

Simulation Studios

A Simulation Development Group Company

Live a day as your CEO®

Simulation Studios Free eBook Series

Making Strategic Yet Tough and Boring Training
Topics Engaging

**Teaching strategic yet boring topics,
such as leadership, business acumen,
and business analytics doesn't need
to put managers to sleep.**



Topics That Are Strategic Yet Boring

Managers Need Certain Skills To Drive The Strategy

Leadership

With the Baby Boomers about to mass retire, Leadership Development has become more critical than ever. Demonstrating what makes a great leader and how leadership impacts the business is critical. It can also be boring and theoretical. Not any more.

Business Analytics

We are in the era of analytics. Data harvesting, effective decision making, and data presentation has become a strategic requirement. But learning analytics can put the best managers to sleep. Learning this skill interactively is the key.

Business Acumen

Today, most CEOs will tell you that business acumen is one of the most important skill requirements of managers. Financial statements, marketing, operations and strategy can also be boring to learn. How about hands-on business acumen training?

Innovative Thinking

Innovative thinking isn't necessarily boring to learn, but applying it to one's job can be. Applying innovative thinking into an actionable behavior is tough. How about not only learning, but practicing in real-world scenarios? Now that's interesting.



The Basics of Engagement

Let's First Look At 'Rules of Engagement'

Topics Align With Strategy

Training content should align with where the company is going, not where it is today. If employees are trained on today's company, the company will strategically move backwards over time. Think about the future goals.

