teach them their place in the herd. He wasn’t the number one ranking horse but he was favored by his pals. I can’t say that I am over his passing. However, I am trying to assimilate many of the lessons he directly and indirectly taught me through our 15 years of friendship. At Rolling Horse Ranch and the Corner Corral we were glad to learn that the editors of Simages still suggested that the column “learning and recognizing the try” which originated with Franklin to continue. So, Tonopah, the wild horse who wrote the last column graciously agreed to carry on as best he can. Franklin was unique as is all the spirits around us—yet we learned more from him than most. This column is dedicated to him and to all the great teachers who have passed through, stopped for awhile, and left deep impressions on the wisdom and souls of our lives.

**Lesson: Learning is about believing in yourself**

**Tonapah:** My best pal Franklin, died a few months ago. People ask if horses feel sad. Yes, they do. Ellen knew I was very sad. Franklin and I ate next to each other for years and daily hung out in the pasture basking in the sun, telling old stories, swiping flies from each other with our tails, nudging and scratching at itches, turning our backs to ease the sting of the wind and rain or running up and down the pasture when we felt spirited and good with our tails up and our heads proud. We talked. He helped me understand that Ellen, the human who cared for us, wanted to have a trusting relationship with me— but struggled so hard in learning how to do that. Franklin served as the “translator” between me and my wish to have stayed in the wild, and now Ellen, who worked many hours trying to find a way to make a connection of trust with me. She finally did and for that we are both forever grateful to Franklin for guiding us towards the special relationship we now share. I took Ellen for a ride the other day and talked about what we wanted to say in this next column. We both agreed that we wanted to dedicate it to our teacher, friend and mentor, Franklin. We laughed and cried about the good times and the lessons Franklin taught us. Letting go is probably more difficult for Ellen than me since, as horses, we understand cycles of life in a more natural sense. I know Franklin and I will meet in greener pastures and I am sure he will be there waiting for Ellen and all his friends. Since Franklin passed away I have watched as Ellen worked with a difficult horse. She would often glance over to where Franklin used to be—like she was seeking strength, knowledge and
guidance as to what to do. I saw Ellen lose a lot of her energy and confidence after Franklin died—and that was a big surprise to me. Now that it has been a few months and we were able to talk about this on our ride. I told her to please try to tell you what we realized in our ride that may be of interest to our readers regarding learning and the teachers who have been there for us and may have moved on to other places.

Let me tell you a story that happened within a few weeks after Franklin passed away. Ellen took me to a clinic in Arizona to work with her horse training human mentor. The week went badly, really, really badly. I was uncomfortable and not responding in the way that Ellen had come to expect from our learning adventures. Ellen noticed but didn’t react in the way that would have made a change for the better. She picked up from where we left off, violating her own principles of noticing when trying occurs...and I was trying something other than what she was asking for. Things were different in Arizona—the environment, the circumstances, the other horses, the people attending the clinic, her human mentor and my pasture friend she had also brought along. It frightened me and I reverted back to many of my old defensive ways. Ellen was frustrated and became mad at herself about this seeming lack of progress. To make matters worse, her mentor scolded her for being insensitive to me, very unusual since I had always known him to be a compassionate teacher...but again, the circumstances changed this trip. That just made her feel worse since she really did think she was being aware of me. The week continued poorly. I ran off a few times, refused the saddle she had been putting on me effortlessly, and my body was so tense throughout the week that Ellen decided not to even ride me. Her mentor abandoned her, virtually wrote her off as not being a serious student and not having learned anything in the few years that had associated with each other. Another horse she had brought to work with was also very difficult and acted worried all week. To make matters worse, the people at the clinic blamed Ellen for the troubles. Ellen was devastated. We all went home feeling worse. Ellen had lost two mentors, Franklin and her human mentor, beings she had depended on for strength, guidance and courage. This gouged a huge hole in her confidence and for the past few months she didn’t work well with me or my other horse friends. We have all been worried about her. Our relationship deteriorated and it seemed that the more Ellen tried, the worse it got.

You see, Ellen stopped believing in herself after Franklin died and her human horse mentor failed her. She didn’t understand that her ability, insight, love and capability was all deep inside her all the time and that she didn’t really need external affirmation anymore to apply herself to helping all of us. She forgot to listen and pay attention to all the cues that we were sending out—her relationship with all of us kept getting worse and worse. She forgot the other part of the equation of learning and finding the try...pay attention to the student. We were all screaming to help her but not in the way she thought it ought to be.

She decided to take me to a friend for some help. We drove 8 hours to visit this friend. He had seen me when Ellen first started riding me and had been really impressed with what we had built together. Seeing us again, several months later, his candid comment...was “What did you do with Tonopah, Ellen...? He is acting just like a wild horse again!” Her first reaction was, once again, to blame herself and feel bad...but this friend just laughed at her and reminded her how much she knew and told her to just work at the level where she could get results—not worry about the way it had been and now it wasn’t that way anymore. It wasn’t about her, it was about me, Tonopah.

Epilogue

Something changed in Ellen—she realized that learning is not necessarily a linear progression. We falter at times and have moments of regression. She had experienced this profound regression and feeling of loss and personal power after Franklin died and so had I. We had to meet where we could communicate and that meant a lot of starting over between us. Ellen slowed down and quit rushing me. She gave me more time to process our learning together. She listened again to me and not her evil inner voices. It took her awhile, but her approach to me now is to assess my mood, my willingness to learn and to work from there. Our rhythm is coming back and our rides are fun—working as a team. Some days are good—some days are not—but increasingly often they are better and better. I don’t feel so tense from the pressure. Ellen and I had an awesome ride the other day when it was just the two of us.

Yes, teachers leave us, but, if they are truly our teachers they will leave behind something that we should never lose or doubt—our inner strength, knowledge and ability to carry on in our own way, our own style and with a tribute to those who touched and taught us. I hope Ellen and I can honor the spirit of our friends and mentors, such as Franklin, by continuing on in what they intended—to make their time with us meaningful and special—and leaving us with the confidence to know that we know.
As a NASAGA member you are invited to the September issue of this newsletter. To access this issue point your browser to http://www.thiagi.com/pfp/IE4H/september2004.html

Read, play, and enjoy!

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EXAMPLE: NASAGA MEMBERSHIP

Become a member. You will receive no hassle about having to renew each year. Membership includes full access to the web site, use of the mailing list, and an electronic copy of our newsletter, SIMAGES.

If you would like to become a member, please complete the form at:

http://www.nasaga.org/become_member.asp

If you have any questions concerning memberships, please send an email to:

info@nasaga.org

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PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE

As a NASAGA member you are invited to the September issue of this newsletter. To access this issue point your browser to


Read, play, and enjoy!