### Editorial Board
Judee Blohm, Brian Remer

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Expanding Opportunities for NASAGA Members
By Judee Blohm

The board is happy to announce two new initiatives that will provide members benefits.

We are pleased to have HRDQ sponsor a game design competition. In addition to recognition by NASAGA, submissions will be evaluated for publication by HRDQ. Entries may be submitted by individuals, teams or organizations. The judging will be done by a panel of NASA-GAANS and the publishing team at HRDQ. We hope to be able to announce a first time winner at the 2009 conference in Washington, DC, in October. HRDQ will have first option for publishing any game submitted for the competition for twelve months after the close of the competition, subject to the approval of the submitters.

Do you have a great game that you would like to publish? This may be your big break to get your work in print! Read the competition rules on page 10 and hurry….the first deadline is fast approaching.

A second publishing opportunity will be announced soon. NASAGA is in final negotiation with Wiley to publish a NASAGA book of interactive activities. The book will contain approximately 50 ready-to-use activities spanning a variety of training topics. Each activity will be presented in detail from set-up to debrief. Each must also have two variations to demonstrate how the activity can be adapted to ensure learning is directly connected to instructional objectives and transferable to many situations. Editors, submission template, and timeline will be announced soon. Watch the listserv and check the website for details.

The board also is working toward a slightly different governance structure. We are planning to have a smaller working board with stronger committees developing programs and opportunities. We hope you will watch for new ways to get more involved with NASAGA with doable tasks that tap into your interests and skills, that you can work on from wherever you are, and that will help expand the reach our great organization to the many who would benefit from our mission.

We hope to see you at the conference in Washington, DC, in October. And if not there, at least online some time soon. Or perhaps at our 2010 conference. To learn where it will be, do the puzzle on page 20.

Best wishes for great games, activities, and simulations!

NEEDED: Additional editors for SIMAGES

Each issue has articles, interviews, book or activity reviews, ready-to-use activity, and a puzzle or game.

Love puzzles and games? Be the puzzle editor!

Love to read new training books? Be the book review editor!

Know lots of good trainers? Help us get ready-to-use activities to publish!

We have editorial guidelines and two editors to help you. Contact Judee Blohm at judeeblohm@msn.com or Brian Remer at brain@thefirefly.org.
From the Chair

2008-2009 NASAGA Board

Officers

Chair:
Judee Blohm, chair@nasaga.org; 703.527.0499
Vice chair: Dave Piltz: dpiltz@thelearningkey.com; cell 814.833.0118
Secretary:
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Treasurer (Ex-officio):
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President (conference chair):
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Elected in 2008
Chuck Needlman (re-elected),
Staff Development Specialist;
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Elected in 2006
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rvars@cokecce.com; cell 813.505.6558
Richard Van Eck,
Associate Professor, Graduate Director,
Instructional Design and Technology,
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richard.vaneck@und.edu; 701.777.3574

The board expresses its appreciation to Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan and David Gouthro who left the board during the year.
Games, Activities, and Simulations attracted 115 participants to a great conference in Indianapolis in October 2008. Chaired by Thiagi, the conference had all the usual stimulation and fun, and several new features as well.

A second certificate course was offered: facilitation of games and simulations. Thiagi presented this certificate while Matthew Richter lead the certificate in the design of games and simulations.

The workshops and sessions…all most grand. The variety is fun. It was hard to chose and never did I find a time slot with less than 2 sessions I wanted to attend. The facilitator prep was great, it gave me a sense of confidence. In fact it was at the conference that I found titles for what I do.. I was in limbo on that previously with all the variety in my background. - Sandy Burg

I'm in touch with people I met at the conference (some new attendees and others) and that's one of the things I loved best about the conference: the people, ideas, energy--like finding my tribe…

I also need to share that one of the things I took away from the conference was increased self-confidence--reinforcement of my skills and talents--and great motivation to learn and grow more… I want that to build upon the motivation from the conference. -Elizabeth Erickson

A conference game was introduced. Based on ideas developed at the mid-year board meeting, Dave Blum (Dr. Clue) and Dave Piltz of the Learning Key created a very professional and engaging game that began at the opening reception. A variety of codes were used to obscure statements about learning through games, activities, and simulations. Participants received a coded card and had to find the other three related cards. They then had to decode the particular statement. If they could successful do it, they all received some auction dollars to use later. And they received new cards to start a new round.

The scholarship program was expanded to include first time attendees. Ten awards of conference registration were offered to students and other participants who were attending their first NASAGA conference.

Two creative participants earned discounts on the 2009 conference. Jan Sage won the name tag contest and Kate Koski won the contest to create the theme for the 2009 conference. Her winning theme: Laughter, Liberty and the Pursuit of Learning.

