

HIP POCKET METHODS

Hip pocket method refers to an unplanned activity that a facilitator chooses to insert into the agenda of a training program, given the circumstances of the moment.

The hip pocket needs assessment method can accomplish a number of purposes: provide definition of needs in situations where no needs assessment was done; complement a needs assessment that may be out-of-date or unfamiliar to a facilitator; make a needs assessment more “real”, by allowing learners direct input into the session; and/or assist a facilitator to uncover needs at appropriate moments during a session.

Experience, research, and your creative flair are the usual sources of hip pocket methods.

1. Pre/Post Assessment

This instrument has both needs assessment and evaluation applications:

Name:		Date:			
A Must Do	B Should Learn		C Did Learn	D Can Do	E Will Do
		<p><i>In this column state a numbered list of the knowledge, skill, and/or attitude items that will be addressed in the session</i></p>			

Learners complete columns A and B (by checkmark) before or at the beginning of the training session.

- Must Do refers to the learner's performance on-the-job of each listed knowledge, skill, and/or attitude
- Should Learn is a self-assessment of the learner's need for development in the respective knowledge, skill, or attitude

To obtain the data generated in columns A and B, the facilitator may collect the completed instruments (for later return); or review in the large group a sample of volunteered disclosures; or invite learners to post their self-assessments on a wall-chart version of the instrument. In any case, it is important that the facilitator review the data and, preferably, discuss them with the learners.

Learners fill-in columns C, D, and E (on their original copies) at the conclusion of the session. This information is valuable for evaluation purposes:

- Did Learn allows the learner to indicate that s/he did acquire the listed knowledge, skill, or attitude
- Can Do allows the learner to indicate that s/he can apply the knowledge, skill, or attitude in the workplace
- Will Do allows the learner to indicate that s/he will apply the knowledge, skill, or attitude in the workplace

If a learner Must Do and Did Learn and Can Do, then a blank (no response) in the Will Do column may signal workplace obstacles to the transfer of learning. Follow-up with the learner and/or client is recommended.

2. We Know/We Don't Know

Form sub-groups of 4-6 learners. Provide each sub-group with two pieces of flipchart. On one flipchart, the sub-groups list in point form everything they know about the topic of the training session. On the other flipchart, the sub-groups list everything they don't know about the topic. Allow about 15 minutes total for the two rounds. The flipcharts are posted around the room.

The facilitator then reviews the data: highlights key Knows as they relate to the agenda; requests clarification; and eliminates (with the group's input) those Don't Knows that cannot be dealt with during the training session (for reasons of time, relevance, facilitator expertise, etc.).

This exercise works well as an ice-breaker. It also may be used as an energizer

activity at other times in a session. We Know/We Don't Know produces useful needs assessment information, and it facilitates buy-in to the agenda of the training program.

3. Forced Choice

The facilitator composes a statement related to the content of the training session and posts it on flipchart. The statement needs to be worded strongly, but not be too obvious. For example, "*Being a facilitator is like being an actor.*"

Identify the corners of the room as Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (a Likert scale). Ask learners choose a corner, go there, then discuss their choice with colleagues. Allow about five minutes. Keep the sub-groups in their corner positions and debrief a sample of comments from each sub-group. Make cross-references to the training session's agenda as appropriate.

This activity may be enriched by consecutively posting and processing a number of statements (up to three or four work well). Doing so promotes more movement, meeting and greeting, and opinion gathering. Forced Choice is both an effective ice-breaker and energizer exercise.

Caution: approximately a dozen or more learners are required, in order for this exercise to be interesting and informative.

Variation: compose four statements pertinent to the content of the training session. The four statements must be both related yet opposing perspectives on a theme or idea. For example, "As a leader, you are most like ... *a saw* ... *a hammer* ... *a chisel* ... *a measuring tape.*"

Post one statement in each of the four corners of the room, replacing Strongly Agree, etc. Follow a debriefing process similar to the above.

4. Success Criteria

At the beginning of the session, ask learners to complete a sentence such as this:

“I will consider this training session successful if, ...
_____.”

Allow about 5 minutes (personal, silent work).

The facilitator may take-up verbally a selection of statements and discuss them, or each sentence completion may be posted on flipchart and then reviewed.

A side benefit of the latter is that the posted list can form the basis of a reaction sheet to be used at session's end. Simply add a rating scale to each sentence completion (whether on the posted flipcharts or on a transcribed, formally presented reaction sheet).

Notes: