SSDA
SERVICE STATION DEALERS OF AMERICA AND ALLIED TRADES

SSDA News

Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades

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Government Affairs Update: SSDA-AT Leading the Fight for Right to Repair and Vehicle Choice

By Roy Littlefield

SSDA-AT is on the front lines of two of the most important battles facing our industry today—Right to Repair and Vehicle Choice—and we're making our voice heard at every level of government.

On Right to Repair, we are working side-by-side with coalition partners, consumer advocates, and fellow industry groups to ensure that independent repair shops have full and fair access to the repair and maintenance data needed to service modern vehicles. With more manufacturers restricting telematics and software information, this fight is critical to preserving competition, keeping costs down, and ensuring consumers have real options for where they get their vehicles repaired.

In the Vehicle Choice debate, SSDA-AT is actively pushing back against one-size-fits-all policies that would limit the types of vehicles consumers and businesses can buy. Whether it's a gas-powered work truck, a hybrid commuter car, or a fully electric fleet vehicle, we believe drivers—not regulators—should decide what works best for their needs.

From state capitals to Capitol Hill, SSDA-AT is meeting directly with lawmakers, testifying at hearings, and mobilizing our members to take action. These are not distant policy conversations—they are live, urgent battles that will shape the future of our industry and the rights of every vehicle owner in America.

We are committed, engaged, and making progress—but the fight isn't over. With your support and participation, we will protect both the right to repair and the freedom to choose for generations to come.

Net Driven: Building a Successful Website

By: McKensie Curnow of Net Driven

Building your own website has become increasingly simple and inexpensive in recent years. Though easy and accessible, DIY websites do not guarantee a website that works well or leaves a lasting impression for your business and your audience.

Your website is a reflection of you and your business, so you're obviously going to want to build a strong, professional, and positive presence to attract customers. Taking the risk of building a website on your own is taking the risk of losing potential leads and damaging your business's reputation – we never get a second chance to make a first impression!

When you invest in a professional web design team, such as our team here at Net Driven, you're not only investing in the visual appearance and accessibility of your website, you also invest in expert advice, techniques, and best practices to create the best possible user experience. Spending less money and trying to do it on your own may seem like the easy way out, but let's dive into why it's important to give your business the professional auto service website design it deserves.

COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY INEXPERIENCED DESIGNERS

Poor Structure & Navigation

A website should be attractive, accessible, and easy to navigate; all in all, user-friendliness is vital. A site's content should be understandable and full of useful information without being cluttered. In today's day and age, people like quick and simple. If they can't find what they need without gaining a headache, they're going to leave your site and find a frustration-free one instead. At Net Driven, we know how to organize automotive websites in a way that makes sense for both the business owner and their potential customers.

Lack of SEO

If no one can find your website, what's the point in making the effort of creating one? Many rookie designers forget the importance of SEO, or Search Engine Optimization.

As a certified Google Partner, our team highly knowledgeable of auto-

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NET DRIVEN

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motive SEO and works hard to make sure your site gets found.

Missing CTA

Your website is one of the most powerful marketing tools for your business.

Not only does your website have the power to bring in new customers, it also helps current customers remain loyal if they find what they're looking for with minimal frustrations.

One of the main components of a great website is a clear CTA, or call-to-action.

A CTA is what converts website visitors into customers by driving them to purchase your good or service. If your website is missing a clear CTA, you'll lose sales and customers.

At Net Driven, our team ensures that every website offers conversion-focused responsive web design.

Using Free or Low-Cost Templates

Rookie designers are likely to use a free or low-cost template for their website.

While this may seem like an easy solution, it will make your website look generic and unconnected to your brand.

Your business is unique, your website should be, too. Our designers take the time to ensure each one of our automotive websites are exclusive to the client and capture the individuality of their business. As with any service or good, you get what you pay for.

Your money buys value, which in turn, will actually build your business's bank account in the long run.