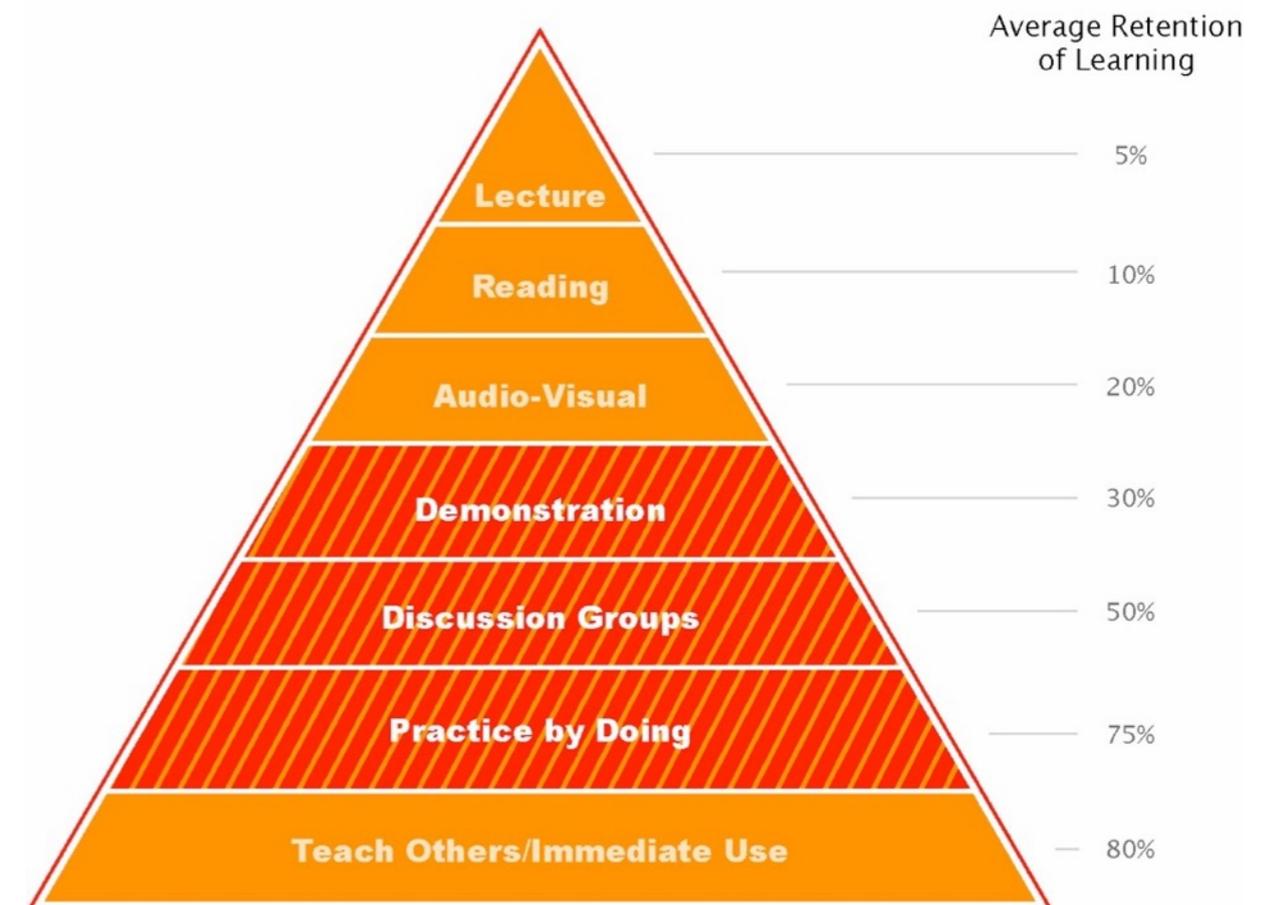
Training Content is Retained

What good is training content unless it can be retained? In order for information to be retained, it must be played with, practiced, and naturalized. Otherwise, it's theory.

Training Content is Applicable

Trainees always ask, "How does this help me?" Training content should show them why and how the content will help them in addition to the enterprise as a whole.

What type of learning produces the greatest effect?



The Learning Pyramid. Source: Corporate Universities by Jeanne Meister

Let's look at each topic more closely....



Align Tough Topics With The Strategy

Making training more strategic than ever.



Leadership Development

Effective leadership is absolutely critical inside any enterprises. All manager training should assume it needs to expose managers to what makes an effective leader within the organization. Training should not only state the leadership expectations, but it should go further and demonstrate why it's important. In reality, it is best if the participants can emotionally experience why effective leadership is critical to the organization.

Business Acumen

When managers better understand how an income statement works, they can make better decisions. Better yet, if managers understand how THEIR income statement works, they can make even better decisions. Understanding business fundamentals quickly aligns employees with the corporate strategy. Giving managers the opportunity to take action where they can see an immediate impact on the financials and business as a whole is fantastically valuable.

Business Analytics

Training becomes exceptionally valuable when people learn applicable skills they can apply back to their jobs or back to the business. This is especially the case with quantitative topics such as Business Analytics. When training participants can learn not only the skills, but also apply it back to real-world scenarios is when it becomes real and strategic.



Apply Tough Topics To Real World

The best way is to 'make it real'.

Effective Ways To Increase Retention:

1. Teach Others:

It's time for you to get creative. Giving participants an opportunity to teach others works exceptionally well. How about the idea of introducing your training content and then having participants present for 5 minutes to the group on what they learned and how they'll use it. Very easy and effective!

2. Practice By Doing (critical for these topics):

It's time to get the participants 'playing' with your training content. You can create exercises that enable the participants to practice working on real-world assignments that have causes and consequences. Letting the participants 'fail' at scenarios in a safe environment is a great way to encourage safe and effective practice. Just make sure it demonstrates an effect on the business and strategy.

3. Discuss the Content:

This one is easy. In general, giving plenty of time for managers to discuss what they are learning, its applicability to their work, and to the strategy is critical. Participants need time to think about and discuss the content.

4. Demonstrate It:

This can be a little trickier so its best to try and focus on the other two. Using your creativity, you can think of a way for participants to do a little 'show and tell' of what they've learned. Maybe a demonstration of how they are going to use it. Similar to teaching others, but with a slight twist.



Source: Forrester, "Online Training Needs a New Course"



Make Tough Topics Highly Applicable

If it matters to them, they'll listen.

Let's make it applicable:

1. Demonstrate the impact on the strategy

When participants 'play' with your training content (remember, they need to learn by doing!), they should see how each decision impacts the financials and corporate strategy. If participants can experience the impact of the business and strategy, it becomes very real.

2. Demonstrate relevancy to their job

How does this training content make them better at their jobs? When participants 'play' with your training content, they should see how their skill will make them better. Managers naturally want to do better and grow. Demonstrating (by practicing) how the skill accomplishes this is priceless. The training content quickly become relevant for them.

3. Demonstrate why it's applicable to both

Of course, we know that if managers are better at their jobs, this is important to the strategy. But you'd be surprised how managers live in a silo and aren't able to 'feel' how their role fits in and impacts the enterprise as a whole. When participants 'experience' how the training content impacts their jobs and the corporate strategy, employee value is immediately supercharged due to a clear understanding.



