5 Strategies for Creating Interactive & Engaging Virtual Training Experiences

Start Strong

The first few minutes of your online training set the stage for everything that follows. Starting your event on time is a great first step! (Waiting rooms can help with this, if available for your platform.) Next, cut down on awkward beginnings by having an activity for participants to do right as they log in, even if it's as basic as introducing themselves over chat.   Finally, we highly recommend sharing context for the event so participants know what to expect, including objectives, an agenda, and how to engage (e.g., chat, verbally, breakouts, polling). A strong opening segment lets your participants know that you have thoughtfully prepared for this virtual experience.

Connect Early & Often

Break the ice early! The earlier you get your participants interacting in written or verbal formats, the greater the likelihood they will interact again. Consider using names in discussions to foster a more connected feel. And focus on connection opportunities that enhance the objectives of the session, such as interacting with each other around key content or skills. Group size will help to determine what type of connection activities are most appropriate; unfortunately, very large groups may be limited to chat functionality or breakout rooms for discussion. Lastly, consider that connecting is not a "one and done" experience; instead, think of each segment of your event as having a unique connection opportunity.

Mix Up Your Methods!

While every training context varies, we recommend mixing up your online engagement methods (e.g., Q & A, polling, video segment, breakouts) about once every 10 minutes.   While it is unlikely that every method will be the perfect fit for everyone, every time, adding a variety can help the majority of participants get the most out of your time together.   When planning methods, factor in the purpose, time available, technology comfort, and group size. If you have a lot of content to share, consider pre-recording a video for your participants to watch asynchronously so that your "live" time together can be devoted to interaction and connectivity.

Encourage Movement

Even a one-hour online training can result in stiff necks and shoulders. To help everyone stay comfortable and provide a mini energy burst, encourage movement. Movement also increases participants' alertness, creativity, and problem solving. This might include verbally giving permission to participants to move around as needed, offering a 30-second group stretch partway through your event, incorporating an activity with movement (e.g., stand up, sit down / arms up, arms down), and building in a 5-10 minute break for events that are 90 minutes or longer.

Go Analog

Just because your event is online doesn't mean that you need to limit the training experience to a slide deck. If your participants have common stationery supplies available, try engaging them with activities using a pencil and paper, such as to write down a reflection, action step, or even an image. You might also encourage participants to show and/or incorporate objects from their setting into activities. Finally, if your group size allows, consider inviting physical feedback as your event unfolds, such as thumbs up/down or "fist to five" hand rating scale. Try out your own ways of bridging the online and physical worlds for increased engagement.

SharpInsight