Your company's website is no exception. If you want to leave a lasting, positive impression of your brand, leave website design to the professionals.

Still not convinced?

Check out our portfolio of the finest responsive web design in the automotive industry.

Energy Featured Prominently in US Trade Deals

Commitments to purchase large volumes of US energy products, particularly liquefied natural gas, are a hallmark of recent trade deals announced by the Trump administration with the EU, Japan and South Korea.

While these pledges support US export ambitions, experts warn they often exceed demand forecasts, lack clear enforcement mechanisms and reflect a disconnect between political math and commercial realities.

They also risk deepening trade partners' dependence on US energy to the point of weakening supply diversity and long-term energy security.

EIA Reports Record Oil Output, Gasoline Demand Drop in May

The US produced an all-time high of 13.49 million barrels per day of crude oil in May, marking the second consecutive month of new records, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Meanwhile, gasoline demand declined 3.6% year over year to around 9.06 million bpd on average, its lowest May level since 2020, as economic uncertainty and trade tensions weighed on consumer fuel use despite lower pump prices.

eia U.S. Energy Information Administration

NextDecade Secures $1.8 Billion From TotalEnergies, GIP for Rio Grande LNG Train 4, Pipeline & Gas Journal

U.S. liquefied natural gas developer NextDecade will receive up to $1.8 billion in equity commitments from TotalEnergies and Global Infrastructure Partners to finance a fourth liquefaction plant at its Rio Grande LNG export project in Texas, the company said on Aug. 11 in a regulatory filing.

The move brings NextDecade one step closer to a positive financial decision on that 5.4 million metric tons per annum (mtpa) facility, also called Train 4.

The company is still awaiting a supplemental environmental approval for its project, even though federal regulators have completed the final environmental impact statement and last week recommended the project be allowed to proceed.

TotalEnergies will contribute about $300 million for a 10% stake in the Train 4 joint venture, while a GIP affiliate will invest up to $1.5 billion for a 50% interest, which will fall to 30% once certain return thresholds are met, NextDecade said.

NextDecade, through its subsidiaries, will provide up to $1.2 billion for a 40% interest, which could rise to 60% after GIP reaches agreed returns, according to the filing.

TotalEnergies has a long-term agreement with NextDecade to purchase 1.5 million metric tons of LNG from Train 4 but has declined to invest or purchase the super-chilled gas on a long-term contract from NextDecade's proposed Train 5 export facility.

NextDecade has entered into a fixed-price contract for the construction of Train 4 with Bechtel for $4.77 billion but the price is only valid until September 15, according to the company.

NextDecade is building its Rio Grande LNG facility with a capacity of 17.6 mtpa, and is developing Trains 4 and 5 with a combined additional capacity of 10.8 mtpa. The projects are expected to assist the U.S. remain as the largest LNG exporter in the world.

Trump Order Asserts Political Control Over Federal Grant Decisions, S&P Global

President Donald Trump has announced major changes to how US federal agencies make funding grants, increasing top agency officials' control of the grantmaking process in an effort to ensure disbursements align with administration priorities.

The changes, outlined in an Aug. 7 executive order, would require every federal agency head to designate a "senior appointee" to draft a new process to review funding opportunity announcements and verify that all discretionary grants "are consistent with agency priorities and the national interest."

Given that the agency heads are political appointees, many analysts see this as an effort by the White House to direct federal grantmaking at a granular level, at the expense of career officials in the bureaucracy.

Indeed, Trump's order explicitly calls for all grantmaking decisions to fall to the senior appointee or a designee rather than an agency's career staff.

"Senior appointees and their designees shall not ministerially ratify or routinely defer to the recommendations of others in reviewing funding opportunity announcements or discretionary awards, but shall instead use their independent judgment," Trump wrote.

Fears over politicization

The executive order marks a substantial change in the federal government's approach to science research, said Joshua Graff Zivin, Pacific Economic Cooperation chair in International Economic Relations at the University of California, San Diego.

