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Trainers use game plan to play different generations

Australian trainers are increasingly turning to games to bridge the generation gap when upskilling employees, according to one of Australia's top trainers Marc Ratcliffe.

Mr Ratcliffe said training games helped to combat the short attention spans of Gen Y, engage the cynical Gen X, and bolster learning retention in Baby Boomers.

He said while games had previously been thought of as frivolous fun, research reinforced the power of play in all forms of training.

"Games help people to not only use their thoughts, but also their emotions, skills, creativity and interaction skills. This is particularly useful when trying to train different generations by complementing their preferred learning patterns," he said.

"Because of their exposure to the digital age, younger generations are used to receiving information fast and varied formats. Variety is the key to maintaining their interest. Whereas older generations are more likely to feel more engaged and to recall the content when games are used.

"Games for the sake of playing games are never a good idea. However, selecting activities to complement or partner the material can assist students in making the necessary connections.

"In most situations, a carefully selected game will support the trainer in attracting and maintaining interest in their session. If they are not playing they are straying, so we need to find the ying and yang relationship of content and supporting activity.

"Remember, games are not the antithesis of content. They help to challenge, reinforce, persuade, refocus and reassure participants."

Founder of Australia's largest provider of trainer training, MRWED Training and Assessment, Mr Ratcliffe was this year named one of the world's Top 10 Young Trainers of the Year by Training Magazine (USA) and was more recently recognised as a finalist in the Brisbane Business News Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards.

Mr Ratcliffe said with an almost endless range of games available, trainers needed to choose and tailor games which gave participants a clear learning outcome.

“Games can be used to set the tone of the session, break the ice, motivate, promote listening, change perceptions, encourage problem solving, stir creativity and also evaluate the lessons learnt,” he said.

“But trainers need to ensure games complement the learning program, rather than dominate it. If used incorrectly, the tone of the training experience will be affected as participants perceive the content and trainer to be trivial and irrelevant.

MRWED Training and Assessment is a private Australian Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and 2009 BRW Top 10 “Best Place to Work”. It has trained more than 12,000 Australians in training and assessor qualifications since it was established in the year 2000.

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