

# Kung-Fu Training

The Art of Developing and Delivering  
Kick-Butt Training Programs



by Chris Ferdinandi

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This work was last updated on October 20, 2009.

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## About the Author

Chris Ferdinandi is a human resource pro based in Boston, MA.

He's also a beach bum, weekend warrior, and musician.

To learn more, visit [ChrisFerdinandi.com](http://ChrisFerdinandi.com).



## Contents

<b>The Art of Kung-Fu Training.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Kung-Fu Training: What &amp; Why?.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Where Most Trainers Go Wrong	
<b>Inspiring People.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Keeping Your Audience Engaged	
The Five Stages of Change	
Motivating Change	
<b>Looks Matter.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Your Slides Are Not the Presentation	
One Idea Per Slide	
Presentation Zen	
<b>Black Belt Training.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Additional Kung-Fu Training Resources.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## The Art of Kung-Fu Training

Training has only one purpose:  
Influence participants to do things  
that drive organizational success.

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If your training doesn't change the way people do things, why bother? If people start doing things differently, but it has no impact on your team or organizational performance, why bother?

Talent management is all about inspiring people to do amazing things at the workplace, and a well-developed training program is fantastic way to inspire.

Let's learn how to kick butt!

## Kung-Fu Training: What and Why?

Before you do anything - before you create content, craft your talking points, or create a presentation - you need to ask yourself two questions:

*What do I want people to do differently?*

*What effect should this have on team or organizational performance?*

Your answers to these two questions will form the foundation of your training program, and will help you develop metrics to measure its success.

## Where Most Trainers Go Wrong: The Four Ways to Evaluate a Training Program

How do you know when your program has been successful?

There are four ways to evaluate a training program:

1. Did participants enjoy the training?
2. Did participants learn something?
3. Are participants doing things differently?
4. Are participants doing things differently that cause the organization to be more successful?

If you can get people to do things differently, you'll be more successful than 95 percent of professional trainers.

Obviously it's important to develop an engaging training. If you're boring and people zone out, your program will be a total failure. But simply being enjoyable isn't the end-goal of a kick-butt training program. It's just a means to an end.

Similarly, you want your participants to learn something. If they don't learn anything new, they can't do things differently. However, far too often people will sit through a training program, learn a lot, and then not do a single thing differently.

Why? Getting people to change is difficult. For instance, everyone knows that smoking will probably kill you, but every day millions of people keep lighting up. Many are addicted, but many also just don't want to stop.

If you can get people to do things differently, you'll be more successful than 95 percent of professional trainers. And if you can get people to do things that cause an organization to be more successful, you'll be a Kung-Fu Training Master!

Remember, your goal is to **influence participants** to do things that **drive organizational success**.

## Inspiring People

In order to be a truly successful trainer, you need to **inspire people** to do things that drive organizational success.

In this chapter, I'll provide you with some very specific tools and strategies to do just that. When is telling your audience about the benefits of a new way of doing things a sure-fire way to ruin a presentation? Why are people so resistant to change, and how can you overcome this resistance?

In this chapter, you'll find out these answers to these questions and more.

## Keeping Your Audience Engaged

Imagine this: You've signed up for a training seminar called *How to Build an Effective New Hire Onboarding Program*. This is one of your key initiatives for the year, so you're pumped. You've registered and your company has paid good money for you to go spend two hours at this training.

You arrive, grab a seat, and the presentation starts. You can't wait (yea, admit it - you're an HR dork, just like me). The trainer walks out and starts... and then spends the first 45 minutes talking about why onboarding is important and why it's something you should be doing at your company.

Understanding where in the five stages of change your audience is (or failing to do so) can make or break your training program.

By the time she gets to the good stuff - building an effective onboarding program - half the audience has zoned out. And when she's finished, she's only really given you a surface level look into effective onboarding strategies. The trainer had great information and a captive, willing audience, but her training was a failure. She didn't **understand her audience**.

## The Five Stages of Change

Where did our trainer go wrong? She failed to consider the needs of her audience. She spent the first 45 minutes of the seminar trying to convince people that they needed a great onboarding program, but they were already there. What the audience really needed was some practical advice on how build one.

Understanding where in the five stages of change your audience is (or failing to do so) can make or break your training program. Spend too much time getting buy-in when people are already keen on the idea, and your audience will get bored. Jump right into the nitty-gritty before people have warmed up to what you're selling and all of your great how-to tips will be useless.

One of the easiest ways to prepare for an audience is to use the *Five Stages of Change* as your guide.

### 1. Pre-Contemplation: Haven't even thought about it

In this stage, your audience is going about their business, doing what they've always done. They haven't even considered doing

things differently. If you're introducing a new system or program at your organization, this is probably where your audience is at.

In pre-contemplation, it's important to thoroughly **explain** what the new system or program is before trying to gain buy-in. Depending on the length of the training, the more detailed how-to information might not be appropriate at this time.