"This is clearly politicizing what has historically been a reasonably non-political process," Graff Zivin told Platts, part of S&P Global Commodity Insights, Aug. 8.

One former US Energy Department official expressed concern that political appointees could arbitrarily deny a grant application, even if it met all the criteria, for reasons unrelated to the content of the proposal — for example, for saying or doing something the administration didn't like.

"It moves farther away from a process by which applicants are primarily judged by merit," the former official said in a separate interview.

The Trump administration had already clamped down on federal energy grants with a January executive order freezing disbursement of funds appropriated through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. That order, which took aim at former President Joe Biden's pro-renewables policies, called for federal agencies to review all covered funding to ensure it complied with Trump's more fossil fuel-friendly energy agenda.

The new executive order is "kind of writing down what they've been doing, in terms of doing a line-by-line review of these financial assistance awards," the former DOE official said.

Until the new review process is in place, the executive order bars agencies from issuing new funding opportunity an-

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Trump Order Asserts Political Control Over Federal Grant Decisions, S&P Global

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nouncements without first receiving approval from the designated senior appointee, unless legally required to do so.

As part of the review process, agency heads or their designees would have to ensure that designated subject-matter experts review the funding announcements.

In addition, prior to issuing discretionary awards, agencies would have to meet with the senior appointee or a designee to verify that the funding is "consistent with applicable law, agency priorities, and the national interest."

Trump said the current grantmaking process funded a leftist political agenda. He said the changes would "improve the process of federal grantmaking while ending offensive waste of tax dollars."

New grant criteria

The executive order specifically barred discretionary funding awards from promoting racial preferences or discrimination, illegal migration, and "denial by the grant recipient of the sex binary in humans or the notion that sex is a chosen or mutable characteristic."

The order also said such grants should not be used to facilitate "any other initiatives that compromise public safety or promote anti-American values."

In addition, the document said discretionary grants should go to "a broad range of recipients rather than to a select group of repeat players," and that preference for such awards should go to institutions with the lowest indirect costs.

The order also called for grant recipients to commit to respecting "Gold Standard Science," as defined in a May 23 Trump executive order. That earlier order, which claimed the Biden administration used science in misleading ways, including by allegedly overstating likely climate change effects, called for agencies to prioritize "reproducibility, rigor and unbiased peer review."

Graff Zivin expressed concern that, under the new policy, federal agencies would take "a more risk-averse and more short-termist perspective" to scientific research than in the past. He cited the executive order's language prioritizing science that serves the administration's priorities and warned that it could harm national competitiveness.

"Administration priorities tend to much more closely align with election cycles than they do with the long-term scientific health of the country," Graff Zivin said.

Graff Zivin also warned that, even if a new administration comes in and reverses Trump's policy, the executive order could have a far-reaching impact on the federal science apparatus.

"If this process becomes political and that leads to significant staff turnover, it will mean essentially a reset will be very hard if we decide ultimately that we need to be reset," he said. "There's just a ton of institutional knowledge in the subagencies that actually just do the mundane, workaday stuff."

Honolulu's Lawsuit Against Fossil Fuel Companies Leads Climate Change Legal Fight, AP

Honolulu is not alone in its effort to sue fossil fuel companies to hold them accountable for climate change harms, but the city's lawsuit is further along than similar litigation across the country.

Judge Lisa Cataldo didn't immediately rule after hearing arguments on a defense motion seeking to dismiss the lawsuit because the state's two-year statute of limitations expired. Honolulu's claims are based on allegations that have been publicly known for decades, attorneys for the oil companies argue.

In 2020, Hawaii's capital city sued major oil companies, including Exxon Mobil, Shell and Chevron, arguing they knew for nearly half a century that fossil fuel products create greenhouse gas pollution that warms the planet and changes the climate. The companies have also profited from the consumption of oil, coal and natural gas while deceiving the public about the role of their products in causing a global climate crisis, the lawsuit says.

