

Why Movies?

Tinseltown short clips are useful in teaching because they evoke emotions and are non-threatening, while providing a quick, direct way for learners to understand, recognize and analyze a particular topic, issue or emotion. Additionally, the movie clip can be translated to business even when the clip centers on a non-business topic. However, for maximum effectiveness, movies must be used in a balanced and useful way. We are a society of information overload; from reality TV and Internet blogs, to e-mails on Blackberries and text-messaging on phones. Such constant input of large amounts of information can end up sounding like dissonant noise. So in utilizing a movie clip as a training tool, the trainer must pare it down to its absolute essential minimum. This allows modern learners of all learning styles and needs to interact and engage with the clip while also being able to focus on the content.

There are four key steps in using movie clips to allow learners to take the information from their heads (cognitive domain) to their hearts (affective domain).

1. The first step involves experiencing the emotion. Select a clip that is funny, sad, intense, intriguing, or links learning to a past experience participants have had.
2. The second step is to have participants actively interacting with the media. Assign a question to be thinking about and answering. This engages both sides of the brain and takes the clip from entertainment only to a learning tool as well.
3. The third step asks participants to discuss what happened in the scene.
4. The fourth step is taking action on what was discussed and applying the lesson to their work experience back on the job.

Retention is a key component of learning. By engaging multiple senses, trainers increase the opportunity for information to move from short-term memory to long-term memory. The challenge is learning how to tap into our long-term memory and find where we stored the information. If we can visualize a movie clip it is much easier to tap into where we “filed” the information in our long-term memory. Movie clips evoke the reflective and analytical attitudes of a learner, especially if the instructor is commenting throughout the clip to spur on that reflection. Even a well edited movie clip can become an entertaining part of our modern information overload unless critical thinking is engaged through the debrief, discussion and application portions of the session. If you have been showing a 15-minute “mandatory” video without, at minimum, a movie guide for learners to fill in, ask yourself, “Are the learners getting the most out of the clip?”

By Becky Pluth

