Strategies for dealing with sporadic attendance in business English courses

IATEFL BESIG Annual Conference
18th November 2012
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Aims for this session:

- to share how we feel about attendance in our courses
- to look at the factors that can contribute to sporadic attendance
- to focus on and talk about strategies we can use to stop it hindering learners’ progress
Attendance

http://www.flickr.com/photos/eltpics/
Sporadic attendance: what does that mean?

http://www.flickr.com/photos/eltpics/
"I frequently find myself with an empty classroom. Is it because the learners don’t enjoy my lessons?"
"There’s supposed to be 5 of them in the group - all top managers. I had to do a really detailed needs analysis with them and at the start of the course they were really motivated, but now it seems like a different one of them comes to the lesson every week."
"Sometimes the participants who do come to the lesson ask me where the ones who haven’t come are and why they haven’t come to the lesson. I have to admit that some of the time I don’t know myself."
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QTIP

Quit Taking It Personally
So, why is this happening?
Factors influenced by the participant

- motivation
- workload
- interest level
- value placed on English knowledge
- time management skills
Factors influenced by the company

- Group size
- Boss's attitude
- Who's paying
- Colleagues' attitude
- Workload
- HR's attitude
- Frequency of business trips
- Company culture
- Importance placed on English
- How business is going
Factors influenced by the teacher

- Coherence
- Continuity
- Clear learning goals
- Rapport
- Links between lessons
- Contact between lessons
Factors out of everyone's control

personal issues

sickness

meetings that can't be avoided
Some strategies I use:
1. Focus on individual needs & working environment
Redo your needs analysis:

Needs

- speak on telephone + write email

Difficulties

- activating vocabulary
- speaking spontaneously
- understanding people speaking too fast or with strong accents
- word order + choosing the right words
- on the phone

Almost non-native speakers...
2. Visit their workplace
Visit to the bakery vocabulary

Things in the bakery
- a test specification
- a recipe
- some flour
- some yeast
- some baking powder
- some spelt
- some malt improver
- a roll/ some rolls
- a loaf/ some loaves
- a fermentation cabinet
- some dough
- a sieve
- a foreign body/ some foreign bodies
- the dough rest/ the rest time

30.10.2012
2. Make a plan: what and when

Technical Language  4a  English

Things we will look at in the course (September- December 2012):

- **17.09** - Names of formwork and scaffolding parts
- **23.09** - Names of PERI products
- **30.09** - Understanding and talking about metric and imperial (inches, feet, etc.) measurements and dimensions in English
- **08.10** - Understanding drawings with English notes
Help them feel connected in between lessons
3. Give learners who are there a teacher role in the following weeks
What are your take-away from this session?
Thanks for coming along....

Please stay in touch

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