My Little Black Book

of

Trainer Secrets

How to Train Any Audience on Any Topic
Dear Friend and Colleague,

This special report is going to show you how you can influence any group or prospective client and engage them to listen, interact, and build rapport with you as someone they can trust and pay for your services again and again.

The ease of getting a training qualification as well as the explosion of information products and out there has meant all freelance and contract trainers have to work extra hard to get noticed, to get work and to make a difference.

You probably got into this line of work because you were good at your job, or you saw it as a way to make a difference to organisations. Maybe you wanted the lifestyle top trainers get working 6 months of the year on a 6-figure salary.

But being good at your job sometimes doesn't transfer to the people in your training room, and/or the organisation just doesn't get it and the change doesn't stick. Or maybe you find the work comes in either feast or famine fashion - and training any audience on any topic will do as long as it’s work, right?

But there is more to it, and, as you read on, you’ll discover what top trainers do to stand out from the crowd.

And if you become a top-tier trainer you get access to amazing opportunities to work with innovative companies, inspired leaders, and creative people all around the world.

Now that’s living the Adventures of a Corporate Trainer.

To your Success

Peter A. Smith

Work Smart. Do Good. Live Great.
The Truth Shall Set You Free...

Let's face it; we are only as good as our last gig. Training budgets are shrinking, that old flip chart or power point circa 1998 won't cut it anymore, and 'entertainment' just isn't sustainable in a world that wants authenticity.

Sharing trade secrets like I do on my site means saying it like it is. Training and facilitation and coaching is part art, part science, it's no bullshit. And we have to constantly work at it. Every. Single. Time. We. Work.

It's a craft and it demands integrity in our actions. Your character shows up in every interaction and that is what clients are buying from you. That means what you say, and how you say it has everything to do with your bottom line.

Are you a Top-Tier Trainer, or are you scraping the barrel for more work?

If you're like a lot of trainers out there, you get by, take the work you can, and make a decent living. As I said before though; you're only as good as your last gig.

I want to ask if you've experienced any of these things.

- Have you ever felt out of your depth in a training room, like you didn't know what to do next?
- Have you ever run out of training material before you've run out of time?
- Perhaps your training has started and five minutes in you realise what you had planned isn't going to fly with the crowd of people before you.
Have you ever been put on the spot to come up with some material, or had a client ask to see you ‘think on your feet’.

Or worse, have you ever stood in front of a group and got a feeling they don’t know why they are there.

When this has happened to me my heart seems to push out with each beat and a little bead of sweat slowly forms, then rolls down my lower back?

When it happens it dints my confidence, loses me credibility and its taken years to get better at dealing with.

If you can relate to some, or all, of these things, I have good news for you. In this report, and all the other training resources on the site, you’re going to discover how to overcome all these challenges.

That's why I created The Adventures of a Corporate Trainer. This is for you. I would have loved a site like this when I was starting out.

**Work Smart. Do Good. Live Great.**

Now, my clients know they can put me in front of anyone – from C suite executives in accounting firms in the city to frontline staff in factories in the suburbs.

**Your clients need to know they can put you in front of any audience and deal with anything that comes up.**

Whether you are a contract trainer, an associate, or in an L&D role **flexibility, and thinking on your feet, is a pretty important skill to have.**

There are too many trainers out there who have received minimal education in how to conduct adult education and are up against you for key jobs. You could be losing work to someone who has way less skill or experience than you.

Worse still, your income can suffer if you are not able to improvise and work with what comes up in the room because you will not get invited back if you can't handle diversity and be flexible.

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So in this report you will learn how to become indispensable, engaging, flexible, reliable, and get hired again and again. There are a few tricks to getting good at this.

1. What it means to be a training consultant.
2. Thinking on your feet
3. The Four-Step Questioning Process
4. Naming the Elephant in the Room
5. Story Telling
6. Transfer of Training

Putting on the Consultant’s Hat

Many years ago when I first started in this industry, I'll never forget the feeling of going in to one of the big banks for a presentation interview. I was asked to facilitate a 30-minute session of my choosing to a group of 5 or 6 members of the learning and development team as a way for them to evaluate my skills as a trainer.