Was the conference successful? This is what several participants said:

“I’ve attended, hosted and participated in many conferences - I found this (NASAGA 2008) to be one of the best I have attended. I thoroughly enjoyed the intimacy, ease of connection, wealth of experiential learning and training tips that I can use. NASAGA delivered a “home-run hit”! I highly recommend the NASAGA conference to any professional wanting to grow in the areas of influence, effective interaction and useful business networking.”
- Cheryl Townsley N.D.

“My overall impression of the conference (NASAGA 2008): it was fabulous! I was looking for a means to expand my creativity within my practice and I couldn’t have had a better opportunity. To be immersed with so many creative, generous, committed individuals was a pure delight. The extent and variety of practical take-aways from this conference exceed any other I have attended in my professional life. This is the first of many NASAGA conferences for me.”
- Faye White
NASAGA Awards
By Chris Saeger

Rising Star Award
The Rising Star Award recognizes a first time presenter who has done an outstanding session at a NASAGA conference. It is based on board members’ feedback to the award committee and is presented at the banquet at the end of the conference.

Michelle Cummings
Michelle is the Big Wheel and founder of Training Wheels. She actively seeks and/or creates new activities to enhance her workshops and to provide new resources for facilitators. Michelle has facilitated a wide variety of programs from therapeutic populations, corporate and school groups, to train the trainer programs for professionals. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Kansas State University and a Master’s degree in Experiential Education from Minnesota State University at Mankato.

Michelle, a first time presenter at NASAGA, facilitated two highly rated sessions -- “A Teachable Moment: Processing the Experience” and “Playing with a Full Deck: Games and Initiatives Using a Deck of Cards” -- earning her the award of Rising Star for 2008.

Ifill-Raynolds Lifetime Achievement Award
The Ifill-Raynolds Award is a memorial award for outstanding contributions to simulation gaming. At its annual conference, NASAGA recognizes one of its members who develops and/or uses simulation games with joy and serious purpose, in the spirit which NASAGA’s friends and colleagues Don Ifill and Gennie Raynolds brought to all their work, and specifically to their work with simulation gaming. Gennie and Don, who died within two months of each other in 1995, were NASAGA’s first active members to die.

The award recipient’s work should respect and make use of the power and spiritual richness within practical settings. In an exemplary way, the work should:

- Foster a sense of community among those who interact with it.
- Deepen understanding of a cultural, organizational, and/or global common good as it provides for interaction with the situation(s) and/or system(s) being modeled.
- Enable active, positive listening by participants to themselves and/or those different from themselves, enhancing their understanding of themselves and others.
- Contribute to strengthening and/or changing an organization's or group's climate and spirit while building a deeper understanding of its purpose.

Pierre Corbeil
Pierre Corbeil, a long-time NASAGA member, holds degrees from the University of Toronto (Canada) and from the Université de Montréal (Québec). After wargaming, historical games, and intercultural games, Pierre became interested in entrepreneurship and has published a collection of games on that subject, Entreprendre par le jeu. He believes games favor invention over classification and defines history as the illusion of reality recreated generation after generation. He also believes that games are a serious business. Retired from teaching, he still plays wargames, and edits games and reviews for Simulation & Gaming journal. For his numerous contributions to the work of NASAGA in advancing the use of simulations and games Pierre received the Ifill-Raynolds Lifetime Achievement Award for 2008.

Past Ifill-Raynolds Award winners can be found on the NASAGA website: http://nasaga.org/webx/about/ifill.wrp
“Laughter, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Learning” is NASAGA’s theme for its 2009 conference in Washington, DC, October 7-10. Chuck Needlman is heading a busy conference committee that has many details in place.

Features of the conference include
- **Two certificate programs**
  - Game Design
  - Game Facilitation
- **Four preconference workshops**
  - Game Design
  - Game Facilitation
  - Facilitating on the Fly
  - Gear Up Your Online Training
- **Over 40 concurrent sessions; 58 presenters**
- **Friday feature: Educator’s Day**
- **Expo and games night**
  - Chance for presenters and sponsors to share their services and products
  - Food and beverages
  - Choice of at least 5 full simulations or learning games
- **Game competition (see page 10)**

Each day will start with a keynote speaker. (see page 7)

**Why attend?**

“Why do I keep coming back to the NASAGA conferences? This is the only conference I know of that professionals are willing to freely share their ideas, insights, and expertise in helping everyone become successful. The sense of sharing and collaboration is un-matched in any conference I have attended. Members are truly committed to learning through doing so that you will leave energized and full of ideas to use in your own setting!”

- Dave Piltz

**How can we help you attend?**

- Take advantage of the early registration fee.
- Get two others from your organization and get a reduced group registration fee.
- Apply for a scholarship or first time incentive award.
- Use a business case template from our webpage to make a case for your boss to send you.

**How can you help NASAGA, whether or not you attend?**

- Publicize the conference and scholarships.
- Encourage your creative colleagues to submit a game to the game contest.
- Sponsor something – put an ad in the conference program for your services or a flyer in the packet; or help sponsor an event. See sponsor opportunities on page 9.
- Send us something for the auction.

