

Chapter 1: Creative Genesis

The Origin and Foundation of the Creative Training Techniques Process

Creative Training Techniques are instructor-led, participant-centered training concepts. Training, as much as possible, should be a do-it-yourself project for the participants involved. But I didn't realize that when I began my career in 1969 selling and delivering sales-training and management-development programs. I was, if I may say so, an effective presenter. Twice a week, I would conduct seminars, and I always received among the highest ratings of any of the presenters, even those with significantly more experience. At just 22, I felt I had arrived as a trainer; in retrospect, I see that I was essentially an effective presenter or speaker. When you're the only one who knows anything about a particular subject and you're giving presentations that last a couple of hours or even a whole day, being an effective presenter is important. But it doesn't necessarily mean you know how to deliver training.

The purpose of any training program is to deliver results. People must be more effective after the training than they were before. What do they now know that they didn't before? What can they now do that they couldn't do before? How have their feelings and attitudes changed and/or improved as a result of the training? If change hasn't taken place that benefits the individual and the organization, I'm not really sure that training has been delivered.

Three years after my career began, I had developed a variety of training programs for internal use that ranged in length from two hours to three weeks. I learned to break people into groups and to give them hands-on opportunities to apply the content being covered. Yet I continued to rely upon a lecture format.

That changed in 1973, when I traveled to Minneapolis to evaluate a seminar I was considering adding to my business. Called "*Adventures in Attitudes*," it was a 30-hour course in human relations, communications, problem solving, interpersonal skills, and self-management. The first day, 30 of us gathered in a room and were seated in groups of five. The instructor made a few brief introductory remarks and then passed out written materials for each group to discuss. After each group

summarized its discussions, we moved on to the next activity. When it was time for a lecture, the instructor would play an audiotape. By noon, I was still waiting for him to say something so I could evaluate the quality of the program. I was still waiting at the end of the first day.

The second day continued in much the same vein. I kept waiting. I finally decided that, if the time and money I had invested were going to be worth something, it was going to be because of me. I wasn't going to get it from the instructor.

Finally, on the third day, it hit me like a ton of bricks: I realized I could recall almost all our discussions and activities because I was involved. I had made some significant discoveries and decisions—and I had truly learned—because I had truly participated.

I consider that experience to be my first, and most significant, contact with training that is based on discovery, participation, and involvement. I returned to Denver, and, in the last four months of 1973, I did 10 percent of the company's volume. In 1974, I moved from Denver to Minneapolis and became vice-president of Personal Dynamics. Over the next six years, enrollments in the "*Adventures in Attitudes*" program grew from 4,000 per year to over 80,000 per year! Today, over 30 years later, I have clients that continue to use the program to make a difference in their organizations.

In 1980, I decided to go out on my own. I started by developing a course on team building and conflict management, and I found the principles of learner-discovery, participation, and involvement worked there. Next, I designed and delivered a program on problem solving and decision making, and the techniques based on those principles worked there, too.

In 1981, I conducted a three-hour seminar on the techniques themselves for a local chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). I reasoned that, if I was designing do-it-yourself training, trainers I worked with should also be applying the principles as a do-it-yourself project. That's what the seminar was all about, and it was an unqualified success.

I presented these ideas to a national audience for the first time in 1982 at the ASTD national conference. Three hundred people crowded into a room designed for 160, and more than 100 others were turned away. At every ASTD conference since then, in more than 60 ASTD chapters, at more than a two

dozen ASTD regional conferences, at every conference TRAINING Magazine has sponsored since 1980, I've presented the concept, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Furthermore, the concept seems to be global: audiences representing more than 50 countries have been excited about the ideas when I've presented them at conferences in Europe, Japan, Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Middle East.

For almost a decade now, we've been working with school systems like Cypress-Fairbanks outside of Houston, Texas and Los Angeles Unified School System in Los Angeles, California to empower classroom teachers and staff to apply the Creative Training Techniques processes in the classroom as well as in staff development. The results have been significant and measurable. You'll find some of the results of the research that's been done in the appendix to this book

As soon as people learned about Creative Training Techniques, they asked where they could get more information on the subject, but I didn't know where to direct them. I had read and researched, but the most I could find were snippets here and there. So I wrote a manual on Creative Training Techniques that has formed the foundation for this book, which is a greatly revised and expanded version. Since 1981, over 85,000 trainers and educators have been through a one-day or longer version of Creative Training Techniques. I hope that, by the time you finish this book, Creative Training Techniques will seem as eminently practical and applicable to you as they have proved to be for me.

What is Creative Training Techniques?

Let's start by identifying what it is not. It is not a miscellaneous collection of tips and techniques. Rather, it is a system that combines an understanding of how people learn best with processes that accelerate learning, retention, and application. It is a system that emphasizes getting results that count in the real world. It is also a system that is dynamic. While the foundation principles remain the same, we constantly incorporate new ideas based on the latest research to continue to make what we do effective as well as efficient. Finally, it is a system that most often is instructor-led, but remains participant-centered. The focus is always on what will help people learn best.

Some Foundation Principles

A lot of different threads run through Creative Training Techniques. I've devised what I call "Pike's Laws of Adult Learning." These, along with an aphorism from Confucius, are the foundation principles underlying Creative Training Techniques and this book.

Law 1. Adults are babies with big bodies. Recall the kinds of learning activities we did as small children. In kindergarten, we colored, drew, played games, modeled with clay, finger painted, etc—all hands-on activities. Children with very little experience learn through experience.



When we reached first, second, and third grade, we lined up in rows, and we were talked at. Rarely were we encouraged, or even permitted, to be involved in the learning process. The more experience we had, the less that experience was used. As adults, we bring a lot of experience to our training programs. We want to acknowledge, honor, and celebrate that experience. If, as children with very little experience, we could discover and learn, how much more as adults can we discover and learn.

Law 2. People Don't Argue with Their Own Data. If I say something is true, you might say to yourself, "He's got to believe it; he's teaching it." But if you say it, for you it's true. For example, through research we might identify 15 characteristics of an effective leader. But rather than presenting them, I might choose to have small groups discuss the most effective leaders they've ever known and identify the characteristics that made those leaders effective. Nor-