Honolulu's lawsuit blames the companies for the sea level rise around the island of Oahu's world-famous coastline. It also warns that hurricanes, heat waves and other extreme weather will be more frequent, along with ocean warming that will reduce fish stocks and kill coral reefs that tourists love to snorkel over.

The lawsuit seeks an unspecified amount of damages. Attorneys and media representatives for most of the companies didn't immediately respond to emails and phone messages from The Associated Press seeking comment on the lawsuit.

ConocoPhillips and Phillips 66 representatives sent emails saying they don't comment on pending litigation.

"The issue of climate change and how to tackle it has long been part of public discussion and ongoing scientific research and debate for many decades," Shell said in a statement issued by media relations representative Anna Arata. "There is a vast public record of media articles, scientific journals and government reports for well over 50 years that make this clear. The suggestion that the plaintiffs were somehow unaware of climate change is simply not credible."

While the case is still far from trial, it is much closer than some 30 similar lawsuits nationwide brought by other

Honolulu's Lawsuit Against Fossil Fuel Companies Leads Climate Change Legal Fight, AP

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states, cities and counties. The outcome could indicate how other cases play out and how oil companies will defend themselves in court.

"The first trial in any of these cases will be very significant," Michael Gerrard, founder and faculty director of the Columbia University Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. "It will get a large amount of nationwide or even global attention because the oil companies have not yet had to take the stand and defend themselves in a trial."

In 2019, Exxon Mobil prevailed in a lawsuit by New York's attorney general over the costs of climate change, with a judge saying there was no proof the energy giant duped investors about the toll that regulations could take on its business.

Honolulu's lawsuit has reached this hearing stage after the Hawaii Supreme Court denied motions to dismiss it, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to take it on.

Meanwhile, a similar lawsuit by Maui County, where a massive wildfire nearly two years ago burned down most of Lahaina and killed 102 people, is on hold.

The state of Hawaii has also filed a similar lawsuit, despite the U.S. Department of Justice in May suing Hawaii and Michigan over their plans for legal action against fossil fuel companies, claiming their climate actions conflict with federal authority and President Donald Trump's energy dominance agenda.

Hawaii's attorney general's office filed a motion last week seeking to stop the Department of Justice's federal lawsuit: "Allowing this case to proceed would give the United States license to wield the federal courts as a weapon against any litigation between nonfederal parties that an incumbent presidential administration dislikes."

Soon before a lawsuit by a group of youths against Hawaii's transportation department was scheduled to go to trial, both sides settled the case last year, agreeing on an ambitious requirement to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions across all transportation modes no later than 2045.

IRS Announces No Changes to Individual Information Returns or Withholding Tables for 2025 Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

The Internal Revenue Service announced that, as part of its phased implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, there will be no changes to certain information returns or withholding tables for Tax Year 2025 related to the new law.

Key points for TY 2025 relating to OBBBA provisions:

Form W-2, existing Forms 1099, and Form 941 and other payroll return forms will remain unchanged for TY 2025.

Federal income tax withholding tables will not be updated for these provisions for TY 2025.

Employers and payroll providers should continue using current procedures for reporting and withholding.

These decisions are intended to avoid disruptions during the tax filing season and to give the IRS, business and tax professionals enough time to implement the changes effectively.

For more information visit, One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 Provisions.

Looking Ahead to TY 2026

The IRS is working on new guidance and updated forms for TY 2026.

These will include changes to how tips and overtime pay are reported.

The IRS will coordinate with employers, payroll providers and tax professionals to ensure a smooth transition.

More information will be shared in the coming months about how taxpayers can claim OBBBA-related tax benefits when they file their returns.

The Treasury Department and the IRS are preparing additional guidance for both reporting entities and individual taxpayers.

Drillers are Pivoting to the Deeper Wolfcamp D in the Midland Basin, MSN

Permian Basin operators are on the hunt for the next Tier 1 inventory, and one researcher believes it is being found in the Midland Basin.

