

When Training is Not Smooth Sailing
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At times, I bite off more than I can chew, and delivering my first Crucial Confrontations training was no exception. I scheduled the training for two consecutive days with the Commercial Management Group at my company. For a first time trainer, I was facing some significant challenges:

- I had three levels of managers *and* their employees in the same session.
- The group's Senior Vice President was attending.
- We had the training at an off-site location which I had never been to before.

Put all three together and I was faced with “the perfect storm.”

The biggest problem I encountered was with the technology—I couldn't get the videos to play! They worked fine on my laptop but when I hooked up the projector all I could see was a black box where the video was supposed to be playing. As trainers, you know how crucial the video is and here I was without it.

We lost *three hours* fixing the video problem and I was forced into my stand-up comedian routine. On top of that, the room was way too small, we ran out of food at lunch, and at the end of day one the Sr. Vice President took a vote to make sure everyone wanted to return for day two! I waited in the hallway while they voted and contemplated a number of different careers . . . But surprise to me—I got the “thumbs up” and the show went on.

Day Two seemed just as brutal as Day One. Because of the lost time the day before, I had far more material to cover than I had time and ended up trying to cram everything into six hours. It was way too much. At the end of the two days though, I was surprised to find that everyone was very positive about the training and really enjoyed the content and the materials!

As I think about this first “trial by fire,” here are some of my recommendations for other first time trainers:

- Space training over three or four sessions so that participants have a chance to apply, return and debrief.
- Test-run the technology before the day of the training (like I didn't know this already . . .)
- Make sure the room is large enough for participants to spread out and move around.
- Use a good, reliable remote mouse that allows you to start/stop the video. If you don't have one or aren't comfortable with a remote mouse, set up your materials close to the laptop so that you can easily use the software.
- Don't rely strictly on the videos. While the videos are a great part of the training, you might not always have them! Also, the video scenarios are designed to be generic. Partner with stakeholders to create “structured rehearsals” that speak directly to their business.

And as always, keep your sense of humor because it's rarely smooth sailing the first time out of the gate!