Simply effective.



How To Get This All Done

Tips to implementing the suggestions...

The 3 Tips To Implement:

1. Create action learning where decisions have a measurable impact

After introducing participants to the training content, give them a chance to take action that has an impact. Increasing time spent doing performance reviews increases employee satisfaction, but also reduces the manager's time to focus on other things. Or how about increasing R&D increases costs, but also increases customer satisfaction scores. Just make sure they can play with your content and it will have an impact.

2. Let participants practice and fail

In general, as trainers, we are usually over-concerned with making sure the participants 'feel' good and are positively reinforced. But, you should also give them an opportunity to try, fail, and eventually prevail. This is the 'flow' of basic game theory and is the reason games are so addictive. Add some challenge to your action learning. Your CEO will love it.

3. Give participants a day in management's shoes

Really want to make a CEO love your action learning? Give the participants a day in the CEO's shoes! The participants will be exposed to enterprise collaboration, business acumen, leadership, employee needs, customer needs, investor needs, time management, etc. The list really goes on and on. When managers see the enterprise from the perspective of the CEO, they understand the whole machine better. Integrate a little of the CEO's perspective into your action learning and it will be much appreciated.





It's Now Time To Summarize

Let's review what was covered.

Teaching Tough Topics

Teaching topics such as these are tough:

Leadership Development- How it impacts the business

Business Acumen- How to use it. How to apply it.

Business Analytics- How to mine, decide, and present

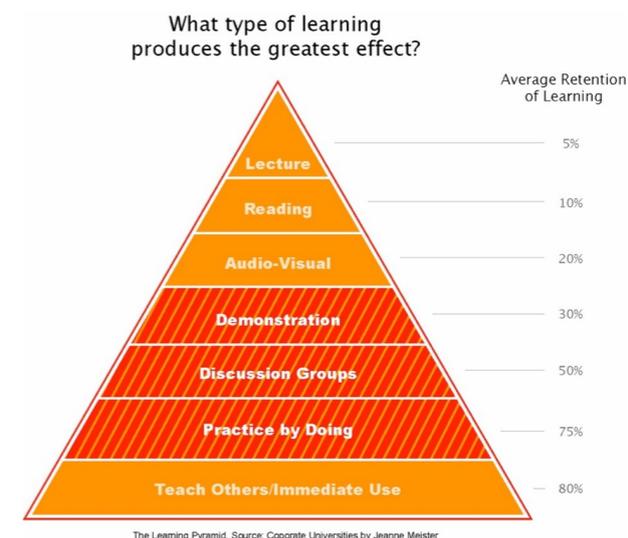
Innovative Thinking- How to think differently and use it

The trick is to apply it to the corporate strategy, make the learning hands-on, and demonstrate its real impact on the business. Creating learning modules where participants can practice, fail, and try again is especially important for these topics.

Strategic Applicability

1. Leadership Development - Companies spend significant time building leadership competency models, management skills, assessment skills, etc.
2. Business Acumen - Understanding basic business acumen is important. Understanding business acumen specific to your company is even more important.
3. Business Analytics - Understanding how data is gathered, interpreted and presented is important. But applying critical.

Retention Rate



The 3 Tips to Execute

1. Create action learning where participants can experience the tangible impact of the action they are taking. Example: Increasing R&D increases expense and increases customer satisfaction.
2. Let participants fail. Don't be scared to let managers fail in your action learning. This is a very natural and important part of the learning experience.
3. Give participants a day in the CEO's shoes. This will increase their enterprise-wide perspective which your CEO will appreciate.



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About Simulation Studios

We love business simulations and action learning.

Contact Us for More Information

Using Business Simulations and Gamification can achieve the following:

- Become more critical to the corporate strategy
- Create 'buzz' about your training program (create a wait list!)
- Demonstrate the importance of the training on the corp strategy
- Fundamentally challenge your employees like never before
- Foster a reputation of your organization as cutting-edge

The end result is rapid positive change, and a more engaged workforce. Best of all, SimStudios custom solutions are guaranteed to excite.

[Learn more about Ready-To-Go training using business simulations to teach topics such as leadership development, business acumen, business analytics, and more today. We're happy to help.](#)



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