The Power of Learn-o-grams™

How and Why They Work!

The History and Theory Behind Learn-o-grams™

LEARN-O-GRAMS™ AND THE REBUS

Learn-o-grams™ have, in one form or another, been around for thousands of years. In fact, all Learn-o-grams™ are simply picture words or what is known as a *rebus*. A rebus is a pictorial representation of any concept, thought, or idea, a grouping of letters, words, pictures, images, and signs (such as + or –) that combine to give a hidden or secret message that has to be decoded. (See examples at the end of this chapter.)

In the caves of early man, there were crude rebus drawings on the walls with representations of events and experiences in their daily lives. The rebus was used by the

ancient Egyptians. Their hieroglyphics were an integral part of their daily societal communications. Their engraved picture words still exist today on many of the pyramids in Egypt. It is my understanding that many of the early Native Americans also used the rebus in their leatherwork and art to communicate the deeper meaning in their lives.

In modern times, there are many applications for picture words that tell a story or give specific information. The use of the Rorschach inkblot test in psychology shows how powerful the human mind is in projecting its reality onto even a totally abstract black-and-white inkblot image. Each person who looks at these inkblots sees something different because his or her mind interprets it differently. (This is one of the underpinnings of Learn-o-grams™, called "projection.") Modern businesses use the rebus in a variety of video games and advertising.

Let's take a look at why the rebus is so powerful and why this book can help you to make a difference in your own workplace effectiveness and in your team's performance.

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PICTURES: THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Why does Hollywood spend billions of dollars each year to create powerful "movies" and television shows that are shown in approximately four thousand theaters and in millions of homes in the United States and the rest of the world?

The answer is simple. The old adage, "A picture is worth a thousand words" has a lot of truth to it. This is also why newspapers and magazines all over the world spend a fortune paying paparazzi for just the right photograph.

Pictures and picture words are the universal language underlying all communication. As we will discuss in later chapters, the mind translates picture words into meaning based on past experiences. To take the value of an image to the extreme, you need go no further than the massive amount of advertising produced to try to influence the buying public with the perfect brand image and just the right photo or drawing.

Businesses spend hundreds of billions of dollars on their brand images. For example, there are the Nike "swoosh" and the NBC peacock. In experiments, even two-year-olds who could barely speak were able to say "Donald's" when they were shown the famous M made of the golden arches.

Show any nationally recognized brand logo to any average person on the street, and a huge number of people will know instantly what product the logo is associated with.

Let's take a look at how these powerful images are applied and see how the Learn-o-grams™ game works.

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HOW LEARN-O-GRAMS™ WORKS

Learn-o-grams™ is a fun, exciting, addictive game that allows players to think and learn in an exciting, humorous, pictorial, interactive process. Because Learn-o-grams™ is interactive and experiential, it is different every time it is played. That is why it always evokes such strong emotions. When people play Learn-o-grams™, they usually get to see themselves more clearly and how they as individuals think, learn, and act differently than their colleagues. Each Learn-o-gram™ is a series of very simple word pictures but, because of the complex nature of the human mind, these picture words are often quite difficult to figure out. The human mind, although highly complex, is very predictable and can be tricked quite easily. In order to function effectively, it must figure out which lines of logic to apply to solve a given problem. The mind works best when it has an experience to relate back to or a baseline of past activity to reference.

The Learn-o-grams™ game consistently challenges players' minds to figure out the logic behind a picture word. (You can learn more about this in Chapters Three and Four.) The average player will find that some puzzles are easy and that some are hard. There is no way to predict which ones will be hard or easy because it is all based on each individual's perceptual abilities and his or her particular body of experience.

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THE GAME WHERE LEARNING IS FUN

One thing that every player will experience is lots of fun, fun, fun. Every time any individual or group tries to guess a picture word and gets the answer right, the entire team laughs out loud, cheers, and becomes more addicted (and can't wait to do the next one to demonstrate their newfound expertise).

However, when a team doesn't guess correctly, there is always a very loud moaning sound (sort of like the echo of a fully grown moose in the distant mountains) emitted by the player or group and a definitive crying of "Arghhh."