Visit the website for many other details.
Keynote Speakers

David Metcalf

Dr. David Metcalf is a senior researcher at the University of Central Florida’s Institute for Simulation and Training. David explores leading edge innovations in learning. Specific areas of focus include: learning business strategy, performance measurement, operational excellence, outsourcing, blended learning, games/sims and mobile learning.

David was formerly the Chief Learning Technologist at RWD Technologies. He joined RWD with the sale of his NASA Kennedy Space Center laboratory spin-off company Merrimac. Prior to spin-off, he was the Lead Multimedia Designer at NASA KSC.

He is the author of several recent works including *Blended eLearning: Integrating Knowledge, Performance Support and Online Learning*, “Operational Excellence” in Elliott Masie’s book *Rants, Raves and Reflections in Learning*, and *mLearning: Mobile Learning and Performance*.

David Metcalf, Ph.D.
Researcher
Institute for Simulation and Training
University of Central Florida
dmetcalf@ist.ucf.edu
407-882-1496

Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan

Thiagi has published 40 books, 120 games and simulations, and more than 200 articles. He wrote the definitive chapters on simulations and games for ISPI’s *Handbook of Human Performance Technology*, ASTD’s *Training & Development Handbook*, and the American Management Association’s *Human Resources Management and Development Handbook*.

Thiagi currently writes a monthly online newsletter, Thiagi GameLetter. This newsletter, now in its fifth year, features Thiagi’s training games and other creative interventions that deliver results quickly and effectively. He served as the editor of NSPI Journal and Performance & Improvement for more than 10 years. He currently edits the simulation/game section in Sage Publication’s journal, *Simulation & Gaming*. He is also a contributing editor of the monthly journal, *Educational Technology*.

Thiagi has made hundreds of presentations and keynote speeches at professional conferences. At ISPI, Thiagi holds the “records” for making the most presentations, conducting the most preconference workshops, and being invited to make the most Encore presentations. Thiagi is also a regular presenter at Lakewood’s TRAINING Conferences, the annual conferences of American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), and North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA).

He has received 17 different awards and Presidential Citations from ISPI, including the society’s highest award, Honorary Life Member. He also received an Honorary
Life Member award from NASAGA as well as its highest award, the Ifill-Raynolds Award.

Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan
The Thiagi Group
thiagi.com
thiagi@thiagi.com
812.332.1478

Gail Heidenhain, president of Delphin, Inc., has been consulting on the people side of the business with multi-national organizations around the world since 1985. She was born in the USA, worked and lived in Germany (23 years) and the UK (1 year). Her life’s work has centered on helping individuals and organizations appreciate and tap into the rich diversity of their people by creating a safe and rich working environment that supports learning and inspires motivation, commitment, creativity and innovation.

While living in Germany, she worked with organizations throughout most of Europe to support them in creating effective global teams, leaders and processes for learning more effectively globally. Gail has been working with companies in the Americas, in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe for over 10 years to develop leaders, effective global teams, an innovative mindset, and the ability to engage with stakeholders effectively. In her partnership with organizations, she is equal parts coach, consultant and facilitator.

Gail studied international business, linguistics, and German at the University of Georgia, Universitaet Muenchen (University of Munich), and the University of Manchester Institute of Technology, and is a certified Master Trainer in Accelerated Learning (IAL and DGSL), an NLP Practitioner, Dialogue-Facilitator (MIT) and was part of the Transformational Coaching Program with Dr. Fred Kofman and Dr. Freeman Dhority from MIT.

Gail is currently board chair and head of the standards committee of the International Alliance for Learning. She has served on the boards of the North American Simulation and Gaming Association, the DGSL (German professional organization for Accelerated Learning), and the Organizational Change Alliance, and was a member of the conference committees of NSCD (National Staff Development Council) and ASTD (American Society of Training and Development).

Would you like to publish?

We are looking for:
- Articles
- Interviews
- Networking Ideas
- Book Reviews
- Resource Reviews
- Ready to Use Games/Techniques (complete delivery plans)
- Puzzles (with answer key for the next issue)

Submit your ideas for these, or other topics, to:
Brian Remer, brian@thefirefly.org, or Judee Blohm, judeeblohm@msn.com
## Sponsorship Opportunities

