



## Reconsider What Training Means...

by

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As a professional speaker and expert on presentation skills and a former engineer of 28 years, I have been working with an organizations to specifically train their engineering subject matter experts (SMEs) who have been asked to deliver some engineering support continuing training to an entire engineering's organization as part of an on-going engineering continuing training program. Previously the SMEs DID NOT have any specific presentation skills coaching and the organization assumed that being experts on their topics was enough. The review of the feedback forms consistently indicated that although the presenters knew their topics, as instructors they were lacking the skills to make the training an enjoyable experience.

Taking this feedback the company hired me to work with their SMEs which were hand selected for their expertise and provide them a train-the-trainer session PLUS a few additional follow up video coached sessions to hone their presentation skills. Since these SME's were required to give their presentations about 10 times over a 5 week period (2 sessions each week) I was also asked to be present in each of their sessions and provided continual feedback on their presentations after each session.

The results after these sessions were nothing less than remarkable. The feedback forms indicated that these presenters were very well prepared, enjoyable to listen to and the learning was actual fun and not boring as has been in the past. In fact, the feedback was so overwhelmingly positive this approach will be used for each of their future quarterly continuing engineering training sessions.

I had worked with these individuals on several areas such as: content, structure, use of visual aids, how to include audience participation, how to facilitate group activities and also how to use personal stories and interject the use of natural humor.

The bottom line result was the learning was not only more enjoyable but the attendees did better on their tests and exercises which were provided as part of this training. Isn't this the goal to improve learning?

As instructors and faculty, our MAIN responsibility is to the STUDENT and we should do everything to provide the best training to them so they can learn. Being a subject matter expert in NO WAY guarantees that you will be a good presenter or teacher. We have not done our jobs until learning has taken place. Having attended college and having several degrees, I know first hand that many of my professors shared the view that they did not have to be good presenters and they only needed to dispense information. As instructors we need to be LEARNER ORIENTED instructors and improve what skills we have to improve the learning process for our students.

I think there should be a TRAIN-THE-FACULTY program. Why not, wouldn't they improve the quality of the teaching and learning? Is that not our bottom line goal? This is great example how one very large engineering company made a

commitment to improve their SME instructors  
based on feedback from past sessions.

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