

Seven Tips to Enjoying being the Trainer

By Carol Fey

Technical gurus often find themselves in front of a group, because they know so much. The challenge isn't the subject matter so much as the training situation. What *does* a person do to be an effective trainer?

Here are some tips for being the trainer:

- 1) Stay in control of both the subject matter, and what goes on in the training room. Start out by stating exactly what the class is about, for example, "This session will cover basic HVAC controls. We won't be going into complex controls today." Then when the big guy in the front row asks something challenging, you can restate, "This class is about simple controls. Catch me after class with your question and I'll answer it." When he does it again—and he will—same answer. He'll eventually get the message.
- 2) You don't have to know everything—no one does—so don't feel bad about that.
- 3) You can often predict types of behavior by where the students sit. There's the question-asker in the front row. There's the group in the back working on a nap. Interruptions and sleepers do affect the total environment. You can alter the dynamic by moving yourself.
- 4) Get away the front of the room sometimes. You can teach from the back, side, or middle of the room. The variation of where you are helps keep their attention.
- 5) Have a "conversation" with the class rather than only lecturing. Ask "what if" questions--and wait for answers. Give rewards the participation that you want, whether a verbal "That's right" or a silly gold star sticker.
- 6) Make the class "hands on," preferably with the items that pertain to the class. If it's a wiring class, then by all means have everyone do some wiring. If that's not possible, have inexpensive toys such as Silly Putty for the students to keep their hands busy.
- 7) Pass out a five-item course evaluation at the end of the class so they can tell you how great the class was. They will!