**NASAGA 41st Annual Conference**

Sponsor conference events and items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Minimal Sponsorship</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Sponsor Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening Night Reception</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
<td>1/4 page ad in program; All 3 below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals and Breaks</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$9,600.00</td>
<td>1. Public acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your company logo in black on conference bags</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>2. Website Acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your company logo in black on back of T-Shirt</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
<td>3. Logo in conference program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game Night/Expo</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$2,500.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote Speaker</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your company name on lanyards</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>Cash donations or payment for specific attendees</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General conference expenses</td>
<td>Any amount</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor NASAGA marketing video</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
<td>All 3 benefits listed above plus your logo on video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce program</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
<td>$1,200.00</td>
<td>Fully funded</td>
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### Marketing Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad in program</td>
<td>one-eighth page: 2 by 1.5 inches</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad in program</td>
<td>one-quarter page: 2.5 by 3.5 inches</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad in program</td>
<td>half page: 5.5 by 4 inches</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad in program</td>
<td>full page: 5 by 8 inches</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer in conference bag</td>
<td>provide 150 copies</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Donations and ads are due by August 15, 2009 in order to be included in the program.
- Donations to the auction are also welcome!
- Some items may have multiple sponsors.
Announcing the inaugural NASAGA/HRDQ Game Design Competition

The organizers of the NASAGA 2009 conference have teamed up with HRDQ to bring you the first-annual NASAGA Game Design Competition. With the goal of encouraging and rewarding innovation in game design and application, the winning entries will be showcased at the annual NASAGA conference in Washington, D.C. October 7-10, 2009. Additionally, all submissions will be considered for commercial publication by HRDQ, a leading publisher of experiential resources for organizational learning.

Rules for Entry and Judging Criteria

Competition Rules

1. This competition is open to members of NASAGA. Entries may be submitted by individuals, teams or organizations.

2. A game is defined as a structured learning activity designed for multiple players, with rules, competition or cooperation, and an outcome or goal that can be measured or scored.

3. Intellectual property rights (copyright) will remain the sole property of the authors.

4. The judging panel will comprise members of NASA-GA selected by the 2009 NASAGA conference organizing committee and the publishing team of HRDQ. The decision of the judging panel is final.

5. HRDQ will have the first option, for 12 months following the close of the competition, to publish any game submitted for this competition, subject to approval of the authors, under the terms of its standard publishing agreements. Any game published by HRDQ resulting from this competition will be co-branded with NASAGA.

6. Designs must be tested prior to submission. Ideally, test the game on a minimum of two independent peer or learning groups, and include in your submission any feedback or comments from this. If possible, have a third-party trainer deliver the game and record the results. Include with your submission the following information:

   • Background for topic and training need.
   • A brief description of the game and the mechanics of play.
   • Game components.
   • Expected learning outcomes.
   • The intended learning audience.
   • Clear and concise instructions for facilitator and participants.

7. The closing date for submissions is August 31, 2009. Please submit entries to nasaga@hrdq.com or mail them to:

   NASAGA Game Competition
   2002 Renaissance Blvd. #100
   King of Prussia, PA 19406

Judging Criteria

The judging panel will reward games where the following characteristics are present:

1. Original:

   The game must be unique, and not derived from an existing or previously published game.

2. Real-World Relevance:

   The game helps participants learn skills and concepts that are applicable to the workplace and the roles in the game relate to easily recognizable real-world counterparts.
3. **Criterion Reference:**

Any scoring system included in the game design rewards achievement of the performance objectives rather than chance occurrences. And mastery of useful skills and knowledge is apparent to the participants.

4. **Effective Instructions:**

Clear and concise instructions are provided for both facilitator and participant.

5. **Ease-of-Use:**

The game can be facilitated out-of-the box by trainers with experience facilitating interactive training.

6. **Time-sensitive:**

A trainer or facilitator of average ability should be able to use the game without having to devote excessive time to preparing the materials or learning the rules.

7. **Appropriate Frame:**

The design uses an appropriate structure for the instructional objectives, participant characteristics, type of learning, and intended use.

8. **Flexible Format:**

The game design permits easy modifications to suit local resources and constraints in terms of schedule, number and type of participants, and physical facilities.

9. **Participant Involvement:**

Participants are actively involved in the training game at all times.

10. **Intellectual Stimulation:**

Participants are engaged in challenging tasks rather than trivial rote memory activities. (It is unlikely that energizers, jolts, icebreakers or other similar methods will achieve this goal).

11. **Effective Packaging:**

Winning designs will be showcased at the NASAGA annual conference. Aesthetics do play a part in helping participants engage with a game. Consider, therefore, game components that are conveniently packaged, attractive and, above all, durable.

HRDQ will apply separate criteria from the competition criteria when evaluating submissions for publishing potential. Of particular interest are designs that:

- Follow an experiential learning methodology such as Kolb’s Learning Cycle.
- Are suitable for play in groups by corporate audiences.
- Develop one or more soft skills such as communication, conflict resolution, influencing skills, or leadership.
- Provide a meaningful learning experience for the participant, and that include appropriate debriefing questions or activities to help reinforce and transfer learning.
- Include comprehensive information for the facilitator including, but not limited to, background on the topic, clearly defined objectives, measurable learning outcomes, and easy-to-follow game-play instructions.

- Draw on new research or a recognized theoretical model.
- Make use of readily available components, and components that are economical to produce in quantity.