## **2. Contemplation: Thinking about it, but not making any changes just yet**

In this stage, your audience is evaluating the pros and cons of doing things differently. If this is your audience, your primary goal should be to **gain buy-in** for the new way of doing things. It's essential for you to eliminate any perceived negative impacts caused by the change and ease people's fears before you start focusing on the good stuff.

As the audience moves through the contemplation stage, a decision to take action will occur (assuming they don't decide they're better off doing things the way they've always done them - I'll talk more about how to avoid this in the next section).

## **3. Preparation: Getting ready**

During the preparation phase, your audience is gathering information and developing an action plan. If you were holding a how-to seminar like the trainer in our example above, you should typically assume that this is your audience. Don't waste too

much time trying to gain buy-in or you'll lose their engagement pretty quickly.

Focus on specific, practical **how-to information**, and when appropriate, some of the theory behind the how-to stuff so that they can modify it for their own needs.

#### **4. Action: Git 'r done!**

During the action stage, individuals are actively working to change their behaviors, implement new programs and adopt new systems. If your organization has implemented a new program or system, it's essential that you **reinforce changes** you're looking for through ongoing feedback loops - through managers, blogs, newsletters, social networks and any other channels of communication you have - to ensure people don't go back to the old way of doing things.

#### **5. Maintenance: Coming full circle**

This stage is the pre-contemplation stage for the new way of doing things. Individuals in the maintenance stage have completely adopted the new program, system or behavior, and this is now their default auto-pilot mode.

During any stage of the first four stages, individuals can revert back to pre-contemplation. It's crucial for you to constantly promote the changes and **motivate employees** to adopt them.

## Motivating Change

People naturally resist change, particularly at work. Some common reasons people may not warm-up to a new system, program or way of doing things include:

*They don't see a problem with the current way of doing things.*

*They disagree with what you've identified as a problem.*

*They're afraid they won't be able to meet their new performance expectations.*

*They don't identify with the new team/organizational goals or outcomes.*

*They feel invalidated. This is particularly true if a skill that they used to hold a quasi-monopoly on is now common place, and their talents are no longer unique or are less valuable.*

While the reasons people don't easily warm-up to change in the workplace are varied, they do share one thing in common: They're all rooted in the *Five Sources of Motivation*.

## Five Sources of Motivation

*The Five Sources of Motivation Theory* is the work of Richard W. Scholl, Laura L. Beauvais and Nancy H. Leonard.

They wanted to answer the question: "What motivates membership and performance of people at work?"

Research by a bunch of people far smarter than me (see sidebar) has found that there are five major sources of motivation that influence behavior at work:

*Intrinsic Motivation*

*Instrumental Motivation*

*Internal Validation*

*External Validation*

*Goal Identification*

Nobody is 100 percent motivated by any one of these sources, but rather by a combination of them. So what do they mean?

### Intrinsic Motivation

When you think about intrinsic motivation, it's important to separate "doing" from "succeeding." Someone who's truly intrinsically motivated **likes the actual act of doing something**, whether or not they're any good at it or reach any sort of goal.

For example, I occasionally like to go to mini-golfing. I'm absolutely terrible at it, and don't really care if I get better or not. I don't care if I win or lose, how many strokes it takes me to

sink the ball (though I am a little embarrassed when my fiancé consistently outplays me), or even if I played better than last time. On a beautiful summer night, engaging in the maddening ritual of trying to get a tiny ball into a little plastic cup is a pretty good time.

I'm intrinsically motivated to play mini-golf. If I played to get better, or enjoyed winning, that would be a different kind of motivation that I'll talk about in just a moment.

### **Instrumental Motivation**

People who are instrumentally motivated do things primarily for **the reward** they receive if they're successful. This includes bonuses, extra time off, promotions and so on.

Instrumental rewards don't always have to be positive. Fear of losing one's job (and subsequently, the right to keep it for a job well done) is a form of instrumental motivation. This source of motivation is the one that organizations seem to focus on the most.

### **Internal & External Validation**

Internal and external validation are quite similar. Individuals motivated in this way are driven by a **desire to be a rockstar** at what they do. In other words, they like confirmation that what they think they're good at is what they're actually good at.

For people who are motivated by external validation, this comes in the form of praise for a job well done and public recognition. For those who are motivated by internal validation, simply succeeding at a challenging goal or task may be enough.

Going back to my mini-golf example, if I played a lot with intention of getting better, I would be motivated by validation. If I liked basking in the glory of crushing my friends in a game, I would be externally motivated. But if just knowing that I played better than last time drove me to play harder, I would be internally motivated.

It's not uncommon for people to be influenced by both internal and external validation.

### **Goal Identification**

Goal identification is when a person so strongly identifies with the **goal or mission of an organization** that they'll do things just to see that goal realized. This motivation is often a very strong driver of behavior at non-profits, where other motivational forces may be low or non-existent.

