

BRIEFIN' ENCOUNTERS

Educating the nation's young people is serious fun. Sitting through the endless meetings that come with the job, somewhat less so. Which is where **Phil Beadle** comes in...

Teaching can get a bit Groundhog Day from time-to-time. Bored of spelling out lesson objectives? You betcha! And, from time-to-time it gets a bit Groundhog Day and when it gets a bit Groundhog Day it becomes professionally appropriate to play the rascal, to enliven the working (Groundhog) day with what a colleague and I have coined 'staffroom campaigns'. These are witless and puerile ways of making any time spent in the prison-like bosom of the staffroom all the more jolly... and are as good a way as any of filling up the hours betwixt now and death.

They can be instituted on a daily or weekly basis, and are best introduced either directly before or even during the briefing (or as my colleague and I term it, *da briefin'*), as this is the only time the whole staff are ever in the same room together.

Try a few out, and see how much japery there is to be had in running a staffroom campaign. Come up with your own versions. See if you can beat ours, which so far include the following doozies:

1. *Sitting slightly too close to.* This is best employed with a member of the opposite gender who is so much older than you that they are unlikely to pick up the wrong signal. The object here is to weird them out almost

imperceptibly, not to let them think they've acquired a new admirer. The technique is simple. You just sit a little too close to them so that they are mildly physically and existentially discomforted.

2. *Over-swearing.* This is a technique ideally employed when ascribing anthromorphic powers to the photocopier, and is best done *sotto voce* so as not to offend Agnes, who has become a little concerned about your behaviour, as you appear to have been sitting slightly too close to her last week.

3. *Random notices.* Take an entirely random page out of whatever print journal you are currently reading, photocopy this and pin it to the staff or union noticeboard. This works well enough on its own, but can be supplemented by some annotation: an arbitrarily chosen article from a knitting magazine is all the more pleasing if some wag has annotated it with the words, 'Surely, they don't mean us!!!' in orange marker pen.

4. *Staff Top Trumps.*
 "Number of pies eaten this week?"
 "Four."
 "Not bad, but not nearly good enough... All the pies. All of them."
 "Your card."
 "Consecutive years of celibacy?"
 "Damn it! None."
 "Forty-seven."
 "Your card."

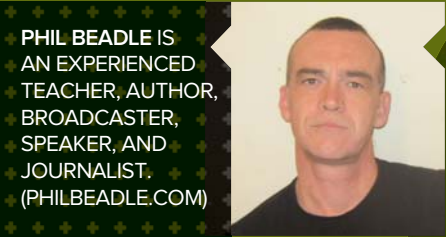
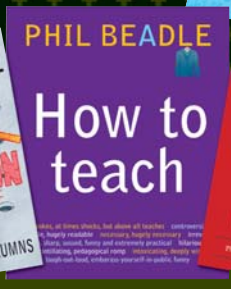
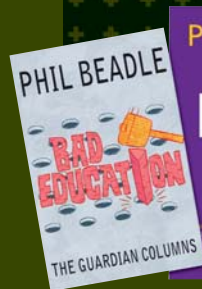
You'll need someone in the know in the office plus exceptional laminating skills but it can be done. Trust me.

5. *Displays of wildly inappropriate over-excitement about da briefin'.* Five minutes before it starts, you go all quiet, almost reverential and drift off. When asked what's wrong, you must pump your feet up and down into the floor really quickly whilst holding your fists tight in exultation and intoning, "It's da briefin'! Da briefin', you hear? Yeh baby! I just can't wait for da briefin'!"

6. *Unnecessary and uncalled for feedback on da briefin'.* During da briefin' itself, you take notes on the performance of the member of senior management giving it, then provide them with un-asked for and unwanted feedback. "Geoff, you're probably unaware that you do this specific hand gesture when you are slightly disappointed with a response; it's impressively eloquent and it really suits you. Next time, I'd like to see you having done a little work on your diction. Oh, and watch that repetitive cadence."

Teaching? It's the only profession that defies the laws of physics. The cream stays at the bottom.

WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING AT US? BY PHIL BEADLE AND JOHN MURPHY (£16.99) IS PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION, AND AVAILABLE FROM ANY LITERARY RETAILER WORTH ITS SALT



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