

# USA GYMNASTICS BUS

## 10 WAYS TO “SNEAK” IN STAFF

By Anne Josephson

*The day you stop learning is the day you die. –Unknown*

**L**ifetime learners are people who have a growth mindset. They are people who believe that their basic abilities can be developed through tenacity and hard work. They understand that intelligence and talent are just the starting points and what really matters is consistent practice and the commitment to improve.

I have yet to meet a great coach or instructor who doesn't have a thirst to improve their knowledge and a drive to get better and better at what they do. As club owners and managers, it is essential that we find ways to cultivate a growth mindset with our administrators and coaches, and the best way to engage them is through continuing education.

Most professions have a formalized structure for such continuing education, and our profession is no different. There are marvelous opportunities for staff education such as USA Gymnastics National Congress and Regional Congresses, USA Gymnastics University live courses, Jeff Metzger's *Boot Camp*, Frank Sahlein's *Business Brain Trust* as well as a host of other conferences that, while not specific to gymnastics or children's activity centers, are marvelous educational opportunities for you and your staff.

Likewise, there is online training such as USA Gymnastics University and wonderful collections of DVDs such as those by Patti Komara, Tammy Biggs and the technical materials from USA Gymnastics store, that help you train and educate your coaches.

Clearly, these types of training often cost money that many gym owners feel they do not have. And, as wonderful as these resources are, none can communicate your club's mission, vision and culture. That must come from the leaders in your gym club.

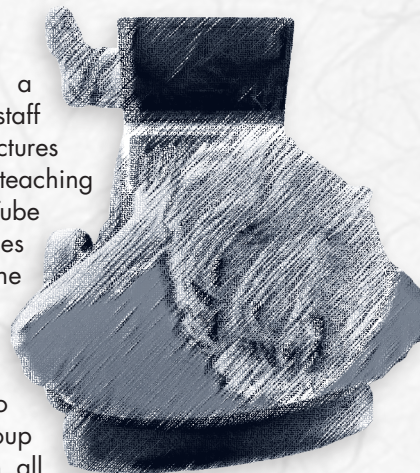
Then, there is the other problem – time.

The result? Staff training often falls by the wayside or is a haphazard mix of “shadow teaching” and “learning by osmosis.” I

know that we at Josephson Academy of Gymnastics (JAG) struggle to find time to meet as a management team—by department and as an entire staff. Being open 8:30 a.m.–10 p.m. six days a week with Sunday being the “short day” of 8:00 a.m.–7 p.m. doesn't leave much time for staff education. But, like the parent who blends broccoli into tomato sauce to get their fussy toddler to eat veggies, there are ways to sneak staff education into your busy gym without taking too much time or breaking the bank. Here are some quick and easy ways to find small pockets of time that lead to great returns on your staff's continuing education.

### 1. FACEBOOK.

On Facebook, you can create a private group. At JAG, we have a staff private group on which we post pictures of set-ups, lesson plan logic, share teaching tips, ask questions and post YouTube clips for drills and links to articles we want staff to read. We make the group interactive by inviting staff to post ideas and tips for using the weekly set-ups and props. And the Facebook page allows coaches to put questions out to the entire group and receive answers from which all of us can learn. Also, we use it to post where the weekend beach volleyball game will be held. Sorry, cold weather people.

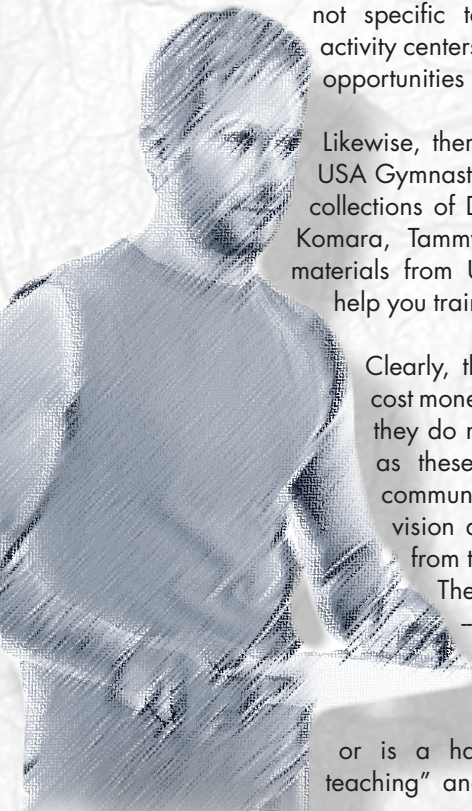


### 2. EVERY STAFF MEETING HAS AN EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT.

Yes, you must find a time to meet as an entire staff. We do it monthly from 7:30 a.m.–8:30 a.m. on the first Saturday of the month. Bagels and coffee (lots and lots of coffee) are served. In addition to discussing policies, procedures, schedules and the like, each and every staff meeting has an educational component or discussion that lasts roughly 10–15 minutes. Past topics have included class discipline, dealing with kids who have dramatically different skill levels, how to talk to kids, how to talk to parents, great ideas to teach cartwheels (handstands, walkovers, etc.), ways to make beam less boring, “*what to do when...*” and more. Fifty brains are vastly superior to my one, and many wonderful ideas are exchanged and pesky problems are resolved.

