

Intimate & Interactive

Including counsellors in the planning of staff training is a wonderful way to hammer home your camp's philosophy

If you want your camp personnel to have your philosophy, then you must show them that philosophy in action each and every day. This is not only done a week or two before camp, but throughout the year as well. Gone are the days when staff can pick up information in a lecture-type training session.

PlayStation and the Internet has ended that era forever! The following are ways in which you can bring your staff into your camp family, and help them represent the philosophy of your camp during the summer and in the off season.

1. Tell them the philosophy: Placing your philosophy in your camp's Counsellor Manual is not enough. Your philosophy must be discussed when you train your staff. Your tag line, or logo, should be all over the camp (e.g., locker rooms, lunch rooms, offices). However, words are not enough. Ask them what they think your philosophy means in terms of working with your camp's children, parents, administrators and peers. Then, you will be able to make your vision part of your interactive training.

2. What do they want to learn?: Ask staff members what they want to learn. This can be done informally over the phone, in person, or by having them write down questions before training begins. When staff realize that you care about their needs, they become part of the training and this enables you to have interactive workshops that are very productive.

3. Work with opposites: When I train staff, I love to show them what NOT to do. I like to set up role-play scenarios that are the OPPOSITE of the philosophy of the camp. They do not expect to see this, and it lends itself to humour and a much more interactive and powerful training session. People can often learn what they should do by seeing what they should NOT do.



Photo courtesy Ryde Lake Camp

4. Bring them into the training: Let your seasoned counsellors plan and present a short talk that speaks to the importance of supervising children properly. Staff get bored hearing from the same people year after year. They tend to "buy in" more

quickly when their peers are teaching them new strategies. When you empower your staff to train others, they too become better participants during training.

5. Don't tell, ask: The easiest way to make your training interactive is to elicit responses from your staff. Ask them to tell you ways to handle certain situations. Ask them the WRONG way to handle the situation as well and you will definitely see a more zealous and humorous group of participants.

6. Staff love games: Staff training does not have to be boring. You can create a variety of games with orientation questions in the form of Jeopardy, Who Wants to Be A Millionaire and Deal or No Deal. Give prizes in the form of breaks during camp, movie tickets, iTunes gift cards and more.

By bringing your staff into your camp's training session before it even begins, and offering them a bigger part in planning and implementation, your interactive approach will allow for meaningful and powerful discussions. The participants and instructors will learn and grow together, and that is what camp is all about! **CC**

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