

## Letter to the Editor

G'day Toni,

As you can probably tell from my accent I am an Australian visiting the USA on a transfer with my company, Tait Electronics, a worldwide manufacturer of two-way radio systems.

I recently read your article in the March edition of Public Safety Communications. Though I am employed by Tait full time, I have been a volunteer ambulance officer in Australia and an A.O. trainer, as well as St. John Ambulance First Aid Trainer. I hold qualifications as an industrial paramedic and, more importantly, a Certificate IV in assessment and workplace training and am working toward completing my post-graduate diploma in that discipline, with particular reference to both industrial and emergency service communication system training.

Apart from my normal activities in negotiating with industry and the public safety sector regarding their communication needs, I am often called upon to perform training needs analysis and assist with the designing and delivery of training to both operators and technical assistance groups (technicians, support staff, etc.), for our dealers, as well as for customers and end users.

Thank you for putting in writing what I have been saying for years. At long last, another trainer agrees with me. I have always tried to keep humor in my training and have found that it is one of the most useful tools for training retention. Though, sadly, I have also been hauled over the coals, more than once, because the senior staff felt that such serious subjects should be treated with all seriousness. However, time and time again I have heard my students discussing particular scenarios days, weeks and even months after a particular course because someone remembered a joke or humorous situation that occurred during the training.

I may be a little fortunate in that a very Australian trait is not to take oneself too seriously. We certainly do take our training needs seriously, but I will use any means at my disposal to have my students remember the lesson.

This has ranged from a scenario I recently set involving a multi-vehicle MVA (motor vehicle accident) requiring fire control, extrication and extended on-site medical care, where the names of the victims, when looked at a little more closely, especially in the written reports, were more than a little descriptive of the victims' attributes or positions, to one using animated clipart characters and audio prompts within PowerPoint presentations.

I have lost track of the number of times I have been asked about these training courses months afterward and, when asked, the students usually state that a ridiculous name or a particular slide just popped into their heads and got them thinking about the training, again.

I have scoured various websites for some of the more ridiculous situations people have got themselves into and had my trainees attend them. I have even allowed my imagination to run riot in coming up with the most ridiculous scenarios I can think of. What amazes me most is that, usually about halfway through the scenario, an experienced officer will start giggling or outright lose it completely and start telling the trainees about a real situation even more ridiculous than the one they were training on.

And why do the officers remember the situations? Certainly one real-life situation I use involves some pretty horrific injuries caused by a very large power grinder being dropped, still operating, by one worker on another. The fact that these two experienced farm workers had placed animal-castration bands around the grinder trigger (because their fingers had gotten tired) and the worker who was hit basically stopped the grinder with his, shall we say, nether regions always causes a level of mirth during the debriefing when it is realized the almost poetic justice of their stupidity, especially in light of the mechanical aid employed.

I could go on and on about these different scenarios, but I am sure you get the picture. I am still amazed at the number of times, when working around dispatch and communications centers, I hear the words "You did what, with what?" followed by the obvious fighting of an operator to retain a professional demeanor whilst struggling valiantly not to fall off his chair and roll around the floor in uncontrolled hysterical laughter. Out comes the notebook, and another training opportunity arises!

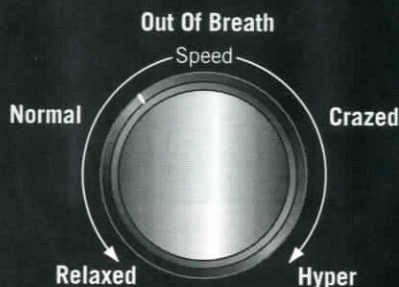
Yes, Toni, all public safety communication is a serious matter, as is the attendance and treatment of the victims, but I will bet that every operator and police, fire or EMS officer can recall, vividly, the jobs that left them speechless with amazement at the incredibly dumb situations people will themselves into, just as they can [recall] the jobs that left them numb with fear. But, when they are looking for jobs to use in a training scenario, it will be the humorous ones that come to the fore, and rightly so.

This e-mail really started as just a short note to thank you for the article; it has grown a little. I would, however, like once again to thank you for the article, with one last thought, "Carry on laughing" and "Nihil illegitima carborundum." (Translation in Aussie terms, "Don't let the bastards wear you down!")

Best regards,

Mike Gray AFAIM  
Regional Sales Manager (Mid-West)  
Tait North America Inc.

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