"After anecdotally seeing more well results in deeper intervals from our coverage universe, we decided to analyze this dynamic in the Midland. While still early days, the pivot to deeper targets (defined as Wolfcamp D and below) is clearly underway," wrote Tim Rezvan, managing director, oil & gas equity research at KeyBanc Capital Markets.

In his analysis, Rezvan noted the zones represented 7.6% of 2024 horizontals, up from 1.9% in 2021. The Wolfcamp D dominated with 5.7% of 2024 horizontals, followed by the Lower Pennsylvanian and Mississippian — Barnett Shale — with 1.8%. The Woodford Shale and below was 0.2% of horizontals.

According to Rezvan, several of its coverage companies have drilled deeper intervals, primarily the Wolfcamp D.

Civitas has completed 39 wells in the Wolfcamp D interval from January 2024 to April 2025, according to Enverus data, 20 of which were drilled in the first four months of 2025.

Vital has completed 20 wells targeting the Wolfcamp D, although its last well was completed in July 2024. Vital has also two Lower Pennsylvanian and Mississippian wells it completed in the second half of 2024.

Diamondback drilled 16 wells targeting the Wolfcamp D since 2019.

SM Energy drilled eight wells targeting the Wolfcamp D since 2019 and two in the Woodford and below in the first half of 2024.

It was also observed the deep wells were coming in gassier compared to other intervals. "The lower oil cut makes sense to us intuitively. Higher reservoir pressure and higher temperatures at greater depths increases the potential for the hydrocarbons to become more 'cooked' and, by definition, gassier," he wrote.

There was one exception to the inferior results from the deeper intervals. Rezvan noted that Wolfcamp D wells in a concentrated, overpressured area in western Glasscock and Midland counties. These wells had results that exceed other counties and also exceed average results from shallower intervals. Of the 492 Wolfcamp D wells drilled between 2016 and 2024, 294 were drilled in Midland and Glasscock counties.

Since 2016, four operators made up 47% of all Wolfcamp D wells: CrownQuest, now Occidental, Endeavor, now Diamondback, Pioneer, now Exxon Mobil, and Occidental. They were also the most active drillers in the Midland-Glasscock border.

Civitas was an outlier, drilling 11 of its 16 Wolfcamp D wells in Reagan County in 2024. In the first six months, the Reagan County wells outperformed Wolfcamp A and B wells in terms of barrels of oil equivalent and oil skew, according to Rezvan.

He sees activity increasing in the Lower Pennsylvanian and Mississippian as well as the Woodford and deeper intervals. The activity increase has been led by Occidental and Pioneer/ExxonMobil. There were 10 wells targeting these intervals in Ector County and one successful well in Dawson County operated by EOG Resources, according to Enverus.

"All signs point to continued natural gas growth and a gassier production skew in the Midland going forward; takeaway remains critical. Our work shows the importance of incremental natural gas takeaway from the Permian Basin as gas-to-oil ratios continue to climb — from 1.71 mcf/barrel in January 2017 to 3.09 in May 2025. Three projects underway are expected to add 4.6 Bcf/d of takeaway capacity by the end of 2026. Another three with 5.9 Bcf/d of capacity are being contemplated. We believe all will be needed, and we expect Waha pricing to remain challenged relative to Henry Hub through 2026, if not longer," according to Rezvan.

U.S. Extends Pause on Higher China Tariffs

President Donald Trump signed an executive order extending the pause on sharply higher U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports for another 90 days.

The tariff truce, set to expire August 12, now lasts into the fall.

Without the extension, tariffs on some Chinese goods could have risen to 245%, with China threatening retaliatory tariffs up to 125% on U.S. exports.

Currently, U.S. exports to China face tariffs of about 30%, while imports from China carry a 10% baseline tariff plus an additional 20% penalty in response to fentanyl smuggling allegations.

Trump to Tap Democrat to Lead US Agency Overseeing Gas, Power, Bloomberg

President Donald Trump is preparing to tap David Rosner to be chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees key decisions about natural gas export terminals and power lines.