The reason for this is because the answer is always totally obvious once the players hear someone say it. Again, because of the nature of the human mind, the answer often evades detection. Once the participants see the simple logic behind an answer, most people say out loud, "I can't believe I didn't see that" or "The answer was right in front of me." (See Chapter Four for more details on the human mind and Learn-o-grams™.)

LEARN-O-GRAMS™ CREATES INTENSE, LONG-LASTING LEARNING

Not only is Learn-o-grams™ fun, but it a powerful teaching tool. Playing the game creates incredibly strong emotions. Any time you combine strong emotions with learning, the intensity and retention of the learning experience are increased dramatically.

Retention is increased because the emotions of the moment are attached to the learning and thus embedded deep in the subconscious.

ANALYSIS OF A FEW LEARN-O-GRAMS™

Following is a practical outline of how to interpret and guess a Learn-o-gram™. In order to give you a comprehensive understanding of how to solve these picture word puzzles, we show one easy sample from each of the four categories of Learn-o-grams™ in the game.

(Brit + Knee + Spears)

This picture word is classified as "People," which means it is a famous person. A British flag is followed by a plus sign and someone's leg, bent at the knee. Then there is a bunch of spears. So you would have British-Leg-Spears. But the plus sign means the first two words are one unit. We also know that this is a famous person. So we run through our minds, "British + leg" and "spears" over and over again. Suddenly the light goes on. We know

a famous person with the last name of Spears. So then our mind's ability to process a part of the picture and get the whole concept (also known to psychologists as part-to-whole logic) kicks in and we see that it is Brit + knee (a part of the leg) Spears or Britney Spears. The amazing thing is that all this logic can happen in your brain in just a split second.
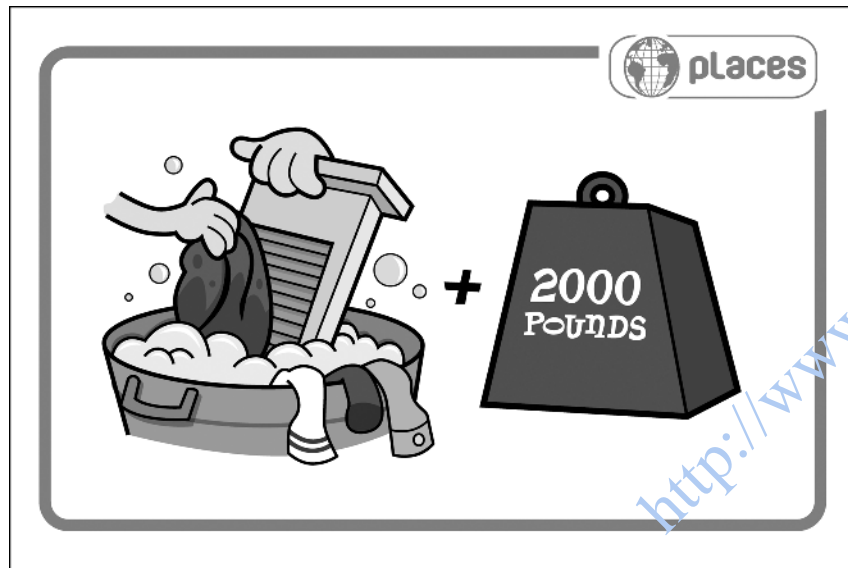
First, it is important to note that this rebus is of a Place, that is, a city, state, or country. Above we see an old-fashioned washboard and a 2,000-pound weight. This can be simplified into "washing" and "weight." But the mind is so fast that it recognizes that the 2,000 pounds is not just a weight but it is also a "ton." Then you use your part-to-whole logic to figure out that it is "washing" plus "ton" or Washington.
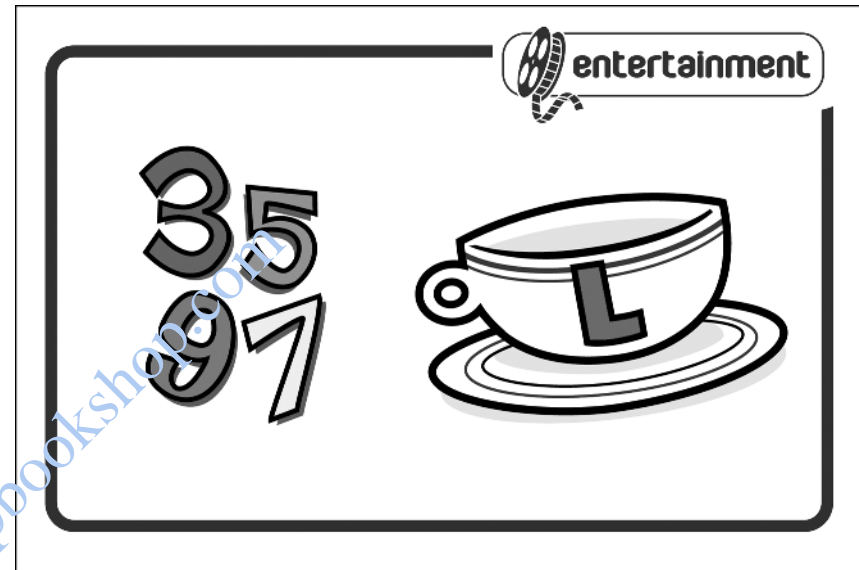

