

# Training: Making It Interesting

By  
**Richard Hawk**

*Without examples, ideas often seem vague, impersonal and lifeless. With examples, ideas become specific, personal and lively.*

It is the constant challenge of any trainer to be interesting. Particularly in the field of safety, in which many topics are technical and often well-known by those being trained. For the audience to leave with new-found knowledge or some tool they can take back to the job, the speaker must engage them in the topic. While there are many ways to accomplish this, as with most professions, certain best practices will achieve better results.

What exactly is a best practice? Best can be defined as most productive; and practice can be defined as actual performance or application. A best practice, then, is the most productive application. Let's explore the most productive applications you can use to train people.

What is the best way to get adults to learn and be inspired enough to change their behavior? Having worked with dozens of companies and given thousands of training sessions and talks, I've found three practices to be some of the most productive: Getting the audience involved; using less text and more pictures and examples; and experimenting.


## Get People Involved

People can quickly lose interest when someone else is talking. Even when they are paying attention, people tend to remember little of the information given in lectures. Attendees at a psychological society meeting in England were asked two weeks after the meeting to write down what they recalled. Of the points actually covered in the speeches, attendees remembered an average of only 8.4 percent; 42 percent of what they said they remembered was incorrect—much of it was not even covered during the meeting.

Lecture-style presentations have been shown to be nearly six-times less effective than presentations that include audience participation. If you want trainees to remember the topic, you must get them involved.

There are many other reasons to involve the audience as much as possible. People are more likely to be supportive of something they feel a part of, and it demonstrates your professionalism in taking the time to plan strategies to reach and involve the group. Following are some effective ways to involve adult learners in training.

## SPOTLIGHT Best Practices

 The OSHA 30 Hour Construction Trainer



help create interactive discussions with participants. CDs can be used to provide 10- and 30-hour OSHA training, or as topics for safety talks and employee training. Titles include *Construction 30-Hour Trainer, General Industry 30-Hour Trainer, Residential Construction 10-Hour Trainer, Spanish Construction 10-Hour Trainer, Excavation Competent Person Trainer* and *Scaffold Competent Person Trainer*. Circle 30 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).

### Safety Training PowerPoints Prosafe Solutions Inc.

offers safety training PowerPoint presentations on CD. Each presentation uses real-world photos and graphics. Photos help students learn through visualization, and



management options. Online programs help reduce accidents and injuries, and reduce training costs, while automated recordkeeping improves training management and accountability. A complimentary featured course and guided tour are available as well.

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### Online Safety Training

**PureSafety** offers more than 250 Internet-based SH&E courses and risk management solutions with customizable delivery and

### Crawler Excavator Kit

**Vista Training Inc.** introduces its crawler excavator kit, which provides professional excavator training. Kit contains CD-ROM with 12 modules and additional materials needed to conduct training. Topics include safety and warning symbols; prestart procedures; starting procedures; after starting checks; operation and safety; engine shutdown; load securement and tie-down; and preventive maintenance. User can view, display via projector or print transparencies.

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**Set up a competition.** This an effective way to review a well-known topic or to cover new material. Several software programs can perform much of the setup work. A few years ago, I worked with a firm to present its annual safety and health refresher course, which covered many standard safety topics such as respiratory protection and lockout/tagout. We created a "Safety Olympics" that included no lecture-type training—every topic involved a competition between teams. Not only was it fun for participants, the common response from attendees was how surprised they were about how much they learned.

But safety is a serious topic. Some may ask whether it is appropriate to use games and other "fun" methods to train employees. Of course, in some cases, it would be inappropriate to use games, such as following a serious accident or fatality. But most of the time, it is a great way to teach and reinforce a safety topic.

When using competition, keep three things in mind:

1) The competition should mostly revolve around the topic at hand. You can add a few humorous questions not related to the topic, but that should be the exception, not the rule.

2) Don't make it too easy. The most successful training games are the ones that force the teams to think deeply about the topic or do some research to find the correct answer. Having teams try to be the first to find a specific point in a confined space procedure, then describe why it is a vital step is an example of a productive competition.

3) Explain the purpose up front. Describe the skill set the teams are learning or reviewing, and why. When adults realize the benefit of a competition, they are much less likely to think of it as a waste of time or "just play."

**Use stories, questions and comments from students.** Safety is a personal topic. Staying safe is one of our strongest natural desires. That is why including personal stories and comments from students is effective. Have the class write brief anonymous accounts related to the topic on a large index card. Then collect the cards and read the responses throughout the session. It's an easy way to get the audience involved without putting anyone on the spot.

