



By Richard D. Czerniawski

WHAT'S TRAINING TO YOU?

My business partner, Mike Maloney, and I conducted two workshops in India this month. While we've held numerous workshops in India, these two are especially memorable, going well beyond the many who participated—52 in the first and over 100 in the second. For one, our client hosts were very gracious and hospitable, taking charge to ensure we were comfortable and went out of their way to provide everything we needed for the workshops. Second, the participants were highly enthusiastic and eager to gain our feedback about their work. They would line-up at every break—crowd is a more appropriate descriptor as they do not queue in India—to raise their laptop screen in front of our faces and vie for our assessment and coaching. Third, they gave us a standing ovation after the workshop. My, my, needless to say, we felt like rockstars.

Now to get the rocks out of my head. I've been thinking about different cultures and how they respond to marketing training. On the whole, US participants are quite skeptical about needing training. They believe they already know what will be covered and consider it a mere "refresher," one which they don't have the time to devote two days. However, they didn't learn what we share in B-school because it isn't taught in school, except in rare cases.

This attitude is quite different from how I, and my colleagues at Procter & Gamble, perceived training in the early stages of our careers, and as I see it now—47 years later. To me, training was an opportunity for personal development and a chance to open my mind to new ways to apply learning to grow my brand. As per those American participants to our training, if they claim they know it, then why is it that they are not applying proven principles, best practices, and quality processes? If they can't or don't do, then do they know what they profess to, or think they know? No way!

Many Europeans appear to have a chip on their shoulder when it comes to Americans conducting the training. Their history is a might longer than ours. We frequently encounter an attitude of, "Who the f*&k do these Americans think they are that they can teach us anything? They don't know our brands, our competition, nor our marketers!" Well, when it comes down to it, those that hold onto that mindset miss opportunities to navigate into position to maximize, or merely optimize, brand growth and health. Our training is not about "what" to think but "how" to think. Therefore, they're free to leverage their "insider" knowledge and unique experiences to achieve success.

I must interject that I'm not talking about everyone as many marketers, regardless of their culture,

come prepared to learn. Moreover, these are the first mindsets and feelings that confront us. The energy we feel from them in their body language, comments, and questions. However, by the time each of our workshops concludes, they appreciate what they've learned. Moreover, they're pleased with the work they've done in support of their brands. We've won them over and they are enthusiastic about being marketers and doing marketing.

Ah, the Latin Americans are a joy. They are happy to participate in the training, in life, with their colleagues and, for that moment, with us. They are most eager to talk about marketing, wine, relationships, food, family, politics, anything! They speak with great passion about each subject that arises. Every workshop is like a fiesta, joy-filled. Yes, they do want to use what they learn—every scrap of it.

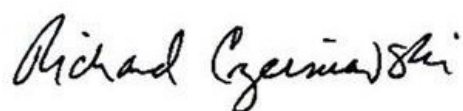
Asia and the Middle East participants are like sponges. They say, "bring it on. We want to soak up as much as we can. We want to improve our knowledge and build our skills so we can out-market our competition. Yes, bring it on, and when you're done, give us more." They recognize that the training will empower them to be more successful and conquer the world.

As mentioned, we win over even the most skeptical. Our workshops are designed to get real work done. We develop brand positioning, messaging strategies, advertising, MBO (Marketing By Objectives) marketing plans, et al., on their brands in and for their markets. We provide the frameworks, share proven principles, best practices, and quality processes to make their work, their thinking, more productive. We also work to develop essential soft skills, such as assessing work and coaching.

Regardless of where in the world we are conducting one of our workshops, I'll kick it off by inviting them to be "active listeners" and participants. In other words, to take action with their newfound learning. I ask them to create two columns. Label the first column, "notes." Label the second column, "actions." When they take note of something, like the importance of extrinsic reasons-to-believe in driving growth, they need to identify an action to do something that will enable them to capitalize on it.

Give it a try. You may very well find it will improve your productivity. No, not in how many things you get done but in doing things that will have a positive impact on brand development and growth. It can work for you regardless of whether you are American, European, Middle Eastern, Asian, or Latin American. It doesn't matter who or what you are. It works to make you an active participant in training and life.

One last thought, participating in training, is not just a box to check-off any more than a positioning strategy statement is a format to fill in. It is an opportunity to learn, grow, enhance skills, and take actions you otherwise would not have considered.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Czerniowski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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