This picture word is based around a famous TV show or movie title. Knowing this will help our minds to sort through the numerous possible solutions and be more selective. First, we see a bunch of numbers that are different colors. Next, we see a coffee cup with the letter "L" on it. So, without any additional input, it would read "colored numbers" and then a separate word "L coffee cup."

Upon further analysis, we could also note that the numbers are all odd numbers. We could also look at the cup and see a combination of L and coffee cup in reversed order as "coffee cup L." So we could put together, in our minds, the combination of "odd numbers" and "coffee cup L."

If you happen to be a little older, this may start to ring a bell. If not, you are left to sound out the name. Eventually, you would come up with "odd" "cup L" or "odd couple" or "The Odd Couple," a famous movie from more than twenty years ago.
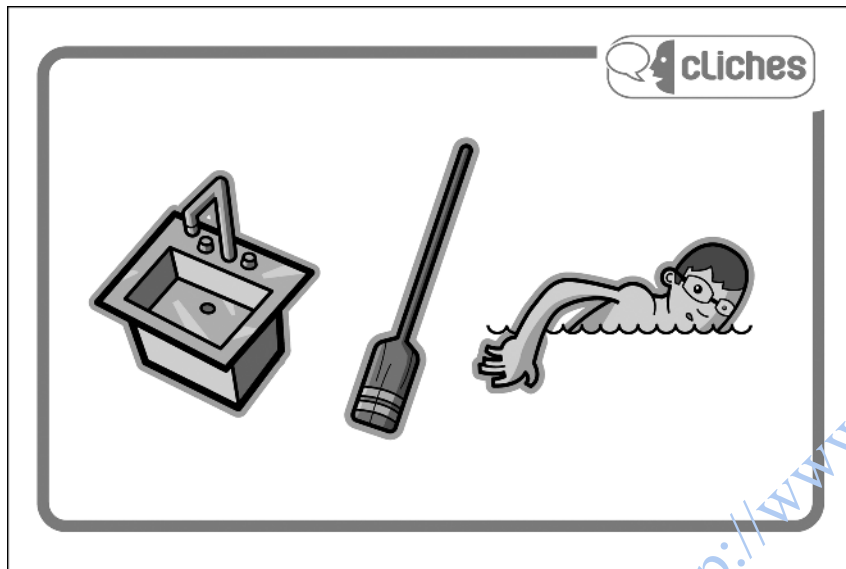
This category, Clichés, is the most difficult because they are so abstract. This Learn-o-gram™ shows a picture of a sink, a paddle, and the left arm of someone swimming. So it might mean, "sink," "paddle," "one-armed swimmer." Or if you let your miraculous mind go to work and try and figure out the larger picture from the smaller parts, you might also see "sink" "oar" "swim." Suddenly, the light goes on and the answer is actually an old saying, "Sink or swim." Congratulations on a job well done.

So now you have an idea not only of what a Learn-o-gram™ is, but also how the game works in general game play.

Since you have a general grasp of what is going on in the Learn-o-grams™ game, let's look at some of their applications and how they tie back to the workplace and various educational settings in Chapter Two.