

LnL: A Dollar Saving Training Option

by Shirley Fine Lee

An old yet still good idea to consider in reducing training costs is the Lunch and Learn (a.k.a. LnL or L&L) or Brown Bag Seminar (BBS). Besides low cost design and development, these have the added benefit of reducing participant time away from the job. Either option provides a module of learning in about 45 minutes to one hour. The thing to remember when offering training options over the employee's lunch hour is that they must be optional, not mandatory, as this is considered their personal time.

The title Brown Bag Seminar is the older name for this training option and it implies that the participant must bring lunch with them. The term Lunch and Learn is newer and promotes the idea of self-directed training. The LnL might be a brown bag situation too or an inexpensive lunch of sandwiches or individual pizzas could be provided. It needs to be spelled out to potential participants what their "eating" option is during this time. Some companies that currently do LnL say offering food is an attractive incentive for more people to attend.

What should the LnL or BBS include in order to effective and timely training? The possibilities are endless, but below are a few common uses.

- Consider taking a 4-6 hour soft-skills course that is already modularized and offering each module separately during the lunch time. Do this over consecutive days in a week or on a particular weekday for several weeks. Courses with group discussion or paired activities, and those with [role plays or skits](#), can be easily done if the activity portion is properly placed. Put activities after the lecture and before the Q&A, summary, or debrief planned near the end, as this is when most will be done eating. Modules with activities that require special student materials or equipment would probably not be a good fit for this timeframe.
- Have subject matter experts (SME) prepare a presentation on a new technology, product, or computer application the employees may be interested in gaining knowledge on. This would be something similar to the [in-house symposium](#) presentations discussed in last month's newsletter, but with a different topic being offered each month for several months rather than being an all-day affair. Using an SME presentation is a quick and easy way to reduce training costs in both design and development.
- Invite monthly guest speakers from outside the company to speak on topics that will help employees with their personal, professional, or financial growth. This might mean having to pay a speaker's fee, but remember you are saving on labor and instructional design with this option too. Find a speaker by using the ASTD chapter's [consultant directory](#) or asking people for suggestions at the next meeting. Negotiating price with a speaker who has a book available may be possible – that is if you also buy copies of their book to distribute to lunch-time participants. A good book to read at their own self-paced speed

and on their own time can provide the participant with additional in-depth learning outside the traditional classroom.

The LnL/BBS concept is an opportunity to be creative, as well as frugal. Think about what you could do, who you could talk to, and what might appeal to those in your company. Talk to your human resources people about any problems they might see with doing training this way. Then determine where something like this might fit into your current training plan.



About the Author: Shirley Fine Lee is a trainer and speaker. She is the author of "[R.A!R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach](#)", a guide to planning and conducting meetings for productivity and effectiveness, and smoothly run. She has considerable training and expertise in leading effective meetings herself, as well as training others to do the same. Shirley has worked as a training and development specialist since 1986, and an independent consultant since 2000 when she joined Dallas ASTD. She has extensive experience helping organizations with their team building, training development, meeting facilitation, presentation delivery, and other communication needs. You may read many business articles by Shirley (some of the e-articles may be reprinted in company newsletters) from her website or on the multi-contributor productivity tips blog at <http://2bproductive.blogspot.com/>. If you want to find out more about

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