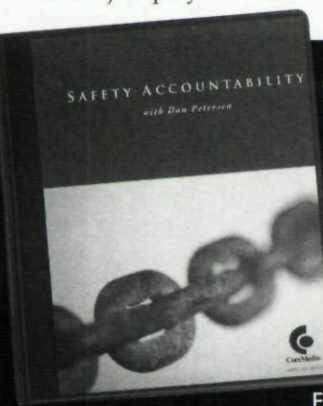
**Use props and objects.** Give each participant a small bolt before they sit down; immediately, they become involved. I use this practice often and have yet to see it fail. It can be any object, as long as you use it as part of the discussion, it will have a positive impact on the audience. It works best when the object does not easily connect with the topic.

For example, during a session on bloodborne pathogens, the trainer handed out a small rubber worm to each attendee, and displayed a fishing pole and tackle box at the front of the room. At first, there is no logical connection between the topic and the props. However, she explained that "like fishing, we are going to learn what it takes to catch and not to catch something." Students can't help but get involved when you turn a subject into a fun group activity.



*Nothing tires a student's mind more than watching one slide of text after another while listening to someone read each one.*

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## Safety Accountability

**CoreMedia Training Solutions' Safety Accountability** program helps a firm establish a system of accountability and focus on current behaviors, rather than dated statistics. Web-based survey provides a concise scorecard across five proven measurements on where to improve and how to transform. Program includes a three-video series, lesson plan, PowerPoint presentation and a set of companion workbooks. Free preview is available.

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## Driver Safety

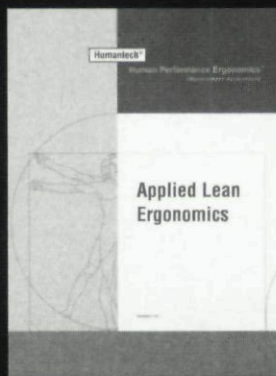
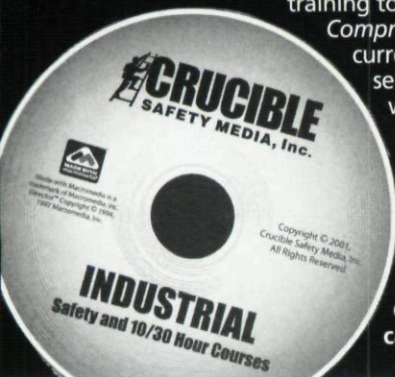
**Advanced Driver Training Services Inc.** has launched a web-based driver safety testing application designed to help companies keep business drivers safer and reduce vehicle crash rate. Package combines bimonthly *OnRoads* driver safety magazine with online testing to allow a firm to test drivers on safety concepts, measure retention and reduce liability exposure. Circle 35 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).



## Training Tools

**Crucible Safety Media Inc.** introduces two multimedia safety training tools—*Industrial* and *Construction Comprehensive*, each filled with current safety information. User selects the course material s/he wants from more than 2,100 high-quality color slides, and can customize the presentation quickly with user's own images and text. Product provides a complete program with thousands of graphics, images and the full OSHA regulations.

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## Human Performance Ergonomics

**Humantech's** new *Applied Lean Ergonomics* training program helps quickly identify lean and ergonomics issues at the workstation level. Program uses hands-on tools and methods to allow user to discover and eliminate hidden waste by involving the operator, increase

quality and efficiency, and ensure a healthy workforce. Circle 36 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).

# Best Practices

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**Design something useful.** This best practice can have two benefits. First, the audience will be involved in the topic; second, you'll get a product out of it. Do you have a roomful of mechanics who already know most of what you're covering on electrical safety? Have them put together a new employee handout on what to watch out for when working with electricity. Or have students revise a procedure. Even new employees can help. Get feedback from attendees on ways to make the new employee indoctrination course more effective.

## Use Less Text, More Pictures & Examples

Though slides can be helpful, they can also distract from your purpose—especially if they are mostly text. Nothing tires a student's mind more than watching one slide of text after another while listening to someone read each one.

Trainers can learn much from the marketing moguls. They get us to buy with power because they know what touches us emotionally: pictures and examples. With digital cameras you can transport almost any tank, pipe, employee or after-

math of a fire into the classroom. We believe what we see; sight is the most believed sense. Use it to your advantage.

I like to use 3-D pictures with clear backgrounds. Inexpensive clip-art packages are available that include several thousand images.