I was shitting myself, to be honest. It was a great role, responsible for a national culture change program across the whole company, with a big fat salary to boot.

5 minutes in and I floundered. One woman, the thought leader behind the program, was sitting in the corner of the large mahogany conference table and didn’t respond to my questions, or even look up as I began my presentation.

It unnerved me. Actually, it pissed me off. How dare she keep reading material unrelated to my presentation and taking notes, as though she was just sitting there because they ran out of desk space down in the office.

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As you could imagine, feeling the way I did, the whole session didn’t go so well. I didn’t get the job.

I later reflected on why I lost it. I realized my unwillingness to put on my consultants hat and deal with not only my own feelings, but also the reality of what this person was doing in MY session.

I was there to perform, not be derailed by some ring-in who didn’t give rip about my session. Sound familiar.

As you’ve probably already gauged, that woman was playing the perfect role to see how I would react.

**Emotional Intelligence is the cornerstone competency of being and in-demand trainer** and in this experience, I sucked at it.

I took the bait; hook, line and sinker.

Do you ever find yourself in situations where you have a hunch about what should be done or said but don’t follow it. This was one of those times.

That’s what this report is about essentially; **making sure you don’t leave out gaps in your presentation that can be filled by other agendas or ulterior motives.**

Flush them out. Nicely

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*The word consultant is derived from a Latin word consultare, which means, “to discuss”. It is important to open discussions with as many levels of an organisation as you can prior to a training agreement.*
When you gain access to the right levels of management here are some great questions that will confirm your role as a consultant; someone who adds value and is results driven.

• What problem are they trying to solve?
• What change/s are they trying to make?
• What are they trying to do differently, or better?

Obviously, there are many different questions and ways of asking them and these should help you get off to a great start. To dig deeper on these questions you can also ask:

• What are the expectations you have of this training intervention?
• And what are your concerns?
• What led you to this training at this time?
• Why this group of people?
• What support options are in place following the training?

Sometimes getting to the root-cause of an organisation’s troubles can be scary. The issues can often be big and complicated. Start by breaking down the priorities of the organisation and build those pieces into your training program.

Remember, that as a training consultant you should always be mindful of the greater priorities of the organisation and holding that vision will make all of your program communication more congruent; you’ll be talking their language.

Putting on the consultants’ hat will ensure that you don’t have to do too many back bends to training any audience on any topic.

Let’s see how I learned my lesson from that presentation at the bank to nail a gig with a new client, many years later.

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Thinking on Your Feet

“Are you crazy”.

This is not the sort of response you’d expect from the director of a large training company.

“What on earth are you going to talk about”.

I’d left the corporate world, a national role in learning and quality assurance, and packed the car to go north to Sydney. I spent nearly three months on the phone ringing training companies offering my services.

Every day I was scouring the yellow pages, researching web-sites, speaking to people who had my financial future in their hands. Some days I wanted to give up and drive back home to ‘real-job’ land.

Some days I had a second wind and worked out my pitch perfect. Each time I landed an interview it invariably meant going in to do a presentation then getting grilled by the business development folks.

I hadn’t had much luck going in to do prepared presentations; it was a bit surreal, and honestly, I got too nervous and stuffed it up for the most part.
Scouting for more work as a freelance trainer can be tough.

So when a potential client - like this director on the phone with me now - asks me to come in and give a presentation to the sales team who will put me in front of their clients - and I don’t want to prepare anything – that doesn’t help either.

“Tell me when I get there what you’d like me to present and I’ll make it up on the spot.” I said with quaky confidence in my voice.

It worked. Now, companies hire me to fly around the world and ensure that whatever happens in their training room, as their ‘go-to’ guy, I can handle it.

Let me explain how and help you to achieve improvisation and flexibility.

Here’s the trick to training any audience on any topic. I’m not referring to skills based or technical subjects like ‘excel spreadsheets 101’, or ‘Occupational Health and Safety for Forklift Drivers’ but more conceptual and behavioural type topics like ‘Delegation and Motivation for Employees’ or ‘Leading without Authority’

The learning process that individuals go through is a sequence of questions - the learning cycle – and our training session should follow this cycle.

