



Sacramento ASTD:

The Annual Holiday Spectacular and Throw-down

Summary: The "Package" for How to do a Throw-Down

This 6 page package and supplemental attachments is designed to show you how to plan, organize, promote, fill, and conduct a Holiday Spectacular and Trainer Throw-down.

The next 5 pages will provide information and background for the event.

Page 6 contains the directory for the files you may want to use as examples or templates for your throw-down.

After each file name on page 6, you will find a short description of each file's contents.

Note: All the files are at Drobbox.com (if you are not familiar with drop-box, it is a free and easy to use service, where you can go to download and share files) You should receive a dropbox link shortly after you receive the email with this file. This will enable you to download files without a dropbox account. If you have a problem getting to the files, call Bruce (below) and he will send a link to you.

Good luck and feel free to call with questions or comments at mail@astdsac.org – Please use "Bruce Throw-down" in subject line

If you use the idea, we'd love to get your comments in a short testimonial. Thanks.

Bruce Winner / 916.563.3232 / winnerb@losrios.edu

Background

If you have a holiday party or tradition that is getting a bit stale, perhaps it is time to shake things up or do something new. In fact, this is exactly why we tried this idea, the Trainer Throw-down, at our Sacramento ASTD Chapter. This was our solution to changing things up, creating some buzz, and revitalizing our December holiday event. We had a real problem. Our December 2009 meeting had a total of nine participants and left everyone in attendance feeling down. We wanted to do something different and maybe... just a little bit crazy.

Summary

We call this event our **"Holiday Spectacular and Trainer Throw-Down"** in order to create a bit of buzz and call attention to the event. We wanted members to get the message that this event would be different, new, and that maybe unexpected things would happen. In addition to the Throw-down event, which most of this paper and attached files concern, we also let people know that if they came to the holiday spectacular there will be some nice giveaways and a great meal, usually a bit nicer than our other catered event meals. In our promotional pieces prior to the event, we spoke about a big crowd and lots of fun. We convinced our members that they would see some great entertainment, in the form of the "Throw-down", and participate in an entertaining event to close out the ASTD season. Then we delivered the crowd and the entertainment and the momentum has been building for three years.

What is a Trainer Throw-down?

The name was based on those hokey staged wrestling events where they start with 8 men in a ring and all but one will be "thrown-down" or eliminated. In our throw-down, trainers and other training and development professionals compete against each other to see who can "throw-down" their best training technique, tool, or method.

We invite trainers, designers, coaches, and in fact any of our members or non-members to submit an idea for a **twelve-minute** presentation to "show their best stuff". From the submissions, we choose four finalists who present at the throw-down. Four twelve-minute presentations seem to be optimal. This gives the time needed to have a nice meal and networking with some end of year announcements and thank you's made to board members and attending members, before the throw-down starts.

The throw-down needs extra time for introductions, time between presentations, and for scoring to take place. The throw-down itself (with four presentations or 48 minutes), will probably consume at least an extra 20 minutes (or one hour and 10 minutes total). In addition, we engage a good speaker or emcee to introduce the throw-down contestants, make a few jokes, and generally keep things positive and light. Each contestant makes their presentation and the audience is given a short and simple scorecard (see attachments) to score the presentation.

The Throw-down contestants are scored on the following categories. (entertainment, learning, engagement, and innovation). It is scored at the end of each presentation by each attendee at the event.

5 is highest score / 1 is lowest score

- I was entertained
- I learned something of value
- I was engaged
- I found the presentation original or innovative

See sample Ballot or Scorecard in the attachments – Attachment 3

Print the sheets, cut out the five ballots, and give them to each participant. Give everyone an extra, in case they mess one up.

After the four throw-down presentations are complete, the scores are tallied in the back of the room and the winner is presented. We give a nice prize to the winner, usually \$100 to \$150 dollars. We give all the presenters free admission and the runners up a \$25 gift card.

We allow two hours for the entire event (registration to close), and have always ended on time or with only a short overrun. (10-15 minutes)

Presentations at our Throw-downs have included:

- A graphic illustrator who used flip charts and drawing to reinforce his training craft
- A trainer who use improvisational acting techniques as training exercise
- Someone who demonstrated a homemade jeopardy game (electronic or PP based) and showed how it could be used in the classroom

Of course we have had some outrageous presentations as well.

They included:

- A woman who does motivational speaking in the persona of a Texan clad in pink, playing a pink guitar, and providing words of inspiration and tips on how to get along in the workplace. She brought the house down. Oh, but she didn't win!
- The winner that year was "OD Elvis" (Organizational Development Elvis) who discussed the concept of "flow" while in full Elvis costume, back from the afterworld, playing guitar and being corny and well, Elvis-like.

Your members and locals will surprise you. There is probably tremendous talent and innovation in your chapter, it simply needs to be given the chance to show itself.

Note: Most of our events over the course of the year are break-even affairs or money makers, but not this holiday event. We usually lose \$250 or more on the event, but are happy to do so. We believe the loss is worth it because of the attention generated. This is our way of saying "Thank you ASTD Sacramento members". December 2013 will be our fourth year of the event and people talk about it all year.