The move, described by a White House official who asked for anonymity before a formal announcement, would put a Democrat at the head of an agency central to Trump's plans to propel American oil, gas and coal.

Rosner, who was appointed to the commission by former President Joe Biden, previously served as an aide to then-Senator Joe Manchin, a Democrat-turned-independent who represented West Virginia and advocated for gas and coal interests in the chamber before his departure in January. Rosner is seen as supportive of the president's priorities, the official said.

The commission became a political battlefield under the first Trump administration as the president's appointees unsuccessfully pushed policies promoting natural gas- and coal-fired power.

While that effort continues, the data-center boom has ushered in new demand for natural gas and other forms of cheap energy. Last month, an annual power sale by the biggest US electric grid saw prices soar to a record $16.1 billion, underscoring the growing need for megawatts to power artificial intelligence.

The planned elevation of Rosner, which was previously reported by Axios, would put the commissioner in the chair role just vacated by Mark Christie, a Republican.

ExxonMobil Speeds Up In Permian as Chevron Taps Brakes, Argus

ExxonMobil is chasing further production growth from the Permian just as Chevron is slowing down to focus on running its operations in the leading US shale basin for cash flow.

The differing strategies from the US majors in relation to the Permian, the engine of US crude output growth, comes as shale has cooled off as a result of oil's price slide this year, with some smaller operators warning that the sector is fast approaching a tipping point.

ExxonMobil, which reported record output of 1.6mn b/d of oil equivalent (boe/d) from the basin in the second quarter, plans to further boost its Permian production by 44pc to 2.3mn boe/d bwy 2030. Crucially, while other operators have sounded the alarm over peak output, ExxonMobil sees growth continuing well into the next decade. "Nowhere is our emphasis on technology and innovation paying off more clearly and immediately than in the Permian," chief executive officer Darren Woods says.

The company is seeking to boost recovery rates from the basin by drilling longer lateral wells and introducing a new lightweight proppant designed to help extract more oil and gas from wells. So far, the proppant has been a success, improving recovery rates by up to 20pc, and the company plans to deploy it in a further 150 wells by the end of the year. ExxonMobil has also taken advantage of adjacent acreage to drill four-mile laterals without any loss of productivity. "Others are drilling wells half that length, at far greater cost, resulting in much lower capital efficiency," argues Woods.

And the top US major is not done with deal-making after wrapping up the $59.5bn acquisition of shale giant Pioneer Natural Resources last year, even if the bar remains high for another corporate takeover. The Pioneer deal is expected to reap as much as $3bn in average annual cost savings, and that number could be revised up again at the end of the year, clearing the way for the company to seek further opportunities. "We're not really interested in buying volumes," says Woods. "We're interested in building value and building volumes."

Flipping the script

Chevron, in contrast, is hunkering down in the Permian after reaching a targeted production plateau of 1mn boe/d during the second quarter. One of the criticisms levelled at the industry in the heyday of the shale boom in the last decade was that the majority of cash flow was directed back into growth, and investors were left with little to show. Chevron is flipping that script on its head by moderating growth and reducing spending. The billions of dollars in additional free cash flow the company expects to generate as a result will go towards shoring up its balance sheet, as well as investment elsewhere.

Chevron's capital expenditure (capex) in the Permian this year is set to come in at the lower end of its $4.5bn-5bn guidance range thanks to improved efficiencies. "As we deliver that free cash flow growth of $2bn next year in the Permian, you should see [capex] drop further as we continue to manage a sustained performance in the Permian," says vice chairman Mark Nelson. "We're definitely drawing down our capex and generating a lot more free cash flow."

The company has been able to bring down costs by 30pc over the past few years on account of improved well and completion designs, as well as reduced cycle times and technology improvements. And while talk of a production plateau may not be welcome news to President Donald Trump's administration, which has encouraged the industry to pump flat out, Chevron can point to record production from its overall US operations in the second quarter.

