

# FIVE CREATIVE WAYS TO KEEP TRAINING ENGAGING

## Making Staff Learning Effective and Entertaining

By Paul Picciurro, CHESP

**S**ame old, same old, over and over again. Environmental services leaders are required to train their staff on cleaning procedures, safety topics, and human resources policies. Teaching the same topics year after year gets flat out boring—even for the leaders!

An environmental service leader can easily turn into Charlie Brown's teacher or a monotone Ben Stein from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* when you're repeating the same topics. Even though the topics are frequently repeated, they still need to be presented in an interesting fashion. So here are some ideas used at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to brighten up the training and get the staff engaged and involved.

### 1 Act it Out

Break your team up into small groups and ask them to act out a training topic. Ask them to develop a short dialog (one to two minutes) or a song on the topic and have them present it to the rest of the group. You can divide the team in sections, or by preference. For example, all Coke-lovers could be one group and Pepsi-lovers another.

### CHALLENGE YOUR STAFF

The ultimate goal is to get the staff interested and develop them personally and professionally. Our facility offers free online computer training classes for Microsoft applications (Outlook, Word, etc). Challenge your staff to learn how to email and ask them to send you a message. Trade a few notes so they get the hang of it.

### 2 Draw or Sketch it

Say your training in that particular meeting covers Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Instead of reading the policy or showing the isolation signs, ask the each group to draw themselves and what PPE they would use in a droplet or contact isolation room. Then ask them to explain the difference between the two isolations. You'll be impressed with their creativity.

### 3 Toss Around Some Ideas

Even children's toys can help your staff learn. Buy a beach ball and write a topic on each of the sections of the ball. For example, one panel would be labeled 'Infection Control,' another 'Blood Borne Pathogens,' another 'External Disaster.' Pass the ball around the room, and when someone catches it, they have to give one fact about the topic that is on the top of the ball when they catch it. That person then chooses who to pass the ball to next.

### 4 Utilize Visuals and Video

Be creative choosing media, as well. Short PowerPoint presentations with department-specific information or even pictures of the staff can

bring a point home. The more you can make the topic relative to the work staff performs each day, and the more you can connect the topic to something that happened in the department or in the facility, the more effective the training will be.

Book a conference room and show videos from YouTube. The videos can help explain more complex topics like diversity and inclusion. For example, the Kid President videos are cute and funny, but hold the message of learning to work and get along with others.

### 5 Hear from Other Points of View

Guest speakers work well, too. Invite someone from infection control, the safety coordinator, or a leader from security or human resources to cover a specific topic. Consider asking vendor representatives to speak to your staff and help with new equipment or new product training.

No matter what new approach you use, the important thing to remember is to keep the training focused on your staff. Consolidate the information and highlight the key learnings instead of reading or posting a multiple-page document. Ask your managers and your staff to help brainstorm new ideas and get their buy-in to the process.

Environmental leaders today use their creativity to alter staffing models and figure out budget constraints. That same creative process should be used for training. ●

**Paul Picciurro, CHESP**, is operations



manager at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – St. Joseph, in Milwaukee, Wis. For more information, he can be reached at [paul.picciurro@wfhc.org](mailto:paul.picciurro@wfhc.org).