### 3. HOLD A BOOK CLUB.

Ask employees to RSVP. Provide lunch, sit and discuss the book. Staff members love it because all of them are eligible to attend and have face time with the owner. As an owner, I enjoy it because I am able to interact with employees with whom I typically do not spend time and learn more about them. It is also a great way to see who

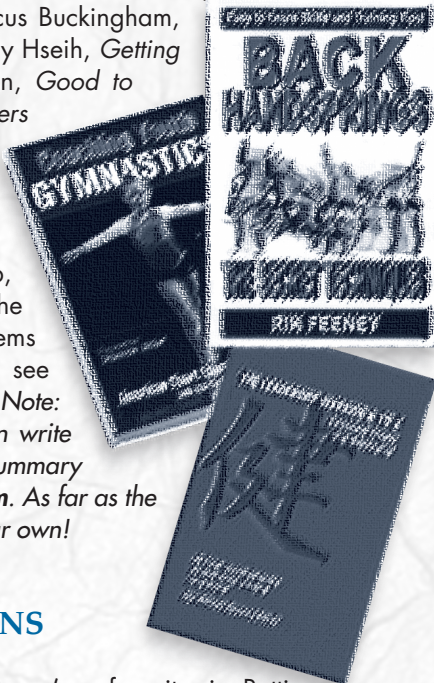




# INNESS ADVISORS' TIPS

## EDUCATION

is really interested in learning and seeking mentorship. Some books we have read as a staff include: *Mindset* by Carol Dweck, *First Break all the Rules* by Marcus Buckingham, *Delivering Happiness* by Tony Hsieh, *Getting Things Done* by David Allen, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell, *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle and *A Running Start* by Pica Rae. For those who do not attend the book club, we send a summary of the book and a list of action items or suggestions so they can see the fun that they missed. *Note: For book summaries you can write your own or subscribe to a summary service. I like [Getabstract.com](http://Getabstract.com). As far as the action items—you are on your own!*



#### 4. SEND ARTICLE RECOMMENDATIONS VIA EMAIL.

I get many great newsletters (my favorite is Patti Komara's), and forwarding articles or pieces of the newsletter to staff is a quick way to sneak in education. In order to ensure it is read, ask for thoughts on it or ideas on how it applies to the gym. Another idea is to decide that it will be discussed in the next meeting or even better, ask everyone to reply and give an idea of how the article can be applied to the gym. The winning idea will get an iTunes gift card or movie tickets. Then, publish all the ideas via email (so everyone can read each idea) and announce the winner.

#### 5. SCHEDULE TIME FOR MASTER TEACHERS TO "FLOAT" IN THE GYM.

Your team coach doesn't have a group until 4 p.m.? Have him/her assist in the 3 p.m. classes to mentor a younger coach. Likewise, if a younger coach is finished by 6 p.m., allow him/her to assist on a group with a master teacher to improve skills. At JAG, we allow up to two hours per pay period for coaches to learn from a peer. (Of course, it must be documented and approved by their manager.) If coaches wish to extend their training beyond those two hours, they may do so on their own time.

#### 6. RUN YOUR OWN "MINI-CONGRESS" WITH YOUR COACHES PRESENTING TO THEIR PEERS.

Assign topics or let them choose their own. Everyone is an expert at something! Coaches are excited to share their ideas with each other. This is a must-do, especially if you send coaches to an off-site



congress or training. Don't let their knowledge stay exclusively with them—have them share it with the whole group! At each session, make sure you assign a secretary, whose job is to record all the great ideas and action items so they don't get lost!

#### 7. TAKE THEM TO LUNCH.

You have to eat and so does your staff, so have small groups or one-on-one lunches to get some informal staff training done. You can also bring in lunch or hold "coffee meetings."

#### 8. BE CREATIVE IN SCHEDULING STAFF TRAINING.

As I mentioned, each month we use early Saturday mornings for staff meetings. We also run multiple sections of the same training. For instance, we cannot close down our customer service desk to do on-going education, so we run the identical seminar twice so each customer service person is able to attend one of the two trainings. Yes, it does take a bit more time and money, but do you know what else costs money? People leaving your gym because of bad customer service. We occasionally use Sunday evening to do trainings. Nobody loves it, but we soften the experience with dinner and dessert! Video taping is a great idea as you can then upload it to your private Facebook group!

#### 9. SPEND TIME WATCHING THE GYM, THE FRONT DESK AND READING EMAILS CLOSELY.

You will see themes arise. This is a great time to jump in with a recommendation, an article, a website or some other





# USA GYMNASTICS BUSINESS ADVISORS' TIPS

## 10 WAYS TO "SNEAK" IN STAFF EDUCATION...CONTINUED

resource that will be helpful. For example, after observing and hearing about several unpleasant customers who were positively rude to customer service members, I sent out an article on dealing with difficult people and setting boundaries. Not only were the tips useful, the staff felt understood and supported.

### 10. KEEP A STAFF RESOURCE PAGE.

Pinterest is a great way to do this. You can "pin" to YouTube channels, interesting websites and other articles that staff might find useful. In some ways, it duplicates the Facebook effort, but since Pinterest is more of a resource page, staff won't have to scroll through old news feeds to find the article they are looking for.



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Anne is JAG's President and CEO. She opened Josephson Academy of Gymnastics with her husband, Michael Josephson, in June of 2004.

Looking for additional staff education resources?

Visit [USAGymnasticsUniversity.org](http://USAGymnasticsUniversity.org) and go to "The Library" for articles and quick tip videos.

The bottom line: Staff training doesn't always have to cost a lot of money or take a lot of time. It does, however, need to be planned deliberately and executed creatively!

Do you have any interesting ways to *sneak* in staff education? Please, share with us! While I cannot offer you an iTunes gift card, I do offer you our entire community's gratitude for helping us all build better gym clubs!

