

Training Simulations: **They're more than just fun and games.**

A Proven Learning Strategy.

Training simulations are an excellent catalyst for learning. That's because they mimic real-life scenarios for the purposes of skill practice and growth, but without the cost – or consequences – that failure has in the “live” world.

Unlike more conventional methodologies, simulations give individuals nowhere to hide during the training experience. Strengths and weaknesses rise to the surface, offering accurate, immediate feedback. Key points become obvious and knowledge transfer is rapid. In other words, the learning *sticks*.

But not all simulations are created equal; some are far more effective than others. So before you develop or purchase your next simulation, make sure it adheres to the key principles of good design. According to expert creator Steve Semler, “Simulations can be very effective learning strategies, and fun for participants. But those that are most powerful feel like work.”

Commitment to Quality Simulations.

The North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA), whose membership includes training and development professionals, is dedicated to the development of games and simulations. In fact, along with training resources publisher HRDQ, they co-sponsor an annual competition aimed at recognizing excellence in game and simulation design.

Assembled by a panel of judges that includes world-renowned author Dr. Sivasailam (Thiagi) Thiagarajan, each entry is measured against eleven criteria:

1. Originality
2. Real-world relevance
3. Effective, relevant scoring
4. Clear guidelines
5. Ease of use
6. Efficiency and time sensitivity
7. Appropriate framework
8. Flexible format
9. Participant involvement
10. Intellectual stimulation
11. Effective packaging

What an Award-Winning Simulation Looks Like.

The winner of the 2009 NASAGA Game Design Competition is an example of good, sound design. *Strike Fighter* is an intense and engaging simulation that is full of learning points. It uses a military scenario to explore all phases of collaborative negotiating – from planning to the end result. At the core of the simulation is the win-win model made popular by William Ury and Roger Fisher in their well-known book, *Getting to Yes*, as well as the highly respected Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Resolution Model.

But the research and theories that support *Strike Fighter* are only part of what makes the simulation so effective. The “learning by doing” experience is just as important. “*Strike Fighter* is powerful because it uses role-based play to enable players to practice their skills,” says Martin Delahoussaye, game design competition judge and HRDQ Vice President of Publishing. “No matter how hard players attempt to act like they can negotiate, the simulation naturally brings to the surface their preferred behaviors, approaches, and strategies.”

Judges Chris Seager and Brian Remer were impressed with the simulation’s relevance and design. “*Strike Fighter* is a realistic training simulation that delivers learning through stimulating and challenging game play,” said Saeger. Remer added, “It is sophisticated in its underlying design, yet easy to use. Authors Joanna Średnicka and Nel Berezowska did an exceptional job.”

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