

“What if” Scenarios

By: Jack Muellerleile

“What if” Scenarios are very effective training tools especially when they are used as a ‘pop quiz’ following some in depth study of the circumstances under which the scenario is to be played out.

EXAMPLES:

1. Parents finish instructing their children about the dangers of fire in the home then ‘test’ their retention of the instruction given by describing a hypothetical situation (“What if” Scenario) to which the children must react.
2. The US Department of Homeland Security is directing the expenditure of billions of dollars across our nation in preparation for a wide array of potential terrorist attacks then utilizes this technique to assess the readiness of first responders and others charged with responsibility in dealing with the matter.

Surely you can think of an endless array of other applications. Businesses use this teaching technique over and over with employees at all levels within the organization. They even organize ‘mystery shopper’ programs designed to measure the level of ‘desired responses’ delivered to customers by their work force.

Taking the technique to its ultimate level in order to ‘predict likely group behavior’, a version of same is effectively used as part of:

1. Political polling;
2. Empanelling a jury or ‘testing’ a proposed line of trial testimony;
3. Focus groups reacting to as yet unveiled new car models; and
4. Attitude surveys within large, diverse groups.