

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM INSYNC WEBINAR, AUGUST 11TH 2020

(Note: Answers/responses are written by Sharon Bowman; sbowperson@gmail.com)

Q1: What if people simply aren't chatting in or answering?

A1: *If it's a short webinar or presentation, leave them alone (they may be listening, even if they aren't responding). If it's an ongoing class where part of the learning involves participation and collaboration, make sure they know up front that they will learn and remember more if they participate in the discussions and activities. Tie participation to long-term memory and begin with low-risk activities (eg. Pair-Shares) versus high-risk activities (eg. being called on by name to answer a specific question).*

Q2: Using a tool or tools that take participants off-site - pros & cons?

A2: *Not sure what you mean by "off-site" – off-line? out of the building? And what kind of "tools"? You can email me with more specific information (sbowperson@gmail.com).*

Q3: What are some strategies to make sure social learning doesn't reinforce incorrect information?

A3: *Make sure learners have the correct information to begin with (and don't confuse them with a comparison of correct-to-incorrect information until they know the correct info first). Give learners time to summarize, paraphrase, and answer questions related to the correct information. Give learners time to actively practice a skill, if possible, using the correct information. In face-to-face classes, walk around and listen to the small group conversations for anything that might need re-teaching. In virtual classes, have learners summarize their breakout room conversations to check for understanding.*

Q4: How can you get someone to work with you who doesn't want to participate?

A4: *Are you working together as co-trainers teaching a class together, as a trainer and a participant, or as colleagues working together in the same office? Need more info here! (email: sbowperson@gmail.com)*

Q5: What can you say to learners before you begin to prepare them in a fun and professional way for the fact that they are going to be doing all of this movement, drawing, writing, etc.

A5: *Explain that they will be learning in brain-based and brain-friendly ways because 21st century brain science has shown us that traditional, lecture-based instruction doesn't work for most people. And before each activity, give them the brain-based reason why you're suggesting that they move, draw, write, speak, etc.*

Q6: When I'm not the teacher, but the moderator, how can I best encourage them to use these brain-training tips?

A6: *I assume that by "them" you mean teachers/presenters, correct? If so, that's a really tough position for you to be in (knowing more about brain-based instruction than the teacher does). You might gently suggest one or two strategies for them to insert into their "talk" (and tell them the brain-based reason why). Or you might say that, as part of your moderating job, you are supposed to pause the "talk" at the 10- or 20-minute mark to give learners a chance to summarize, ask questions, etc.*

Q7: How to deal with people that are too shy to engage in the session?

A7: *See A1 response. Also, most shy people will engage once they feel comfortable (i.e. psychologically safe) with the other learners. And they will engage in the low-risk activities (eg. Pair-Shares) more often while perhaps using the "right to pass" for the higher-risk activities, and*

that's okay (unless they have to do the higher-risk activities for certification purposes). Really shy people (strong introverts) often learn more by listening than by participating while feeling psychologically uncomfortable the whole time.

Q8: What are tips to make pre-recorded learning modules more interactive?

A8: *During the recording, you can suggest that listeners pause the audio and do a "Stand-and-Stretch" (and explain why they should do this). You can instruct listeners to do a short written assignment and suggest that they pause the recording while they write. For more ideas, please explore the free Micro-Courses on my website (www.Bowperson.com) for all the ways you can insert activities into a pre-recorded module (the only thing missing from these short slide presentations is my voice!).*

Q9: Best way to get buy in from the students? Especially adults who are virtual and you can't see if they're actually following instructions.

A9: *Begin with topic-related "Connection" activities to get students connected to each other and to the topic. Follow these activities with "Working Agreements" which are the students' commitments to be responsible for their own learning and to participate in meaningful ways. Also, you might want to experiment with virtual whiteboard apps (eg. Miro, Mural) because using these annotation tools makes it easy to see if students are following instructions.*

Q10: Elementary education uses many of these principles, and they are great! Any recommendations of how to sell this to adult learners who might resist these strategies?

A10: *See Q1 and Q5 above. Once most adults understand the cognitive neuroscience behind brain-based instruction, they are usually happy to participate (it's a much more interesting way to learn than listening to a lecture!).*

Q11: What if people get too carried away with some of the activities and lose focus?

A11: *Give a specific activity objective, instructions, a timeline, and accountability (eg. reporting back to the whole class). And sometimes, when an activity goes off-track, you just pick up the pieces and move on!*

Q12: How do you know how to pace when your attendees are virtual?

A12: *Practice! Practice! Practice! Be sure to allow plenty of time between activities for the tech changes and issues that will arise. Remember to engage learners in various ways about every 5 minutes (and allow time for this, as well). Pay attention to the pacing/timing with each virtual class you teach and then change it based on what you learned.*

Q13: What to do when there is a wide range of knowledge?