These questions also form the preferences, or learning styles, of the majority of people.

It’s called the 4-MAT, you’ve probably heard of it, and full credit to Bernice McCarthy for sharing it with the world.

So this is a nifty little tool to have up our sleeve when time runs short in our training session, or we’ve been put on the spot to come up with content in a hurry, or you get a group that perhaps doesn’t want your training. Maybe, like in my story, you just want to impress a potential client.
A Road Map for this Section

In this part of the report I am going to jump around a bit. Let me explain how it's structured.

We'll start with the ‘Why’ question, which is about how to engage your participants and work with their resistance to the training and getting buy-in to the training. Because of that I have included the section on ‘Naming the Elephant in the Room’ just the why question.

Then I jump into the ‘What’ question, and move to story telling as a way to engage and get people sharing and interacting; ‘what’ is the training about and how does the ‘story’ about the information they are here to learn get told.

Then I finish off with the ‘How’ and ‘What if’ question.

So let’s get started with the ‘Why’ question.

What do you say when you don’t know what to say in a training session?

O.K. so let’s say it’s two thirty in the afternoon and you have hit a blank spot; you don’t know if the material you’ve got will get you through the day and interaction levels are falling like participants eyelids.

The 4-MAT Questioning Process

Let’s start with the four questions as a quick review, then, see what we can do with it...

1. WHY - Do the participants need to know what you are teaching?

2. WHAT - Is the information about – the theory?

3. HOW - Will the participants learn what you are training?

4. WHAT IF - Happens when they start to think about how they will apply what they’ve learnt?
Start with a ‘Why’ question. This should be a question that creates curiosity in the content to come.

Ask any why question. For example, let’s say I am training call centre operators (something for which I am clueless) and the subject is difficult customers:

- Why do people in general become difficult to deal with?
- Why do we react so negatively to them at times?
- Why does it happen in our industry/with our product in particular?

You should get some good interaction going with those questions to start you off.

But before I go on to the ‘What’ question is worth pausing at this point to deal with something that inevitably happens in workplace training.

**Naming the Elephant in the Room**

See, all too often, we as trainers find ourselves in front of a group that either shouldn’t be there in the training room, don’t want to be there, have been told to be there, or have had such a bad run with boring training that we as the trainers are the recipients of that negative vibe.

Trainers need to have a strategy to deal with resistant participants because if they don’t, they get caught out, lose their cool, their credibility and may lose the job. One way to name the elephant in the room is to call it as you see it.

First thing to do is acknowledge what’s going on. Some people may not want to be in your training room. That’s a reality.

Your job at the outset is to confront this challenge by acknowledging their position. A great way to do this is with a flipchart that identifies it all. Reveal the following flipchart titles and explain each to the group seated before you.

**Shopper** – gets a day or two off work to attend the training and is there to browse the program and see what’s worth taking home.

**Conscript** - has been sent to the training by someone else and probably doesn’t want to be there.

**Adventurer** - is up for anything and wants to learn.

**Volunteer** – Needs convincing but will go along for the ride.
Once you’ve established who these participants are, they’ve got nowhere else to hide. That means they can’t sabotage your training as easily as they normally could. And by putting their hand up to this you’ve got license to be transparent with them if they do.

Then, once you’ve got that out of the way, you can begin to ask the next questions in the 4MAT.

**The answers you get from the ‘Why’ questions can determine the ‘What’ questions that will get the best response.**

Let’s get back to our call centre operators and dealing with difficult people. For example; If I ask “why do people in general become difficult to deal with”, and the answers you got back from participants was: ‘They don’t get what they want’, The ‘what’ question you then ask could be “what sort of things do they want from your product or service?”

Other examples to find out what they already know could be...

- What has worked to calm you down when you’ve been difficult to deal with? (or someone you know has been difficult :)
- What do you think people really want then they are being difficult?
- What must we never do when we have a difficult person on the other end of the line?

By now your participants will be reflecting on their experiences of dealing with difficult people. They’re sure to have a few horror stories.