Please direct questions to NASAGA at proposals@nasaga.org. Put “game competition” in the subject line.
Learning Tree International received the Outstanding Human Performance Intervention award from ISPI (International Society for Performance Improvement) in 2007. The award was for the company’s newly-developed RealityPlus™ simulation and active learning program. In this SIMAGES article, John Opiola, Product Manager for Learning Tree, discusses the program and its learning benefits.

JM: Learning Tree has been promoting its RealityPlus™ environment and won the ISPI award last year. What is RealityPlus™?

JO: RealityPlus™ is a practical hands-on simulation and case study-based approach to learning. It is organized around adult learning principles. In the courses we use case study simulations to get our participants engaged, especially in our management courses. We have case studies where participants work out realistic scenarios to actively participate in the simulation. The outcomes are based on the participant decisions as opposed to being pre-defined. Authenticity is the key to the whole approach.

JM: Why did Learning Tree create RealityPlus™?

JO: We realized that many of our management titles were too lecture-oriented. Some courses were 75% lecture and 25% activities. Our technology courses are more hands-on and we wanted to make our management courses more hands-on. We understand that adults learn by doing. We also wanted to differentiate our training from the competition and to provide better service to our customers and increase their training ROI. Finally, we wanted to improve our customer experience.

JM: What types of courses use RealityPlus™?

JO: We started with our management curricula. Our first course dealt with identifying user requirements. While we started with our soft skills courses, we are now incorporating RealityPlus™ principles in the technical curricula, too.

JM: What do course participants think of RealityPlus™?

JO: They are enjoying the experience much more! They are having much more fun. The design of the courses gets them involved in activities immediately; and the evaluations tell us that they really like this. The participants find that the simulations really open up the learning channels. Our hope is, and the feedback we have received indicates, that participants are retaining the material longer because they are more open in the classroom.

JM: What do the instructors think of RealityPlus™? Is it more work for them?

JO: There was some initial resistance. The instructors thought RealityPlus™ was not as in-depth or meaty as the old lecture-based scenario. The feeling was that the courses would be weaker.

We actually went through a complete retraining effort for the instructors teaching RealityPlus™. We developed a new train the trainer program for those instructors to help them move from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side.” The new course focuses on coaching and facilitation techniques. It helps the instructors understand the motivation for this simulation-based environment. We also give them experience using the new tools for the courses’ media-rich environment.

What they found when they actually taught the courses was that rather than having to cover fifteen or twenty topics in a three day course, they could focus on five or
six core objectives. This let them get deeper into the core material and spend time implementing those. This deepened the participants’ knowledge of the core topics.

Instructors changed their attitudes from, “This course is not as meaty” to, “You know, the participants are getting a much more thorough understanding of the core principles because they are trying out those principles in the simulations and case studies and having more fun.”

The instructors are finding the courses somewhat harder to teach. There are three reasons for this. First, many instructors find it difficult to be more of a coach and facilitator than a traditional lecturer. Moving the focus from the instructor to the participant has been difficult for some.

Second, because the instructors have to engage and involve the participants more, the simulations are more difficult than the old paper-based exercises some courses used.

Finally, the debriefing sessions require more effort. The RealityPlus™ debriefs are focused on questions like, “How would you apply this at work?” The instructors encourage the participants to think through the implications of the simulations more and that often requires greater effort.

**JM:** What is next for Learning Tree and RealityPlus™?

**JO:** We continue to develop new RealityPlus™ courses in the management curricula. We are also using the principles in new technical courses, too.

Part of our goal is to differentiate our products from our competitors’. We did that and in the process we produced a better product more focused on adult learning styles. We are now carrying what we’ve learned into all of our new course developments.

**Author**

John McDermott, CPLP, is a learning and performance consultant in Angel Fire, NM. As part of his consulting work, he does some teaching and course development for Learning Tree International. John can be reached at jjm@jkintl.com.

**NASAGA Expresses Appreciation to William Wake for His Work as an Editor of SIMAGES for the Past Five Years.**
Tips for Designing and Delivering Training: An Interview with Five Trainers

By Jon Nowick

As a first-time attendee at a NASAGA conference, Jon Nowick of Science Applications International Corporation in Reston, Virginia, found a way to maximize his ROI for the Indianapolis event. By polling colleagues in his organization prior to the conference, he devised a list of questions to guide his learning. Below are excerpts from interviews Jon conducted with five trainers and training activity designers at the conference who were chosen for their expertise in a variety of training techniques.

-Editors

Interactive Games. How much of a several-day course would you devote to interactive games and activities compared to other learning formats? Do you see any limits on the use of such games and activities?

Brian Remer: I would do the whole thing as a game or other interactive activities. Participants won’t get bored if they’re engaged. The exact activity might vary—small groups, large group discussion, use of metaphors leading to discussion, true/false questions shown on PowerPoint, and so forth.

