



Happy Trails

Nearly every training program in America starts with an “ice breaker,” a common implement standard in a Trainer’s toolkit. It both sets the tone for participation, and allows the group to become comfortable with each other and the Facilitator. By that same logic, shouldn’t we end the training program in a similar fashion? In the late 40’s, singing cowboy Roy Rogers ended his episodes with the song, "Happy Trails," signaling the conclusion, and almost admonishing the viewer to "go forth and do good!" After all, that's what the episode was about.

If your session was truly participative and experiential, then end it the same way. You need to provide closure, and help the participants validate their learning. Depending upon your course, your endings can be fun, thought-provoking, challenging, bonding, or any combination. What’s important, however, is to create an exercise that helps participants recognize all they have learned, and challenge them to apply it. Here is a simple closing exercise to illustrate:

Picture This!

- Distribute 3 x 5 cards to the group, and describe what you would like them to write by paraphrasing as follows:
- On the card, I would like you to draw a symbol, a drawing, a picture or anything that represents the major change you will make as a result of this course.
- While some people will struggle with creativity, try not to suggest possible graphics, or you will find the participants using them. Give the group a few minutes to draw, and then ask for volunteers to share their drawings.
- Encourage people to elaborate as they explain to the group what their graphics mean. Try to tie their explanations to course objectives or other learning points throughout the program. Encourage everyone to share, but respect those who feel uncomfortable with sharing.
- So, conclude your programs with an experiential exercise. Tell your group... "Happy Trails."

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