

## Play the Game – Why playing games is important for learning

When people label a task as 'work' do they find the task more onerous than when they label the same task as 'play'? It would appear that they do. So how does that effect training. As trainers we want people to learn new skills and retain that knowledge.

Games can be used to provide powerful metaphors for what happens in the workplace. They are fun, can be competitive, and have a beginning, middle and an end. As children we learnt through playing games. Why should that change as an adult?

So much training is designed around listening and watching, both fairly passive activities. But the most powerful training involves all the senses and learning styles, allowing participants to absorb new information in a variety of ways, through sight, hearing and doing; through both active and reflective learning styles. This in turn promotes understanding and retention.

Imagine your workforce engaged in learning where they are full immersed in the subject. The more fully engaged they are the more memorable the training will become. So why do games work so well?

- Learning can be accelerated when playing a game. A large body of knowledge can be absorbed in a new and exciting way.
- Participants can make mistakes in a safe environment and learn from their mistakes for the future. Feedback is quick and simple to understand rather than slow and unclear.
- Playing games can often promote strong bonds between players and therefore they work well for developing teams and groups who need to work well together.
- Games can often be used to reduce the fear of learning that some participants can feel.
- They promote interaction between people and provide an opportunity for a hands on development rather than the remote training provided by e-learning and other remote learning tools.

Continuous Investment in training and development is essential for maintaining and improving performance in organisations. Something like 75% of most training is forgotten in a few weeks. So if games can provide a longer learning lifetime then they are better value for money.

By making learning fun we find that participants are far more likely to 1. get involved; 2. stay involved; 3. be open to the learning points; 4. retain the new knowledge gained longer.

If you would like us to bring some fun to your training, come and talk to us now.

Berry Winter

