

GCASTD Dinner with Thiagi

Sivasailam Thiagarajan, or Thiagi, presented the *Six Secrets of Effective Training Design* at the Greater Cincinnati ASTD August dinner meeting. Besides the six secrets, which were really eight (you want to “under promise and over deliver”), Thiagi applied some of the ideas by starting us out with an activity to make his point. Here’s what he did:

One of his premises is that lots of free content is available for any subject. He brought with him a document containing the “Interactive Strategies for Improving Performance.” It was a 10-page document. Rather than “teach” it to us, he had us learn only the most important things. How did he do this?

First, he gave only one page to each of the 10 people at each dinner table. He instructed us to read the page we received and select two items that were the most important to us.

After reading the page, Thiagi had us get in groups of 3-6 people who had the same page as we were given. After the chaos of getting in our “Page 6”, etc. group, we were to tell our group which two items were the most important to us and select the two most common items of the group.

Next, we were to get in groups of 3-6 people with different page numbers and share the two most important items. At this point, we were able to learn more key information from the 10-page document. Based on the discussion, we were to then narrow the items down to N-1 {if there were 4 people in your group (4-1=3) items.

This activity was quick and to the point. Many activities could have followed this activity, such as:

- Get in pairs and argue with that person about how your items are more important than their items.
- List the items on a flipchart and share it with the other groups. Discuss similarities and differences.
- Continue, within your groups, to determine how you will apply these concepts in your current work situation or organization (depending on the topic).

Thiagi reminded us that this activity is a good way to review large handouts for key ideas or as a way to review pre-work that never is done before a workshop. The key is that this activity can be used for various reasons and in numerous ways.

Thiagi made this activity “light and fun” by pretending that the instructions were on PowerPoint slides – when, in fact, the screen was dark. A whistle was blown to get our attention along the way. Humor was used throughout.

Oh, I didn’t mention the six secrets...that’s because they’re secret!

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