Don't be afraid to change things up for your audience

Even after 3 years of success, we are still making changes to this event. For this year's event, Dec 2013, we are making a change to broaden the pool of participants. We sensed last year that many of our members and non-members felt too much pressure to participate. Perhaps this is because of some of the rather outrageous presentations that have taken place in the last few years. In order to level the playing field in 2013, we are planning a "Pecha Kucha" event. If you are not familiar with the concept, there is an attachment to give more detail. In short, a Pecha Kucha is a short Powerpoint presentation on any topic. We will limit our presenters to training and development topics. A Pecha Kucha contains 20 slides, with each slide shown for 20 seconds, for a presentation of exactly 6 minutes, 40 seconds.

This format should give anyone with a good idea the ability to participate. It will also give us the opportunity to expand participation to 6 or 7 participants. The atmosphere in a Pecha Kucha session is usually very engaging. Once the "clock starts ticking", the audience is on the side of the presenter, willing them to succeed. This is a wonderful atmosphere for both new and experienced presenters. We'll let you know how it works. (See Pecha Kucha attachment – Attachment 4)

More Program Details

Before the event.

Market the program heavily, especially in the first years. You will have to do a bit of explaining to make sure the event is understood. In fact, you will probably need to hand select or recruit those who are your first Throw-down contestants. I personally explained this event and convinced 4 trainer friends and colleagues to participate in the first event. Since then, we have simply sent the announcements out 6-8 weeks in advance and asked for presentation submissions.

In the attachments you will see a few examples of event flyers, text we use in our promotional email blasts, and language from our website used to promote the event. many examples of flyers and promo

See attachments that include:

- Attachment 1 - Draft email blast (This is our email message sent out to announce event to members and non-members. Generally sent for 4-8 weeks. Once per week until 2 weeks prior to event and then twice per week.)
- Attachment 2 - Draft of event flyer 2-sided (Side one of flyer is promotional and informational. Side two is event information and side two is the entry form for throw-down participants)

During the Two-Hour Event (Registration to Throw-down end)

How the event unfolds (in detail)

We conduct this event as an evening event using this agenda model

5:30 – 6:00 PM

Registration, buffet style dinner, and some loosely structured networking event (often simply table top mixing) Wine, mixing, dinner, registration

6:00 to 6:15 Outgoing President Message (Some attendees are still eating)

Includes: Message, thank you's and kudos to the board, volunteers, and members for their support. Welcome and introduce incoming board, other announcements.

6:15 – 6:25 (Some attendees are still eating or doing coffee and dessert. We aren't hurrying things, but we are keeping the event moving along so we can end in 2 hours)

Program Director introduces the event and turns things over to the emcee.

The emcee explains the rules, the responsibility of everyone to be a judge, makes things light, fun, tells a good story, a joke or two, and makes a big point of creating a supportive atmosphere, where everyone is celebrated.

6:25 to 7:20

4 participants, 12 minutes each, ballots on every table, 2-3 volunteers to pick up ballots and turn over to the judges at end of each presentation

Emcee introduces and probably asks a few questions to set up each participant

During this set up time a few volunteers pick up ballots and give to two more volunteers in the back of the room who are entering results into a spreadsheet. (Sorry, couldn't find the spreadsheet to include in the package. It was a simple affair with five long rows for each contestant. Each row was for one of the scored criteria and the score of 1-5 was entered from each ballot turned in. We then averaged the scores and compared them for each throw-down participant. *NOTE: We love to find a simpler means of scoring (without incurring more costs). If you have an idea, let us know.*

7:20 to 7:30 Tabulation of results by judges

7:30 Presentation of the awards to winner and other contestants.

Present trophy and check to winner (usually a very cheap and funny trophy)

Turns program back to President for thanks for attending / adjournment

Close with invitation for all to attend the January event and great things planned in the new year.

See sample agenda in attachment 5. This is a two-sided document. Page one is the agenda for the attendees. The back page contains the coming events for the next year. (We think this last meeting of the year is a great time to promote what is coming in the following year)

We also hand out a short bio on each presenter. See attachment 6. This is a nice promo for the speaker and a way to thank them for their participation.

Attachments

- **Attachment 1 - Draft email blast** (This is our email message sent out to announce event to members and non-members. Generally sent for 4-8 weeks. Once per week until 2 weeks prior to event and then twice per week.)
- **Attachment 2 – (in word and pdf) Draft of event flyer 2-sided** (Side one of flyer is promotional and informational. Side two is event information and side two is the entry form for throw-down participants)
- **Attachment 3 - Sample scorecard in the attachments**
Print the sheets, cut out the five ballots, and give them to each participant. Give everyone an extra, in case they mess one up.
- **Attachment 4 – The Pecha Kucha informational piece.** Several pages with links to more information about what a Pecha Kucha event is, some examples, an NPR piece on a Pecha Kucha event, and more.
- **Attachment 5 – Sample agenda from one of our Throw-Down events.** This is a two-sided document.
 - Page one is the agenda for the attendees.
 - The back page contains the coming events for the next year. (We think this last meeting of the year is a great time to promote what is coming in the following year)
- **Attachment 6 – Short bio on the Thrown-down Participants.** We also hand out a short bio on each presenter. This is a nice promo for the speaker and a way to thank them for their participation.

Two bonus Handouts

Don't forget to review these two documents if you haven't seen them in awhile. They are the two handouts for creating buzz and building membership from ALC 2012. We are still using them for reference. Are they working? We expect to have 300 members by the end of 2013. At the end of 2009, we had 90 members! It works!

Handout # 1 The Four Secrets of Building Chapter Membership and Buzz: Twenty-Four tips, techniques, and methods to build membership and buzz!

Handout # 2 A set of slides that showcase our monthly events in 2012 (with explanatory notes).