

How To Use Board Games in Training

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Are you constantly looking for innovative methods and techniques to encourage audience participation? Are you worried your training may not impact participants to change behaviors? Do you feel constrained by traditional pedagogical training methods or see eyes rolling during another PowerPoint presentation? If you answered yes to any of these questions, using board games in your training is for you. Using board games helps to:

- engage all participants in the topic
- create a relaxed environment
- illustrate content
- apply adult education and instructional design principles
- make complex information understandable and interesting

How do you do this? Make it interactive! This is key advice for trainers, but what does it really mean? For many it means using group discussions or case studies. For others, it means using low-ropes course initiatives to promote diversity and teamwork. Either way the goal is clear - to engage participants.

An often underused engagement strategy is board games. I'm talking about using business-based board games that teach a specific topic, such as pharmaceutical drug development, effective outsourcing, good manufacturing practices, banking, or effective sales techniques.

Using Business-based Board Games

Board games that teach complex industry processes and procedures allow trainers the opportunity to facilitate the learning rather than be the expert. Trainers draw content from the board game and players, thus becoming guides for learning. This change in focus can be difficult for many trainers used to being the expert. The board game provides the structure, content, and expertise for learning to happen, and frees the trainer to observe participants' reactions for the ending discussion.

Business-based board games are successful when:

They are used to support training content.

Even the most fun and interactive board game will fail if it is played outside the boundaries of a training seminar with clear objectives. The advantage of using the board game is to reinforce and teach new training content. The game provides a non-traditional method to present the information and reduces the trainer's design time. Trainers can then concentrate on the transfer of knowledge during the game and hold discussions to verify retention at the end of the game.

They are played in teams to promote collaboration and diversity.

Board games, in general, tend to have participants play individually and to be engaged primarily during their turn. Business-based board games with teams can engage participants at all times by providing opportunities for missed questions to be answered by other teams. In addition, team members consult with each other before providing answers. Well-done business-based board games mimic the real world where many decisions and projects are completed in collaborative environments. Trainers can have the greatest impact on a group by observing how participants deal with communication, collaboration, and competition. End-of-game discussions are excellent places to explore

the dynamics of teamwork and communication.

They have an ending or time limit that can be achieved within a short time frame.

Business-based board games have a purpose beyond being fun and interactive. They are meant to teach concepts in a relatively short time just like a traditional seminar. However they must be flexible enough to allow for new concepts to be examined multiple times and designed so that when content changes the game can also change. This allows trainers to always have an accurate and up-to-date tool. The time frames also provide the end-of-game discussion with opportunities for participants to relate to ways time frames impact work assignments.

Creating Business-Based Board Games

To be effective in creating business-based board games, allocate enough time and resources for development. Following these easy steps will help you create a board game that works for you.

Find a company who has experience in creating business-based board games.

Although it may be exciting to create the board game on your own, nothing is more important than experience. Finding a company who already has documented processes and procedures will accelerate the development. In addition, finding test groups and obtaining the pilot testing data can be overwhelming. Companies with experience can help you structure this part of the process with little hassle.

Ensure your game is playable, flexible, and usable.

Business-based board games do not have to be dull as they teach regulations or an industry concept. They **do** need to be playable, meaning that anyone from the company can learn how to play within minutes. They **do** need to be flexible so that they can be used in a variety of ways. They **do** need to be usable, meaning they convey the information intended to be conveyed and they do need to be reusable, meaning they are rich enough to provide ongoing learning with repeat play.

Ensure your audience and top management support learning by doing.

Success in learning isn't always about the method. It's also about the culture of an organization. Before venturing into creating a game, test the idea with current participants and upper management. The more support and energy you have around using business-based games before creating them, the more successful you will be.

So make it interactive!

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