A13: *Set up activities in which the more knowledgeable learners can assist the less knowledgeable ones and, if possible, make sure there is a mix of expertise within the table groups (face-to-face) or breakout rooms (virtual). Also, remind the "experts" in the class to let the others speak first and then give the experts an opportunity to share their knowledge.*

Q14: What percentage of time should be spent presenting vs applying & feedback?

A14: *Rather than total presentation time versus total application/feedback time, the guideline should be the duration of each presentation segment (which should be 10 - 20 minutes for in-person classes and 5 - 10 minutes for virtual classes). In between those segments, involve learners in short, quick, engaging review activities of the content presented.*

Q15: What is the ideal webinar length (to maximize engagement and learning)?

A15: A "webinar" is usually defined as an online presentation of information, with limited learner participation. A "virtual class" is usually defined as a more immersive, collaborative, online learning experience. The ideal webinar length seems to be about an hour. The ideal virtual class length (for one session – there can be multiple sessions for one class) is about 2 hours. Beyond that, physical and psychological fatigue increases and learning decreases (research indicates that it takes more mental effort to learn in a virtual class than in a face-to-face one).

Q16: How to replace the ability to "see" each other's answers in online mode with a big group?

A16: I'm sorry, but I'm not sure exactly what you are asking. Please email me with more specific information (sbowperson@gmail.com).

Q17: How to engage learners online when many are reluctant to unmute and speak?

A17: See Q1 and Q7 responses. Also, give learners various ways of being engaged– breakout rooms, chat boxes, whiteboards, and annotation tools – besides speaking.

Q18: How to help participants to "empty their cup" at the beginning so they are open to learning new things.

A18: See Q5 and Q9. Also, having learners do some kind of topic-related activity that involves physical movement at the beginning of the class helps to lessen stress and increases endorphin levels (the pleasure chemicals of the brain). Plus, connection activities along with movement help focus learners on the present moment.

Q19: What are good ways to encourage chat participation in virtual trainings?

A19: See Q1, Q5, Q9, Q17. In a live-streaming class (eg. Zoom), a "Virtual Ball Toss" is a cool activity: Pretend to throw a "virtual ball" to someone in the class and call out their name. They pretend to "catch" the ball and then they comment on whatever the discussion topic is, or they can "pass" and just throw the ball to someone else.

Q20: You are structuring your chat a lot (closing it or saying, "Don't send until I tell you ..."). What are your thoughts about letting participants chat with each other on an on-going basis?

A20: I think the constant visual scrolling of the chat box can be distracting to some (akin to side conversations in a face-to-face class when the instructor is speaking). With that in mind, this was the first time I structured the chat box this way (opening/closing it). Because of technical issues involved in turning it on and off, I probably would not do this again, but I would set some parameters for chat box usage before the class begins.

Q21: How do you do these techniques virtually without them feeling contrived?

A21: When you use these techniques often, you will feel comfortable and the techniques won't feel contrived to you. Once you're comfortable with using them, your learners will be, as well.

Q22: How to get people drawing when they are hung up on not being artists?

A22: You tell learners that the drawing isn't about art; it's about moving information into long-term memory. Instead of calling it "art," you make suggestions like: draw a line, stick figure, icon, cartoon, object – anything that represents the content or the concept.

Q23: What are a few tips for virtual environment please?

A23: Please go to my website's blog (www.Bowperson.com) and you'll find a number of posts there from the past two months with lots of links to resources, articles, and ideas for virtual environments. Also, consider using whiteboard apps (eg. Miro, Mural) – I've seen trainers lay

out their whole class, with a variety of activities, on a whiteboard with excellent results: visual, colorful, interesting, collaborative, informative, engaging learning experiences done virtually!

Q24: How to get feedback that you can use to do further online talks that will work?

A24: *I'm sorry but I'm not quite sure I understand your question – do you mean feedback from your participants? Or from your company or colleagues? Please email me with more specifics (sbowperson@gmail.com).*

Q25: How do you get corporate individuals who are used to sitting and learning to engage in these new ways?

A25: *See Q5, Q10, Q17. And be patient with them; change takes time.*

Q26: How does that square with binge-watching?

A26: *I assume you are referring to the "nature and nurture" segment? Just proves my point! And remember, binge-watching movies, for example, means that something changes on the digital screen every few seconds, which the human brain REALLY loves! Most people, to my knowledge, don't "binge-watch" the news – they will click from one source of information to another, or scroll through social media fairly quickly.*

Q27: Don't such short chunks train our learners to learn in only 5 minutes chunks?

A27: *All of us have already been conditioned by television and the Internet to get information in shorter and shorter chunks. According to current research, the suggestion of 5-minute lecture segments in a virtual class also relates to the physical and mental fatigue of online learning – it takes more concentration and energy to learn in a virtual class than in a face-to-face class (Zoom fatigue is a real thing - a lot has been written about it these past few months).*

Note: If your question from the webinar wasn't listed here, or if you have another one, please email me at sbowperson@gmail.com. Stay safe! :-) Sharon