

Inspiring Others To Action

By Lee Struble, Monroe Community College, Director of Campus Safety



A recent participant in one of my training programs noted in their evaluation that "Lee has inspired me to go back and inspire others."

While this compliment certainly made me feel good about my success of connecting with this particular participant, it also made me pause to consider what it truly takes to inspire others when presenting training programs or workshops. The new program that I have been presenting is entitled "**A Job Worth Doing: Creating A Climate of Quality Service and Commitment**". As with all my programs, my main goal is to motivate the participants to action. We've all sat through workshops or training programs that seriously challenged our ability to be attentive and polite. The workbooks from these sessions usually get tossed directly into the trash, or maybe get placed in that one file cabinet that we put old training programs into, and that we never intend to use again. I like to think that my programs are different. They are about individual action and self-improvement.

The purpose of this article is to share with you a few thoughts about what I feel it takes to present training programs or workshops that can be so effective that they will truly inspire others to action. To begin, you need to know your audience and allow them to get to know you. We all know how quickly people make first impressions, and it's no different for presenters. How we approach the front of the room, our appearance, the first few words we speak; all of these have a significant impact on the ultimate success of our program. I always try a little comic relief as an icebreaker in

an attempt to gain immediate rapport with the group. I also spend a few minutes to disclose some professional and personal information about my background and experience in a candid and relaxed manner.

After the preliminary introductions are done, the next challenge is how to present your information in an interesting and entertaining way. The first key to making the program interesting and entertaining is to personalize it. If we're sharing information about an event that we personally experienced, it is much more effective than telling stories about someone else's experiences. Colorful stories or antidotes of famous people are certainly a part of most effective presentations, but relying solely upon the experiences of others is not the best way to establish a personal connection with the audience. In other words, be yourself, and share your life experiences.

The most popular presentation format used today is PowerPoint. PowerPoint is an excellent tool that has been used to professionalize many a boring and drab overhead transparency presentation. While it is still necessary and prudent to possess a hardcopy back-up, the benefits of using PowerPoint far outweigh its' disadvantages. My only caution is to limit the amount of bells and whistles that you add to your presentation. Inserting random video clips, audio tracks, clip art, animation, cartoons or images can all help to break-up the text of a presentation, but over-reliance on these tools can also hinder the effectiveness of the information that you are presenting. Overly ornate and decorative fonts and templates can also serve as more of a distraction, than an asset to the presentation effectiveness. So don't make your PowerPoint presentation so busy that it distracts from the information that you're trying to present.

Sometimes the "KISS" (Keep It Simple, Silly) principle is still the best policy.

Another aspect of effective presentations is the ability to enlist group participation. I will normally have 4-5 questions during the course of a presentation that solicits a variety of group responses. They are generally open-ended questions that do not necessarily have a right or wrong answer, but are designed to begin discussion of a certain topic. An example of such a questions would be "what are some personal characteristics of an effective leader?" Using a flip chart and listing the group responses is an excellent method to keep everyone involved.

The final, and many times the most important aspect of an effective presentation is the conclusion, i.e. what are the last thoughts that you leave them with? I usually try to summarize all of my presentations by reviewing what I call the "Golden Nuggets". The Golden Nuggets are simply 10-12 bullet points that I believe are the critical points that I tried to make during the course of the presentation. Following this quick review, I will bring the presentation full cycle and personalize the ended with an important life lesson that is appropriate for the topic. My endings will usually evolve around the subjects of personal happiness or a strong work ethic: two issues of which I share a strong passion. My favorite quotes in these areas are Dale Carnegie; "*happiness doesn't depend upon who you are or what you have; it depends solely upon what you think*", and Thomas Jefferson; "*I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have*." These are the type of positive messages that I like to leave for each of the participants in my programs.

Remember, "*The great aim of education is not knowledge, but*

Continued on Page 20

The Complexities of Facebook

(Continued from Page 19)

Princeton organization in his confirmation hearings; and President Clinton had to defend his "I never inhaled" use of pot in college. These examples of previous private, collegiate behavior that came to the attention of some investigator, are real concerns. However, in a free society, these issues are not dilemmas for college administrators but for students themselves. However, somewhere in the educational process, colleges do not want students to set themselves up for a future disaster. At times, we do have to protect students from themselves.

The question rose for a campus public safety officer is - when you see

a violation of law, what is your obligation? Is there a difference between reacting to a violation in plain view and a violation viewed on Facebook? If the Public Safety job is to patrol the campus for the safety of students and violations of the code of conduct, then what is the difference from patrolling electronically in an open forum? Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, and Immanuel Kant might have an interesting debate on the philosophical implications, but for now, the answer must reside in each department's philosophy and mission statement.

Inspiring Others

(Continued from Page 17)

action." (Herbert Spencer). I am hopeful that many of you will use some of these tips in planning and facilitating your next formal presentation or training program. The time you spend in planning your program will reap great rewards in terms of the quality of your presentation, and will hopefully also inspire others to action.

"One of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you are, but what you're perceived to be by others."

- Edward Flom

"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it."

- Theodore Roosevelt

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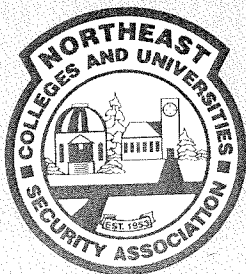
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