### **Making Motivation Work for You**

Inspiring people to change the way they do things isn't easy. Black Belt Kung-Fu Trainers know that they need to stack the odds in their favor.

How do you do this? Make sure you're motivating using as many of the Five Sources as possible.

Most organization's make the mistake of only using one or two - usually just instrumental motivation. "Do this differently. We'll let you keep your job." What a great way to motivate people!

If you really want to **inspire** your employees to do **amazing work**, use as many of the Five Sources as you can.

You may want to have some instrumental motivation in the form of spot awards or bonuses tied to exhibiting the new behaviors. You should be mindful that whatever changes you're looking for don't invalidate your employees. This may require coaching employees on how to adopt the new behaviors. Set them up for success. If the change is drastic, it may actually benefit both you and the employee if you modified certain individuals' roles or moved them into new job functions.

Through open communication (not just giving employees information, but engaging them in conversation), you can gain substantial buy-in on the new direction you're heading in or goal you're trying to meet. And as much as is reasonably possible, making the new behavior somewhat enjoyable helps, too.

Change is rarely easy. But it often does not have to be as difficult as some organization's make it, either. As a Kung-Fu Trainer, your job is to inspire people in whatever ways you can.

## Looks Matter (Not Your Looks - the Presentation's)

There is an unspoken truth about most business presentations...  
*They suck!*

There is an unspoken truth about most business presentations:  
*They suck!*

Far too many presentations are boring, ugly and painful to sit through. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. Ten bullet points with full sentences in size 12 font. The occasional graph or chart thrown in for good measure, with 27 different variables and text too small to read. The presenter just reads off the screen.

Does anyone really think this makes for a good presentation?

## Your Slides are **Not** the Presentation

Many presenters have a tendency to hide behind their slides. They dim the lights, sit off to the side of the room (or worse, the back!) and read off the screen.

There's a big problem with that: People can read faster than you can talk. I'm sure you've sat through presentations like that before. What happens? You ignore what the person is saying and read ahead of them.

And if people can just read the slides and get the same information, what do they need you for? Why not just send them the slides by email and cancel the training?

Good presentation slides should complement you, not mimic you.

## One Idea at a Time

**Bullet points suck.** Stop using them immediately and you will instantly improve the quality of your presentations.

I know what you're thinking: "Won't all of the ideas on the slide blend together without bullets to keep them separated?" Nope.

Why not? Because you'll only have **one idea** per slide. That's right, one.

One sentence, preferably even just one to five words, whenever possible. Or maybe even no words at all. Since your slide isn't littered with text, make sure you're using at least size 30 font.

Or instead of text, how about just a single, striking graphic? And while we're talking about graphics, you should drop the clipart and upgrade to professional graphics. You can find them for free on [Flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com) or very cheap at [iStockPhoto.com](https://www.iStockPhoto.com).

What I've just said is PowerPoint blasphemy, but it will drastically improve your presentation skills. It will keep people

from reading ahead and allow you to be the star of the show. Remember, slides should **enhance** your presentation, not be your presentation.

## Presentation Zen

Garr Reynolds is a professional designer. He runs a fantastic website on presentation design called [PresentationZen.com](http://PresentationZen.com). This chapter was in large part my summary of the concepts on Garr's website and in his book, also titled [Presentation Zen](#).

This chapter is designed to be an introduction to the principles of Presentation Zen. To see some great examples of presentations using this style, check out Garr Reynolds' talk on [Presentation Zen](#), or Merlin Mann's presentation on [Inbox Zero](#), both sponsored by Google.

If you'd like to learn more, check out the list of resources at the end of this book.

## Black Belt Training

Congratulations! You're a Kung-Fu Training Black Belt.

To keep your skills sharp and advance to the level of Training Sensei, it's important for you to constantly practice and refine your art.

**In summary:**

**Ask yourself two questions:**

*What do I want people to do differently?*

*What effect should this have on team or organizational performance?*

**Understand your audience.**

**Incorporate as many motivational drivers as possible.**

**Design presentations that complement you, not overshadow you.**

# Kung-Fu Training Resources

## Reading

[PresentationZen.com](http://PresentationZen.com)

[Presentation Zen](#) (the book)

[How I made my presentations a little better](#) by Merlin Mann

[How to Build a Better Training Program](#) at Manager's Sandbox

[How to Motivate Your Employees](#) at Manager's Sandbox

## Viewing

Garr Reynolds at Google: [Presentation Zen](#)

Merlin Mann at Google: [Inbox Zero](#)

## Free or Cheap Presentation Images

[CompFight.com](#) (Search Flickr's Creative Commons Directory)

[iStockPhoto.com](#) (Inexpensive stock images)

For more resources like this one, visit [RenegadeHR.net](http://RenegadeHR.net).