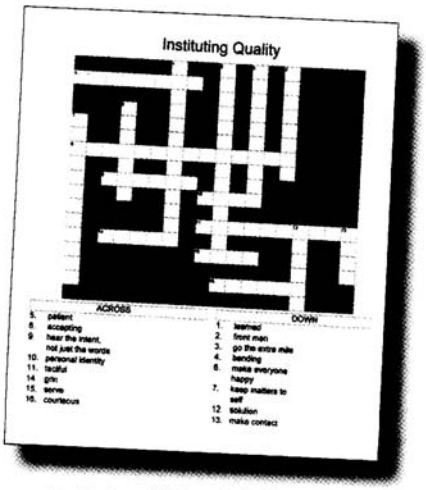
Incorporate Puzzles Into Your Next Training Session

Ever considered including crossword puzzles or word jumbles into your next volunteer training session?

With more than 30 years of volunteer training experience, Terrie Temkin, founding principal, CoreStrategies for Nonprofits (Miami, FL), has perfected the way she presents materials to volunteers by including puzzles in the training.



"I try to think about how to get information across without being just a talking head," she says. "I'm a strong believer that when people actively do things, they learn better than when they just sit and listen. With that philosophy, I have to come up with different ways to present the material."

Before creating the puzzles, Temkin meets with the organization and at least three training participants to identify the training session's goals.

Temkin then creates an outline that features techniques she feels will best help her audience reach those objectives. Depending on the group's needs, Temkin incorporates puzzles with games, lectures, group discussions or brainstorming — always making sure to process the exercises to ensure participants walk away with a firm grasp of critical information.

"I try to build puzzles that assess where they're already at, what they already know and make clear what they still need to learn," she says. Temkin's puzzles have been created from scratch as well as from computer software programs.

Once in the training session, the puzzle exercises are approached with a "unite and conquer" attitude, with the volunteers working at the puzzles in groups.

"I like to keep the groups relatively small because anything more than six people and you tend to have one person take over and leave the others not as involved."

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