**Tips on Dealing with Different Participant Personalities**

A successful trainer needs to understand how to deal with the various types of trainees that might be encountered. Some will need to be encouraged to become more involved in discussion, while others are far too involved.

**Quiet Trainee**

In [Chapter 6](http://online.vitalsource.com/books/0558582478/content/id/ch06), we discussed methods for encouraging quiet trainees to become more involved (small group discussions, writing their answers first), and these approaches are usually successful. What if they do not work? If there are several small groups for discussion sessions, one way to encourage the quiet trainee is to ask each group to rotate the person who is responsible for reporting back to the larger group. The quiet trainee will then take a turn reporting to the larger group, thus increasing his participation. However, too much pressure to become involved is not a good idea. If a quiet person is speaking up during the small group sessions, he is providing input. Do not attempt to get these trainees to participate at a level equal to others if they are not so inclined. Doing so can create too much tension in the environment. If all these methods are tried with little change in the quiet trainee’s behavior, do not push any further. Further attempts will only create barriers to the trainee’s learning.

## Talkative Trainee

The talkative trainee is usually far more of a problem than the quiet one. No matter what question is asked, this trainee wants to answer. Usually the answer involves a long story, and soon other trainees are rolling their eyes and tuning out. The trainer loses the trainees’ attention, and valuable training time is wasted on irrelevant stories. It is important to tone down that trainee’s input but not embarrass anyone. One approach is to ask others for their opinion. Say something like “We have been making Lex do all the work here so far—how about someone else responding?” Or use the direct questioning technique to get the focus away from the talkative trainee. It may be helpful to speak to the talkative trainee in private, suggesting that her comments are appreciated, but there is a concern that others are not participating as much as they should. In this context, asking the talkative trainee to hold back on participation usually works.

## Angry Trainee

Some trainees who come to training simply do not want to be there. They set out to ruin the session for everyone. Such trainees must be dealt with early on before they disrupt the class. One of the authors was training line workers in team concepts, and although the union executive and most union members were supportive of the training, some were violently opposed. In the first session, one of these trainees said, “I really do not want to be here; this training is management propaganda designed to weaken the union.” The author’s response was “I have heard that said before; how do others feel about the training?” At that point, a number of others indicated support for the training, and although the angry trainee did not participate much in the rest of the training, he did not disrupt it either.

If in such a situation most trainees felt the same way, it would be wise to spend some time discussing the issue because such an attitude will certainly affect training. The important point is to focus on how training can benefit them. One way to accomplish this task is to ask trainees to identify ways they would be able to use the training.

## The Comedian

These trainees are a gift and a curse. They are a gift because when their jokes work, and if they are not put forth too often, they will do wonders to set a positive tone. Laughter is good medicine, and a comedian is able to provide it. The potential curse is in the nature and frequency of the jokes. Some jokes are clearly out of place. In other cases, it is difficult to know what is offensive. However, it is not productive for even a small number of trainees to feel that a particular joke was offensive. Also, if the comedians do get a lot of laughs, they are likely to continue to joke around. This behavior can disrupt the timing of the sessions and put the trainer behind.

What to do? If the joking gets out of hand or some jokes are inappropriate, you can talk with the comedian at a break. Indicate a concern that some of the humor is offensive to some of the other trainees or is distracting from the focus of training. In taking this approach, you need to indicate appreciation of the comedian’s intention to contribute to the training, but reach an agreement about how often the jokes can be offered and what types of jokes are acceptable. This conversation should be enough to curb such behavior. Sometimes the comedian’s jokes are directed at the trainer. In these cases, the trainer must have a tough skin and be willing to laugh without taking it personally. This reaction will defuse any tension that may have been created, reduce the amount of distraction, and show that the trainer is not “too full of herself.” It is only when the jokes become distracting or offensive that action needs to be taken.

