

# Cross Point

## If You Train: How to Avoid the Three Biggest Mistakes Trainers Make

By Carla Cross, CRB, MA

**F**ew people who ‘train’ in real estate are trained as instructors. In fact, almost all of us who are now real estate trainers learned to train like I first learned to play the piano: ‘By ear’. That is, we just did what comes naturally. In addition, we usually watched other real estate professionals do ‘training’. We picked up certain techniques just by watching these people present their material.

For awhile, doing what came naturally and watching others present sufficed to help us get good reviews. We knew our subjects, and we could think on our feet well enough to get by. Now, that’s not all bad. We picked up some good habits and exploited our natural talent. However, we also picked up some bad habits—habits which actually inhibit effective attendee learning.

The way we train assures the outcomes we get. The goal of real training is an observable change in behavior. Avoiding the mistakes below help assure that the goals of training are met. After all, if you’re going to spend your time training agents and managers to be more productive and profitable, you deserve to see the results of your training in increased production and profits

**H**ere are the three biggest trainer mistakes I’ve observed that stop the student from being able to do what the session promises:

1. Choosing too broad a topic for the time frame.
2. Having no clear student goals (learning objectives) for the session (what the student will be able to do as a result of attending this session).
3. Not involving the students in

the learning process (lack of involvement diminishes what the student learns to do)

### **MISTAKE #1:**

#### Choosing Too Broad a Topic

Have you ever attended a real estate presentation, and the instructor began with: “We have lots of material to cover.....” I just want to take out a blanket and cover the instructor and get it over with! That isn’t a presentation—that’s a marathon of information. This instructor’s goal is to tell us everything he/she knows, so we will all know everything he/she knows. Why don’t we just read the book? What’s the point of being in a class? Being a musician, I compare it to playing all eighty-eight keys on the piano in any order, just to get them all heard. It’s not a song, it’s just noise! Remember, less information is better.

**Narrow Your Topic and Include Skill Development.** I teach a two-day, very interactive workshop called “Train the Trainer”. Each attendee presents a six-minute skill-building workshop. One of the most common mistakes presenters make is that they choose too broad a topic, and spew out too much infor-

mation. Then, they don't have time to see the students practice the skill—even though it was supposed to be a 'skill-building workshop'.

A two-hour presentation could be "How to Handle the Three Major Objections to Listing with You." Remember, you must first teach what handling objections is by defining this concept and giving an example. Then, to assure the student can handle objections, you must teach the skill of handling objections by demonstrating objection handling and then having the students practice that skill. By observing the students' performance, you can observe whether the overall goal of training has been met—an observable change in student behavior. Structuring a workshop may sound easier than it is. In my "Train the Trainer" course, I use structural models to show how to structure a workshop using the teaching principles I've sketched for you in this paragraph. It takes practice and conscious effort to structure workshops effectively.

### **MISTAKE #2:**

No stated student goals for the session.

Making mistake number one practically guarantees that the instructor also made mistake number two. To avoid wandering around in the land of words, the trainer must first decide on student-focused goals for the session. In training terms, these are called

'learning objectives' Here's an appropriate learning objective for the workshop above:

"As a result of this workshop, the student will be able to answer the three major objections to listing with that agent."

### **MISTAKE #3:**

Not Involving the Students in the Learning Process

Most new trainers have two fears: They won't be able to control the class, and they won't be fascinating enough as presenters. So, they work on their presentation skills. They attempt to become entertaining, likeable presenters. They work on their timing and their stories. They don't realize that these are only a few of the 'delivery methods' real trainers need to be effective. And, in fact, they are not the delivery methods that result in the most learning! They're 'instructor focused', not 'student focused'. I believe the reason that new trainers focus on these 'stand alone' presentation skills is that they see these skills applied over and over by real estate presenters. They think they're seeing 'training'. Taking a good "Train the Trainer" course will expand your horizons beyond the 'stand alone' presentation skills so often relied upon, and take you into the world of effective, student-focused training.

Refining your training methods is the greatest gift you can give yourself—and your students. By becoming

a master trainer, you'll start seeing real, measurable behavioral changes in your students—and a great business bottom line.

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