

Weight Lifting in the Classroom

AT YOUR LAST WORKOUT, we indicated that we would hit the weight—er, class—room next. Before we do, let's warm up with a quick review. For the best workout, we recommended the following:

- a job-based training program that focuses on the specific aspects of the regulations that impact each line unit's job function
- kick off training by grabbing your audience's attention (use tricks of the trade such as a tale of woe, request for help, or talking about penalties)
- keep the stamina up; focus on what trainees need to know, explain your meaning with related stories, and keep them on their toes with some fun and games

Now that we have you loosened up, let's go pump some iron!

Weight Lifting as You Workout

While time in the classroom may feel like heavy lifting, it is the most comprehensive method for compliance training. Working directly with your line units, you can see if they are really getting it or if the information is a TKO

(technical knowledge overload). During the session you can exchange information and "check the pulse" of the class through participation to see if trainees are catching on. In addition, while you are explaining regulatory requirements, you might receive a crash course about what actually takes place on the line. If you get responses such as "Really?" or "We've never done it that way!" from your group, use them as an opportunity to probe further about

what actually does happen—after you get first aid for the near heart failure caused by this very strenuous workout, that is!

This connection to the front line allows you to be more practical in advising your audience because you have better insights into the area. Your fellow employees benefit as well, as they now have someone to identify with compliance and are more likely to call you with questions.

Weight lifting in the classroom is ideal for working out your compliance training, especially when you are training a small group. Community bankers have an advantage here because much of their training can be done in person, though regional banks may have small groups performing specialized work such as processing wires or handling collections.

Workout Buddies

Some compliance professionals feel more comfortable using workout buddies to make their time in the gym more productive. While going solo works for many people, others prefer the added motivation supplied by having someone else there to help keep things moving. Team teaching can be an effective way to reach the audience. Consider reaching out to someone in your training department or business line or one of your compliance peers and strategizing how you can work together. The audience might appreciate the "tag team" approach, which gives dual perspective and the expertise you both offer.


Getting the Most Out of Weightlifting

You do repetitions of each barbell you lift, and the same goes with training. Repeat your most important concepts to make sure they sink in with your audience. Adult learners do best with some repetition. Successful bench press training takes several short sets, and you should do the same with your audience. Adults generally have a 20-minute attention span, so allowing them short, frequent breaks will ensure a more receptive audience. This allows time to refocus so they can pay better attention to you and serves to get everyone back on the same page.

You should also keep in mind that different exercises help people achieve their results because individuals learn differently. Some people are visual learners, so use graphics and images to get the information across to them. Others learn better if they hear information so be sure to incorporate a good rousing discussion of your material. Still others will benefit from touching the process, so use role playing to reach them. This will also serve to keep your audience active and keep them pumped up for more learning.

The Other Weight Lifters

Sometimes just walking into the weight room can be in-

A hand in a dark suit and striped tie holds a dumbbell vertically. The dumbbell has a silver handle and several black weight plates. The background is plain white.

timidating—especially when you are just getting started with your program. The room may be filled with folks who appear to have been on steroids for many years; they look like they can lift more than you ever thought about, or sometimes it may almost feel as if they are trying to test you. Don't let them muscle in on your routine.

One of the more challenging learners you may encounter is the one who asks you detailed questions that have the twofold benefit of letting them flex their knowledge while making you look less informed. Don't be afraid to defer them until later. Ask them to discuss the details after class so you can focus on the core material; chances are they won't take you up on the offer. But if you think the information would be helpful to the group, never be afraid to tell the class it is a really good question and you'll get back to them later—just make sure you do! You won't lose muscle for being honest.

Another intimidator is the one with the chip on his or her shoulder. "Chip" will respond angrily to something, maybe anything, you say. Perhaps Chip is having a bad day (pulled a hamstring?) or going through a bad situation outside of work. Remember: It isn't about you. Acknowledge Chip's position and defuse the situation so you can move on. For example, if Chip challenges whether you can actually review a former spouse's credit report, thank Chip for helping you point out that there are qualifications before you can do so. Use the moment's fireworks to keep the class interesting and the momentum high. As for those weight lifters who are yakking away or otherwise stealing your thunder, try lobbing them a real question. This reminds them that you are in charge and will usually bring the spotlight back where it belongs.

When to Weight Lift

Weight lifting in the classroom is ideal for working out your compliance training, especially when you are training a small group. Community bankers have an advantage

here because much of their training can be done in person, though regional banks may have small groups performing specialized work such as processing wires or handling collections. The classroom is also helpful for dealing with sensitive topics. It is easy to declare oneself bias-free and an all-around fair lender until you really discuss problems that may make borrowers feel like they've been treated less than equally. It is also helpful when your audience needs to take a consistent approach—for example, underwriters.

When Not to Weight Lift

Despite the benefits, the classroom may not be your answer to every training question. When trainees are numerous or spread out geographically, it may not make sense. Other training methods may be needed to reach them. We'll talk about alternative workouts on your next trip to the Training Room. See you at the next session. BC

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meg Sczybra, CRCM, CRP, is the compliance processes manager at Washington Mutual. She has more than 11 years of experience in the banking industry and has spent a substantial amount of time building training solutions at several banks. Reach her via e-mail at meg.sczyrba@wamu.net.