Kate Koski: I might work in some lecture but I would keep it short—no more than 20 minutes—and make even that interactive.

Debbie Newman: I would make 99.9 percent of the course interactive. In my experience, the doing the work is doing the learning. Passive spectators don’t get much. I think lectures that exceed 15-20 minutes offer more opportunities to sleep than to learn. Besides, with so many alternatives available to us, why settle for death-by-PowerPoint?

For example, instead of delivering a presentation myself, for a change of pace, I might invite a subject-matter expert (SME) to meet with me and my learners. In preparation for the SME visit, I might invite learners to work in teams to formulate interview questions about the topic to be addressed.

In a Q&A session, the guest SME can respond to learner questions. Presto! A potentially hypnotic talking-head lecture can be averted in favor of an interactive learning activity where learners share in the responsibility to acquire meaningful information.

Leif Hansen: I’m getting more skeptical about the value of lecture, video, and even books for retentive learning. Presenting or reading content is good for an initial vision of the “upcoming terrain.” If you don’t give people a chance to “go into the valley” and experience the vision you’ve prepared for them, it just fades away. I’d make it as interactive as possible.

And in terms of how much engagement, the traditional model has been to make activities neither too challenging nor too easy to sustain an “optimal level of challenge.” However, I’ve been learning that it’s important to give periods of rest, reflection, and reward for their work; otherwise learners can burn out.

Adapting Training to Learning Styles. To what extent do you vary training techniques depending on the participants’ style of learning? And does the younger generation demand more “entertaining” learning?

Brian Remer: Because I don’t have time to ask or know in advance, I include a variety of activities so there’s something for everyone. Participants value a chance to talk with one another, so I have them share their ideas as a group whether I use a video, tell a story, or use some other format. The key thing to fostering sharing is creating an environment that’s welcoming and relaxed. I generally sit down with them rather than stand in front of them to create learning together.

Leif Hansen: I would change the word entertainment to engagement since entertainment is more top-down teaching than individuals doing the learning. But yes, I think that younger generations are definitely more geared toward high levels of entertainment/stimulation.
I try to dissatisfy everyone equally! Seriously, in all my designs, I attempt to include something that can be broadcast on a variety of learning channels (auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic) and appeals to each of the Myers-Briggs types. Regardless of generation, I think everyone wants to enjoy a learning experience. To me, the best way to engage learners of any age is to create a space where there is little chance of a learner looking foolish, and where there is plenty of appreciation for learner contributions of questions, opinions, and experiences that support the focus of learning.

I use “seduction” to draw in my learners. I typically start with relatively non-threatening inquiries that can be answered with little more than a raised hand or a nod. I then move to activities that engage participation in pairs and triads where participants feel responsible for the success of their learning partners, but aren’t put in a position to risk of public humiliation. It isn’t long before learners are ready to jump in with both feet and engage in higher-risk large group activities.

Much is made about the differences among generations; especially these days with workers from no fewer than four generations in the workplace at the same time. However, in my experience, learners in every generation will reach way outside their comfort zone to learn if they believe there is something of value to be gained, and when they feel appreciated for contributing something of value to the process.

Icebreakers. How important are ice-melters to icebreakers? The “ice” refers to anxiety. I recommend using ice-melters where there’s ice, such as with a group where participants don’t know each other or when the instructor or the content is new. Simple ones are often more effective than complicated ones.

One is the “Common Ground” game where you place a number of chairs or markers to stand on—one for each participant minus one. Create an open space in the middle, where the instructor stands. The teacher starts by saying something (perhaps simple or superficial) about himself/herself, such as “I like chocolate.” Everyone who agrees has to get up and race to find a chair or marker (can’t use immediate right or left). The person who is left without a chair goes to the center and says what he/she likes.

Another good one is the “Back to Back” game. You have everyone stand back to back with one other person. You throw out a question and then interrupt them sometimes so that they can’t finish their answers—that way they will want to seek out classmates later to hear the endings.

Case Studies. Any tips for designing and delivering case studies?

Kate Koski: Have the participants develop a case study, bringing it out of their own experience. It’s more powerful than one that has happened to someone else.

Brian Remer: Keep them short, at least for training in soft skills. One example is my “99 Words” technique of short stories that are springboards...
Interview, continued

for participants to share experiences and see possibilities. Case studies that lead people to one right answer are not as productive.

Debbie Newman: My favorite case studies are those that are robust enough to be used as the spine of an entire curriculum. I had great success in a recent project with a 10-part case study that aligned with a 10-module curriculum. The design was inspired by the game of Clue. At the conclusion of each learning module, an installment of the case study was presented and learners were asked to apply course content as they analyzed the case.

In this particular project, custom jigsaw puzzle pieces were distributed to reward effective critical thinking. Ultimately, the final case study clue was buried in a 768-piece jigsaw puzzle which was to be assembled by the 20 participants over the course of the week-long curriculum.