**Story Telling**

If you are really thinking on your feet you can bring in a story or anecdote that relates to the material.

It is vital to find a relevant link that will connect the power of the story, analogy or metaphor to the training content and the point you want to get across.

For instance, in this example, you could think of the last time you were annoyed with a call centre operator and what did they do that worked to calm you down, or what didn’t work.
Story Telling Structure

The key structure of an effective story involves four elements:

**Context:** The context or environment in which the story is set. It could be in a workshop, an office, out in the field; ideally it is a setting the participants can relate to.

**Characters:** the key players in the story and what is going on for them – what they might be thinking and feeling. Don't be afraid to give them some character; describe their facial features or how they move.

**Conundrum:** The situation, scenario, problem, or challenge the characters are faced with.

**Clarity:** What did the characters understand or resolve about the situation that lends itself to the reason you told the story?

You can scour your work history for the best stories and anecdotes. Some trainers read the business pages to find the most relevant material for a particular client.

My earlier story about making up a presentation on the spot to the training director in Sydney had all these elements.

**Context:** Finding more work as a trainer after moving to Sydney.

**Character:** The training director and sales people.

**Conundrum:** I needed to stand out amongst so many other trainers canvassing to be contractors.

**Clarity:** How to effectively demonstrate to potential clients my ability to think on my feet.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a story is worth a thousand pictures.

**Remember, establish curiosity and engagement with the ‘why’ question and build theory and content with the ‘what’ question.**

Moving on, the ‘How’ question takes you in a number of directions. If you had time to prepare you would obviously have some sort of experiential activity to facilitate at this point. But because we could be training any audience on any topic we can only use what has come up in the session we’ve created on the spot.
We can do one of three things:

1. **Generate a Case Study:**
   If someone has given you a juicy enough anecdote previously, you could generate a case study and ask small groups to offer their suggestions on how to deal with it.

2. **Organise a Role-Play:**
   You could organise a role-play with the incident described and have participants take it in turns to deal with it. You could use a useful discussion method like O.R.I.D.

3. **Build a Template:**
   Get a blank flip chart and write up responses from the group which help them to build a tool kit or series of steps; e.g., ‘the six secrets to dealing with difficult customers’ or ‘four steps to keep your sanity at work’ or whatever was the essence of the discussion you facilitated.

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**Transfer the Training**

**Translating the discussion into workplace examples**

The final questioning step is the ‘What If’ question. Following with our example from the call centre operators, you will want to establish what the roadblocks and obstacles are to effectively dealing with difficult clients. This might generate a bigger discussion about company policy or further training needs.

And in this example at least you have drawn out some participant learning from each other, bought yourself some time, and got the interaction levels back up if they were waning.

I am going to let you in on a little secret, you may have already realised if you’ve been in the game long enough: **It’s all about results.** That’s all your clients want; an outcome that solves their problems.

If you refer back to the section on ‘wearing the consultants hat’ you’ll recall the questions. This is where you bring them back into the training. **You have to constantly return to the objective of the training as it relates to what the organisation is trying to achieve.**
Let me highlight the importance of this with an experience of mine. This means so much for your business you won't believe the return – in more work – and in great experiences.

I was contracted on a job just outside of Frankfurt. A few months earlier in Dallas, I had trained the subject matter experts in the organisation on how to train and facilitate new managers into the company.

It was great to work alongside them now as the group facilitator, and it was an important step for the company to let their new trainers loose.

Of course, as part of the quality control measures with the content, and senior people getting good training, members of the global learning and development team sat up the back, watching our every move.

Not only did my budding trainers nail it under the watchful eye of their bosses, but because of the impact of my work; ensuring the training I ran transferred to this day – I was invited back for more training.

In Mexico city, Johannesburg, Manilla, Beijing, Montreal, London and Sydney.

I don't say that to impress you, but to impress upon you that you can never know where your great work will take you.

This is what I do to knock the socks of potential clients at an interview/audition, or to keep getting great gigs. Try it out a few times to get the hang of it, then trust yourself, you know your stuff.