Opinion: Dead Air and How to Survive It: Three Ways to Handle Awkward Silence, Crutial Learning

"Okay, I hear what concerns you in this video if you're Anya. But tell me—if you're Anya here, how do you feel?"

We were debriefing the first video in Crucial Conversations® for Mastering Dialogue, and this group seemed more comfortable talking about thoughts over feelings.

The room was so quiet you could have heard a paperclip drop. Seconds dragged by as I fiddled with my clicker, waited, and breathed. I was just about to give up and move on when one person raised his hand.

"I would feel angry … sad … and hopeless," he said.

Wow. Just ten seconds to shift from head to heart.

That moment taught me I need to get more comfortable with silence in the training room. How much learner insight had I missed because I wasn't pausing long enough, especially for the internal processors? I'm an external processor myself and don't need a lot of reflection time before speaking. But others need space.

Since then I've picked the brains of facilitators who skillfully navigate awkward silence. Here's what I learned.

Set the Tone Early

Establish ground rules. A ground rule as simple as "please participate" encourages learners to share their thoughts. One often-overlooked advantage of a virtual session is that it gives people options: they can unmute or type into the chat.

Affirm participation. As the first person answers a question, call them by name and thank them for setting the tone that we'll share in class. And if the answer was especially honest or real, thank them for that vulnerability.

Don't rush the first question. Let silence sit. If you give the group a pass on the very first question, that tone will likely carry over into the rest of the course. Resist the temptation to move along too soon.

Wait

Trust the pause. Internal processors need time, and waiting a few seconds may yield a rich insight or a vulnerable example. As one master trainer told me, "Once I went through that loop a few times, I began to trust in the power of waiting for answers."

Use a mental countdown. I've found it helpful to count my breaths (which ensures I'm not literally holding my breath) while sitting in silence. Another helpful option is to repeat a short mantra. My personal favorite is "one, peace in silence, two, peace in silence."

Name the silence. Say something like, "I know that's a big question. I'll give you a moment to reflect."

Get comfortable with discomfort. Participants may need to go to the edge of their comfort zone to learn. A wise trainer once told me, "There is no

Opinion: Dead Air and How to Survive It: Three Ways to Handle Awkward Silence, Crutial Learning

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growth in comfort and no comfort in growth."

Watch the room. Look for non-verbal cues that the group understands the question, and be ready to rephrase or simplify the question as needed. Also scan the room for that person who seems to be on the verge of answering. Sometimes an encouraging smile or eye contact is all it takes.

Ease the pressure. When there isn't a right or wrong answer, remind learners of that! This might take pressure off the room, especially with a group of high performers who want to get it right.

Have Alternatives for When Waiting Doesn't Work

Offer examples. Give some sample answers, like, "Would you feel surprised or anxious or maybe even a little excited?" Or offer a simple example from your own career.

Use simple visuals. For a question like, "On a scale of 1–5, if you were Alvaro how safe would you feel right now?" instead ask for a "fist-to-five" assessment and have everyone in the room raise their hand and share their number. Or if the question is "How did Karina do this time?" ask learners to give a thumbs-up, thumbs-sideways or thumbs-down assessment.

Add journaling time. Give learners a minute to write before sharing out loud.

Break into small groups. Reflection and discussion sometimes happen best at their tables or in turning and talking to a partner.

Lighten the mood. Turn silent moments into laughter by saying things like, "This is the group participation part," or "Our group discussions will be more interesting if we talk."

Tap into personal motivation. If you are a fan of the Six Source model, you know the power of Source One, Personal Motivation. Engage it with something like, "I know it can be intimidating to speak up in front of the room like this. And yet, one thing I've learned over the years is that your moments of deepest learning are going to come when you're talking, not when I'm talking. I want to give you space to dive deep here."

What about you?

How do you manage dead air? Please share your thoughts with me and your fellow trainers in the comments section. (I hope you do. I'm over here counting and breathing…)

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