The case study enabled learners to apply curriculum information and engage in problem-solving. The jigsaw puzzle served as a metaphor for the process by which data is collected and shared.

A debrief of the puzzle assembly process enabled learners to identify effective and not-so-effective interpersonal and data-sharing strategies that exist in their workplace and led to a discussion about how those strategies can be improved.

Debriefing Sessions. When is it necessary to have a debriefing, or process, discussion after a game, and when can a game just speak for itself?

Brian Remer: You always need a debrief. You want to know what people got out of the activity. They maximize learning. Not to have one is a missed opportunity.

Debbie Newman: Sometimes a game can be used to debrief another interactive activity. For example, learners can adapt a TV game or board game and formulate questions and answers that challenge other teams of classmates. Learning is anchored and information is reviewed not only as learners invent their games, but also when the game is actually played.

Level 2 Evaluations. Any tips for using interactive games, techniques, or technologies for a Level 2 evaluation—to determine how well participants understand the skills and knowledge taught?

Debbie Newman: As far as I am concerned, by definition, all games and interactive learning techniques are and can be used as Level 2 evaluations.

Brian Remer: Just get people doing something using material, or giving them perhaps a metaphor, and ask them to reflect what you want them to relate it to. For instance, how is a “chocolate cake” relevant to a “leader?” The aim is to see them make new connections and see new potentials for content.

Games for Creativity. Would you recommend any games for fostering and testing creativity?

Brian Remer: Creativity comes out in solving problems, inventing something new, or putting a new twist on an idea. You can build an activity around any of those things. Examples are activities that use metaphors comparing something to a real-life work situation. You can lay out a series of items—a backscratcher, a can of Spam, a starfish, etc. and then ask participants to compare them to an issue at work, or vice versa.

Kate Koski: You can show cards with pictures and ask participants “how is this picture like…?” It helps un freeze the brain.

Debbie Newman: Give learners source materials and have them design some way (like an original game, skit, art project, etc.) to teach that material to their classmates. In this way, learners focus on key content, and also engage in a creative process of working with others, brainstorming, choosing among a variety of approaches, and discovering ways to manage the creative process to produce timely and effective results for the benefit of their fellow learners.

Leif Hansen: Role playing is effective. Do a future role-playing exercise—it’s a year from now, what did you take from (the class) and what has happened since. Or try “vivid imagining”—take a scenario you want and have them envision it as if they’re already there. Then they learn more about the details and, perhaps, find out that they really didn’t want it.

All forms of improv games and exercises are helpful for stimulating creativity. Examples are games where you set limits, such as having participants go from A to Z and say the first word that comes into their head starting with that letter. Or an improv
game “I like…” where you keep saying sentences about what you like.

Or “We do well…” and have them state what the organization does well at. Or a “yes, and…” game, where each person takes what the previous person said, affirms it, and then expands on it. Try contrasting that last one with a “Yeah, but” round the circle.

Good resources for improv are the book *Improv Wisdom* by Patricia Ryan Madson; the website appliedimprov.org; and improv theaters that have classes open to the public.

**Online Learning.** What types of learning games and activities are most effective for online learning? And when online learning is blended with classroom instruction, are the online activities more effective at the start of a class or after students know one another better?

**Sandy Fritz:** Effective use of eLearning depends on the topic, situation and desired outcome. One of the advantages of eLearning is that it is available to the learner 24/7. We have utilized on-line modules as a pre-requisite(s) to face-time coaching for a number of nursing skills.

Some advantages our learners have found when utilizing the on-line modules is that they are relatively short, are available anytime for a quick review of the full module or just a nugget at the time of need, and are learner-centric, allowing the individual learner to choose what they want/need to review. They also link out to additional resources and documents, sort of a ‘one stop shopping’ learning experience.

The majority of the modules we built this past year are designed to be on-line events only. Some were designed and utilized as pre-requisites for subsequent instructor-led sessions. In yet other cases, we brought the staff together for discussion and then had students go online for the skill-specific details.

How we chose to utilize the on-line modules depends on the outcome we were trying to achieve, budgets, and available resources for instructor-led sessions. We found that a blend is helpful when it’s important for participants to have hands-on experiences, like nurses who must develop patient-care skills.

It’s helpful to vary the type/format of the eLearning questions, using randomized questions when possible, so that each learning experience could bring something new to the learner.

We found it to be particularly useful to develop a single module with multiple levels and multiple uses (branching), when possible, to allow the learner to get what they need without ‘skipping’ over information that just does not apply to them for that topic. We are trying to move away from telling the learner something and instead creating an opportunity for them to have their own topic-specific ‘ah ha’, thus creating a sense of relevance or urgency for completing the training module.
**Turning to One Another**

By Stephen Moles

**Purpose**
This session provides the opportunity for a diverse group of people to talk about important, positive topics from their life experiences. Often this leads to a recognition of similarities among them and can help establish an open, safe, and “connected” environment from which to continue exploring the differences that are also inherent in diversity and cross-cultural training.

