

## Breaking the cycle of training insanity

By Gary Mitchell; Managing Director, GEM Communications Inc.

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When group training programs simply aren't cutting it, changing your training approach could be just the ticket.

If you use the same training approach over and over and expect different results, at best all you've proven is that the definition of insanity is true. When you're ready to produce different or improved results, you'll be ready for a new approach. In this article I articulate the reasons why a "group" training program isn't cutting it for producing lasting behavioural change and the formation of new habits. Don't worry, there are new options available.

### New Information

If your firm is on the leading edge with respect to the training you make available to your lawyers, then you're most likely introducing your lawyers to the concepts of business development, leadership, management and team building. While these concepts are essential for helping you run your law firm like a business, they are, for the most part, foreign to lawyers. These concepts are not taught at law school, and with the exception of those who possess natural abilities, learning these will require your lawyers to develop new behaviours. Behaviour changes once new habits have been formed. Habits don't form over a one or two day training session.

### Be Mindful of the "Quick Fix" Approach

Unfortunately, when it comes to learning new skills and forming new habits, most existing group training programs offer only a "quick fix" at best. Habits take longer than a day or two to form. And new behaviour is best learned through action, not lectures. So while the all encompassing two-to three day workshop might look appealing at first, take a second look. Be sure you understand what results these programs have produced. And know what successes there have been two, three and even six months following the

program. In most cases, this will not be a sufficient amount of time for your lawyers.

### Approach

It's one thing to teach someone how to do something, and it's another to show them how to do it. And show them in their own environments, not in the incubator of an off-site training program. Information is soon forgotten when it is not acted upon in real life. Within a short period of time, they go back to their old habits or become consumed with their billable hours.

### Addressing Individual Needs

Each one of your lawyers possesses varying degrees of communication and people skills. Delivering a "one size fits all" program does not effectively address individual needs and abilities. While there are similarities in the needs of individuals, they are in the end, still individual. You cannot expect to meet the needs of everyone with group training.

### Participation

How likely are your lawyers to open up in a group setting? How likely are they to experiment and try something new in front of a room full of their colleagues? How many of them are likely to role play in this type of set-



Gary Mitchell  
GEM Communications Inc.  
Suite 675  
142-757 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver, BC  
V6C 1A1  
(604) 669-5235  
www.gemcommunications.ca  
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ting? You guessed it — not too many. So how can you create breakthroughs with this approach? Breakthroughs are required, in fact, even an impetus for changing behaviour.

### **Accountability and Implementation**

Where the ball is dropped 90 per cent of the time with group training is in the integration of the learning back in the workplace — back in real life situations. How likely are your lawyers to implement their learning on their own with all of the current pressures they face? They need weekly support for the

kinds of changes they want to make. You can help your lawyers integrate what they have learned in a group or intensive setting by holding them to account to the process of integration. This is extremely time consuming. Most marketing directors and professional development directors don't have the time to

meet with each one of their lawyers regularly. And quarterly is not regular enough. Accountability is the key ingredient. It leads to integration. Integration leads to implementation. Implementation leads to results. Results they (and you) can see.

### **The Alternative**

To produce the results you and your lawyers are looking for, offer them one-to-one training. It's in this setting where individual needs are addressed and met, where breakthroughs in experiences happen, where real-life learning takes place and where results are immediate and tangible. Learning takes place using an experiential approach, where every aspect of their habitual daily routine can become a "teachable moment."

### **Group Training Sessions: The Pros**

I am not trying to discredit the numerous professionals delivering group training programs or the knowledge that they pass on. There are some great presenters who produce the "hallelujah" moments and get your team all fired up and ready to go. But know that's what they produce and are good for. Group training sessions are great for a quick energy boost and for introducing your lawyers to new concepts or information. They're also great for helping you to identify which lawyers are most likely to benefit from further training in a one-to-one

setting. So, invest in group training if you must. But do so with realistic expectations of the results they produce. And then ask yourself if that's enough for your firm.

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*Gary Mitchell is the managing director of GEM Communications; a firm specialized in helping lawyers become business savvy. He currently serves as the chair of the Marketing committee of the Vancouver Chapter of the Legal Marketing Association. Gary can be reached at 604-669-5235 or [gary@gemcommunications.ca](mailto:gary@gemcommunications.ca).*

