



# Training Tips that Get Results

To get meaningful results from training, follow these steps.

**By Evan Hackel**

Let's take a look at two trainers — let's call them Joan and Jack. Both are energetic trainers who get their audiences laughing quickly. They'll do whatever it takes — using props or asking trainees to do silly things — to illustrate a concept or get their trainees excited and engaged. And when trainees leave at the end of the day, they feel energized and happy.

But there's a big difference between these two trainers. A few weeks after training is over, the performance of the people who trained with Joan has really improved. The performance of those who trained with Jack hasn't. They quickly went back to "business as usual."

The difference? Jack's training is *edutainment*. Joan's isn't, because it gets results. And that's true even though someone

who peeked into their training rooms wouldn't notice much difference.

## How Can You Avoid Frivolous Training?

First, it's important to understand that although good training is entertaining, it's not entertainment. Training is supposed to achieve demonstrable results, not just make people laugh or enjoy themselves. The wrong kind of training — edutainment — does well on the "smile sheet" but doesn't have long-lasting, impactful results.

Whether you hire a professional trainer or someone within your organization who's a skilled teacher, you want a meaningful, measurable outcome. These steps will help assure that your trainers and your training program reach that goal:

**Think of training as a strong combination of education, engagement, and use.** Training must educate by teaching skills, transferring knowledge, cultivating attitudes, and hitting other specific targets. But training that's purely educational doesn't get results. That's why training must present information in ways that are engaging and interactive and that require the learner to use the information learned.

“Although good training is entertaining, it's not entertainment.”

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**Apply the VAK Attack model to increase learning.** VAK stands for the three ways that people learn:

**Visual learning** happens when people watch videos, PowerPoints, charts, and other visual elements.

**Auditory learning** occurs when people learn by listening to the trainer, other trainees, visitors, and others.

**Kinesthetic learning** happens when people get out of their seats and move around as they take part in work simulations, games, and other meaningful exercises.

Be sure your live training makes use of all three. Each person has a preferred way of learning, and if you use all three methods, you'll have the best chance of connecting with everyone.

**If you're hiring someone from outside your organization, speak with other organizations** where that trainer has worked. When you do, ask for specifics about what the training accomplished. Look for hard data about results. Statements like “We loved Paul's training!” might be nice, but they don't tell you whether Paul's training produced measurable results.


**Define outcomes, and make sure your trainer can reach them.** Do you want your fundraisers to contact 25% more new prospects? Do you want your staff to delight customers with exceptional service? How will your trainer break those processes down into individual steps and address them through training? Work with your trainer beforehand to make a plan.

**Help your trainer know who your trainees are.** Are they staff, volunteers, or board members? Are they new to their roles or experienced in their jobs? A good trainer will want to know about the trainees' ages, prior experience, educational level, current jobs, and all other factors that can be leveraged to engage them more fully in training. A concerned trainer will also want to be aware of any factors that might cause them *not* to engage.

**Work with your trainer to develop meaningful metrics.** If you work together to define what you'll measure after training is completed, your training will accomplish more, because its goals are well-defined.

**Monitor sessions, and make sure that the training stays on track.** If you can't attend the sessions, ask a few trainees to check in with you at lunchtime or other breakpoints to tell you whether the trainer is hitting the benchmarks you created. If not, a quick check-in with the trainer can often get things back on track and avoid wasting time.

**Be sure that trainees have an opportunity to put their training to use** as soon as possible. Doing so will cement the learning.

**Ask for feedback.** Survey trainees to see what they thought of the training. Then measure how much of the material they retained and how much their behavior changed as a result. This input is crucial as you continue to refine and improve your educational program. 

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## Create a Learning Environment

There's a huge pool of resources available to enlighten everyone in your organization. Here's a starting point (NonprofitWorld.org):

**Using Training Strategically to Build Organizational Capacity** (Vol. 14, No. 4)

**Take Your Training into Your Hands** (Vol. 29, No. 6)

**Key Performance Indicators: Nonprofits Need Them, Too** (Vol. 31, No. 2)

**How to Present Training Workshops that Educate and Inspire** (Vol. 29, No. 4)

**The Nonprofit Executive as Chief Learning Officer** (Vol. 16, No. 2)

**Motivate Workers with Training Opportunities** (Vol. 33, No. 3)

**Board Problems Reflected in Training Requests** (Vol. 33, No. 1)

**Training Programs Need More than Good Information** (Vol. 21, No. 2)

**Keep Your Volunteers Happy with Dynamic Training** (Vol. 31, No. 4)

**Measuring Outcomes in the Real World** (Vol. 30, No. 6)

**Bring Your Training Home** (Vol. 37, No. 4)

**Why Feedback Is the Key to Your Success** (Vol. 35, No. 3)

**Seven Kinds of Listeners & How to Approach Them** (Vol. 39, No. 2)

**Why You Absolutely Must Train Millennials** (Vol. 37, No. 3)