The session can be used in an abbreviated form as an icebreaker or introductions exercise.

**Rationale**
This session helps to ensure that both similarities and differences are addressed in such training and that points of commonality are brought forth than can serve as bridges if disharmony later occurs.

**Target Audience**
Groups of people embarking on diversity or cross-cultural training who are unfamiliar with each other and/or who know each other only in a superficial context (work, school conferences, etc).

The exercise has been successfully run as a part of a Peace Corps counterpart conference in which the Volunteers and the counterparts get to know each other better.

**Duration**
30-60 minutes (depending on size of group and depth/content level of debriefing)

**Objectives**
By the end of this session participants will
1. identify two unexpected ways in which they are similar to other members of the group.
2. list three benefits of deep listening.

**Facilitators Expertise and Preparation**
- Know about various cultural values and how they might manifest differently across cultures.
- Ability to model deep listening.
- Preferably, read the book *Turning to One Another* by Margaret Wheatley (if available). Or take a look at the web site www.margaretwheatley.com and at her many articles and speeches.

**Materials**
Prepared flip chart with four points as noted in the introduction below.

**Methodology**

I. Introduction of concepts and activity (10 minutes)

Step 1: Explain

We are about to engage in an exercise that emphasizes listening deeply to each other’s stories. In her book *Turning to One Another*, Meg Wheatley (former Peace Corps Volunteer and now a world-renowned management expert) focuses on the power of positive stories and the connectedness that can result. In her books she outlines several principles that help.

- We acknowledge one another as people – as equals.
- We try to stay curious about each other (no matter how well we THINK we know each other).
- We recognize that we need each others’ help to become better listeners – and that we all benefit from this.
- We purposefully slow down so that we have time to think and reflect.
Step 2: Provide instructions for thinking of a story.

1. The exercise we will do is structured in keeping with these principles.
2. We will all tell a story about the same topic: a story about a time in your childhood when you learned a value that you still hold dear.
3. Take a minute and think about a story that happened to you and be prepared to tell the rest of the group the story in about 2 minutes.
4. If people need further clarification be prepared to tell a short story of your own as an example. (Be cautious that if you tell your story others may mimic it or choose one very like it from their own childhood.)
5. Give them a minute to think. Then ask, “Does everyone have a story in mind?”

Step 3: Give instructions for group work.

1. Explain that they will form groups in a minute.
2. Once in a group, one person will tell their story. All the others in the circle listen silently while keeping in mind the principles that we have up on the chart.
3. When that person is done with their story, allow for a few seconds of silence without any comment. Just take that time to think about the story you just heard.
4. Then the next person will tell their story. Continue in this manner, with no comments and with silence between each speaker, until each person has had a chance to tell their story. (Experience has shown that using this technique allows for people to slow down and listen more deeply. At no time is any person to comment upon another person’s story).

II. Small group storytelling (15-20 minutes)

Step 1: Form small groups of 4-6 people.
Step 2: Each person tells their story, going around the circle and with no comments from others.

III. Debriefing (10-20 minutes)

Step 1: Bring everyone back together.
Step 2: Use these questions as discussion prompts.

1. Did you notice any themes in the stories?
2. What were the values that were illustrated by the stories?
3. Could these stories have happened anywhere?
4. Are the values illustrated unique to any one culture or people? (The answer is most often no.)
5. Did you find unexpected areas of commonality with others by doing this exercise?
6. What insights or lessons would you like to take away from this exercise? (If this is an introductory exercise you might want to post these insights and refer back to them at a later point in the training or possibly include the insights as a part of the norms for the group.)

References


http://www.margaretwheatley.com/

Notes
Variation: Instead of asking people for a story from their childhood you could ask people to share a proverb from their culture, what it means to them and how they try to apply it in their everyday lives.

After running this exercise in an inter-religious workshops one participant exclaimed, “We all had the same grandmother!” even though the people present represented at least six nationalities and four different religious traditions.

About the submitter:
Stephen Moles works with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as the Competency Program Manager. Stephen has 15 years of experience in training and performance improvement within multicultural nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies. His areas of emphasis have included cross-cultural training, organization development, and competency programs. At Peace Corps, Stephen was the cross-cultural specialist and also led the agency’s competency modeling project.
Spelling Quiz

By Judee Blohm

Each word has a spelling error: an incorrect letter, an extra letter, or is missing a letter. Identify the mistake in each and list either the letter changed (original or replacement), eliminated or added in chart.

Then use all of those letters to identify where the NASAGA 2010 conference will be held and who will host the conference. Blanks help you know how many letters in each.

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Answer to last issue’s drop letter puzzle:

When is a game not a game? When it’s GASN NASAGA conf Oct ’08 Indy.