

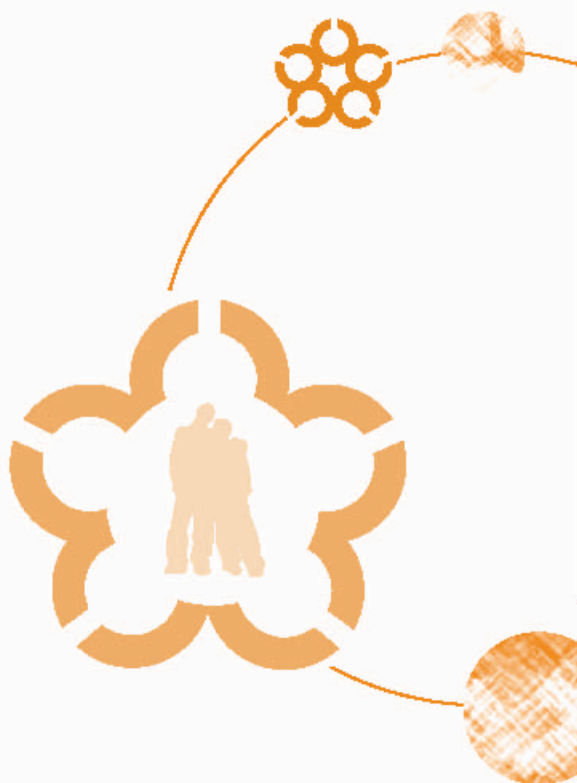
# marker

*The speed of things. Funny! but is it?  
Thinking in blocks and all that.*

*"Marker" is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate. Feedback from you will be really welcome, especially in the form of poems and ballads. Post-its will be returned to sender unopened unless they are in the form of pink arrows.*

*Hello. If you have nothing better to do one day, make a photocopy of this article and cut it vertically into strips. Then rearrange the strips and try to read the resulting sentences. Do you find any "hidden messages" here? Remember to blink your eyes very fast while you are doing this. You will find this process has the added value of producing an unlimited number of articles. Efficient, isn't it?*

*Knowing that our attention span gets shorter every day, and that Coyote appears but twice per year, it seemed efficient to include more themes in this Marker. So, what comes next is the result of many concentrated sessions over the past couple of months, resulting in a series of mini articles. Don't blink your eyes, you might miss something... And remember: any relationship to any real life situations is only coincidental.*



## Get it done, but get it done fast

There is no time left. More and more people seem to be more and more busy, more and more people arrive later and later and leave earlier and earlier. How many times have you put a lot of thought into planning a welcome evening at the beginning of a course, only to find that more than half of the participants arrive around midnight? There's no difference between those who are permanently employed and those who are freelancers - they are all affected by the same sickness. A friend of mine was observing a high level European meeting recently. Content was all about planning joint strategies for the future. The majority of the people who had things to say arrived 10 minutes before they were due to speak, spoke and then left the meeting. Which was no meeting. How short can an international training course be? Bring all those people from different countries together, facilitate their getting to know each other and confront them with the topic(s), insert some theory, get in some practice and then evaluate it all. The current record holder is around two days.

## Who is laughing?

A participant arrives late for every session. On the fifth occasion she enters and announces to the group "I'm sorry for being late". The whole world collapses in laughter. Funny?

I am in a particularly difficult and complex team meeting. Suddenly one of my team mates starts to laugh, seemingly as a response to something I said. Then, one by one, all the rest of my colleagues start to laugh. They laugh so much that tears pour down their faces. I sit there, wondering: what did I say? what is so funny? this is serious stuff.

During the workshop on conflict management, the trainer tells lots of stories about real life conflict situations. During the workshop on Forum Theatre many people laugh – a lot. Some don't at all, but they appear not to be noticed.

*Without humour there is no life in training. Discuss*

It is possible to be seriously funny; it does seem to be a bit difficult to get the balance right though. Discuss



## Thinking in blocks

When making a programme we can choose to work with blocks. A block of team building here, a block of project management there. Hey, that's useful and it fills the blank programme really quickly. But where's the connections? Don't we turn ourselves into block-heads in this way? (no disrespect to Ian Dury and the Blockheads by the way - hit me with your rhythm stick is what they used to say...) Working with blocks allows us to make little conclusions. In this way we manage quite successfully to block continuing processes. Maybe it helps to remember what some wise person somewhere once said: "We haven't finished this discussion, we just stop it here".

## Silence is a rhythm 2

Thanks to those who sent me their top training music lists. Wonder if Nick Hornby would be interested? Someone currently experimenting with silence is a sound artist called Matt Rogalsky. He recently issued a recording that was made up of the gaps between words in the speech of a famous politician. All that is to be heard are the strange background noises in a rather pale house over the sea. Wonder what the same process would bring if applied to your next input in a training course?

## Competition between trainers

There are those who are chosen a lot, those who are chosen sometimes and those who haven't been chosen yet. Luckily, there isn't any competition between trainers as we are all lovely people and perfect professionals. But what would happen if "they" started to create a league table of trainers? This is different from a pool where everyone is more or less in the same, er, boat. I've been speaking with colleagues more often these days about whether or not the trainer should challenge participants. Give them pain. Without which there is no gain. If competition really catches on, then all we will be able to do is to be popular. Funny. Nice.

### References:

Matt Rogalsky at <http://www.protest-records.com>  
Nick Hornby: 31 Songs, Viking Books/Penguin Books  
Mariza: Fado Curvo, Times Square Records

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