## Dry Run

In the training model, the process component of the implementation phase contains two important steps that should be completed before training is ready for general use:[22](http://online.vitalsource.com/books/0558582478/content/id/ch08bib22) the dry run and the pilot program. The former is a rehearsal of the training program to test out new material, work out delivery issues, and firm up the timing of different segments. In some situations, the training package might not need to be presented in its entirety. The pilot program is the first full-blown presentation of the training using finished materials.

The [**dry run**](http://online.vitalsource.com/books/0558582478/content/id/gloss71) is not designed to actually train participants who assume the role of trainees. Instead, it is designed to determine the value and clarity of the various pieces of the training program, identify and correct any delivery problems, work through timing issues and otherwise make sure that the training is ready for delivery. The dry run provides a controlled setting in which these issues can be discussed and resolved. In general, the dry run will take much longer than the actual training, so enough time should be set aside to not only deliver the material but also make necessary adjustments. To this end, it is necessary to get as many key perspectives as possible to view the training. The trainer should be the person(s) who will actually deliver the training. For a really effective dry run, use some potential trainees but choose them carefully; consider their diverse backgrounds, their general supportiveness of the value of training, and their willingness to provide feedback. More seasoned employees will be able to help evaluate the transferability of the training back to the job. Include some content experts who can provide feedback on the validity of the material and its usage. Some members of the training design and development team should also participate in the dry run, assuming the role of trainees or observers. They can provide feedback as to how well the various pieces of the design fit together.

The dry run might not require that all the training modules in the program be tested. If a previously used specific exercise, case, or role-play has been used with a similar target population, the dry run for this exercise might simply involve the participants reading through the exercise and providing feedback as to its relevance. However, you should make sure that the exercise or activity has enough history to provide you with an accurate estimate of the time it will take during an actual training session. Newly developed or occasionally used exercises and activities require the dry run participants to go through the full process, providing feedback after it is completed.

It is important to ask participants and observers a list of questions after each exercise or module that is tested. For example, after participants complete a role-play, you ask the following:

* •Is the situation realistic for this organization? If it is not, future trainees might dismiss the training as being irrelevant.
* •Is the information and direction for the exercise clear enough for trainees to do the exercise?
* •Is the time allocation too long or too short?

After the dry run is completed, examine the feedback carefully, and revise the training where applicable. Then it is time for the pilot program.

**Pilot Program**

The [**pilot program**](http://online.vitalsource.com/books/0558582478/content/id/gloss190) is different from the dry run in that trainees are there to be trained. It will be a full-fledged training program. The dry run refines the training to eliminate any major glitches. In the pilot program, trainees are again chosen carefully, as you want people who are generally supportive of training and who are not likely to be disruptive. Trainees will spread the word about training to others in the organization quickly. That word should be as positive as possible so that when new trainees come into the program, they bring positive expectations. The pilot program will provide additional input to further refine the training (if necessary), and disruptions are not conducive to this process. To evaluate how the training comes across to different groups, it is desirable to have a good cross section of those who will be in the later training sessions.

The main goals of the pilot program are as follows:

* •To provide the trainees with the relevant training
* •To assess further the timing and relevance of modules and various training components
* •To determine the appropriateness, clarity, and flow of material

The pilot program provides valuable responses and viewpoints that are inserted in the trainer’s manual. These inputs will help guide new trainers in what to expect. Another use of the pilot program is to provide an opportunity for future trainers to attend the training and experience what takes place firsthand. Finally, the pilot program will provide valuable feedback to designers regarding the effectiveness of the training.

After the pilot program, any revisions are documented in the training plan and trainer’s manual and implemented in future training sessions. If new material or activities are added, these should be perfected in a dry run. Thus it is possible that a training program might have a dry run, followed by a pilot program, followed by another dry run that would be followed by the actual training. One final note: Although a dry run and a pilot program will help improve the program, evaluation and appropriate revisions should not stop here. Training evaluation goes on continuously. The primary objective of training is the transfer of the training to the job to positively affect organizational results. Training should continue to be modified until desirable outcomes can be reliably achieved.