Often, a trainer will use slides as a reminder for what is next in the presentation. You can still use images to do that. When reviewing your notes before class, use the image as a prompt then too. By using more images and less text, you'll also spend more time looking and interacting with the audience, which is always a good thing.

**Use examples.** Norman Vincent Peale, who has been heard by millions on radio, once said that his favorite form of supporting material in a talk is the example or illustration. In an interview with *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Peale says, "The true example is the finest method I know of to make an idea clear, interesting and persuasive. Usually, I use several examples to support each major point."

The richly textured example supplies everyday details that bring the example to life. If using a real-life accident as an example, include details such as what the area looked like, sounds that were heard, what people may have been thinking about, and as many details as possible to help the audience imagine the experience.

Remember, the more vivid your examples—brief or extended—the more impact they will likely have on the audi-

ence. Vivid, concrete examples have more impact on listener beliefs and actions than any other kind of supporting material. Without examples, ideas often seem vague, impersonal and lifeless. With examples, ideas become specific, personal and lively. Several kinds of examples can be used in training sessions, such as a personal account of an accident, ways that a tool has prevented accidents or an ingenious way someone has developed to overcome hazards.

## Experiment

Try new things. Yes, this is a best practice—perhaps the best one of all. If you've been a safety trainer for any length of time, you know what a challenge it can be to keep it fresh and exciting. Safety training has a reputation for being boring. It has nothing to do with the topic—safety is an important subject, one that involves our survival and quality of life. It's the lack of variety that can make it stale. That's why you need to try new things.

Don't limit yourself to standing in front of the room and reading one slide after another. Use your imagination. If you do, who knows how many "most productive applications" you'll create.

*Richard Hawk is a speaker, author, trainer and consultant. He is an expert on reducing accidents by making safety fun. For more ideas on how to spice up your safety program, visit [www.makesafetyfun.com](http://www.makesafetyfun.com).*

**Beacon Mutual Insurance Co.** Online University

Welcome to The Beacon Mutual Insurance Company's Online University

The Beacon Mutual Insurance Company has partnered with FirstNet Learning to create a unique online learning solution for Beacon organizations. This course is provided as an additional offering of our services to our customers to help them and their employees stay safe and healthy. This course is available to all Beacon Mutual Insurance Co. customers who are currently active in our training programs. This course is available to all Beacon Mutual Insurance Co. customers who are currently active in our training programs.

What does the online training cost?  
Beacon Mutual Insurance Co. offers this course to you and your employees free.

Are there any costs to me the policyholder?  
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The following courses are currently available to you:

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- Defensive Driving - 6th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 7th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 8th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 9th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 10th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 11th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 12th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 13th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 14th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 15th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 16th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 17th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 18th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 19th Edition
- Defensive Driving - 20th Edition

Need More Information?  
To speak with a Loss Prevention Consultant about Beacon Mutual Insurance Company's Online University please call:

Dave Cookton  
phone: (401) 625-2728  
email: [dcookton@beaconmutual.com](mailto:dcookton@beaconmutual.com)  
You may also call 781.532.1187 or send email to [ed@beaconmutual.com](mailto:ed@beaconmutual.com)

## Customized Training

**FirstNet Learning** offers online training solutions in occupational safety and health, homeland security and human capital management to help manage risk, reduce injuries and minimize losses. Designed to simplify training development, implementation, delivery and administration, the firm's Knowledge@Work online training centers are customized and branded with a customer's logo and colors to provide an "online university" that costs less than a typical learning management system. **Circle 37 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).**

## Training Techniques

**MakeSafetyFun.com** has published *Spice It Up!*, a guidebook that offers 52 tips for making safety meetings successful. Readers will learn how to capture the audience's attention and get attendees involved, and make the meeting memorable. **Circle 38 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).**

## Defensive Driving Comprehensive Loss Management Inc.

has released a new defensive driving program, *Defensive Driving: I Could See It Coming*, with versions for autos, cargo vans and step vans. Program addresses specific handling skills required for safely operating these vehicles. Program includes video, instructor guide and PowerPoint presentation. **Circle 39 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).**

## Ladder Safety

**Summit Training Source Inc.** has released its *Ladder Safety* training program that focuses on preventing slips and falls from a ladder. Program uses 3-D animation and live, on-site video to grab viewers' attention and improve awareness. Topics include ladder selection, proper setup, safe use, and care and maintenance. **Circle 40 on reader service card or [www.psads.info](http://www.psads.info).**

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