

# Workshop Delivery Tips

by Michael Eury

## Running your workshop

Whilst the content and design of any learning-focussed workshop is more important than the presenter's skills, a workshop run by a person with poor presenting skills will be less likely to result in positive learning outcomes.

Below I have listed 8 points to consider when delivering your next workshop. 8 points focussed upon improving the presenter's skills.



### 1. Snap!

This may seem to contradict the importance of your preparation, however your audience will form an

impression of the quality of the workshop the moment they see you and hear you speak. Malcolm Gladwell, in his book Blink, describes the phenomenon of 'thin-slicing'. Thin-slicing refers to the way people form a largely accurate picture of others almost immediately upon seeing and hearing them. First impressions do count!

### 2. Know your stuff

I know, this is obvious! However next time you're running a workshop ask yourself whether you can do it without referring to any notes whatsoever. Your audience has probably paid to attend, at the least they're giving up their time, the least you can do is make sure you put enough time into knowing your content, your slides, your activities...

### 3. Variety

You may have a lovely voice. Perhaps you are the expert in your field. Maybe you're just nervous. However, DO NOT talk non-stop! This is about the learner. A workshop

designed to meet learners' needs should have a variety of learning activities. It will vary depending upon topic, audience, size of audience, length of workshop and the experience of audience. However the following should be in most presenters' repertoire:

- lecture
- open discussion
- group brainstorming
- small group discussions



- case studies
- projects
- ice-breakers/ energisers
- games
- role-plays
- use of different media, eg powerpoint/

keynote, whiteboard, flipcharts

### 4. Be mobile

Some presenters seem to be anchored to one spot at the front of the room. Be mobile! If using powerpoint/keynote use a wireless remote to change slides. Interact with the audience. Movement creates energy, encourages attention, helps communicate passion. But DON'T go overboard and jump around!!

## 5. Be professional

This is related to point 1. Your audience will partly judge your workshop on how they perceive you. What are some of the things that your participants will be judging you on?

- The clarity of your communication
- Are you smiling?
- Your enthusiasm
- Are you organised?
- Do you treat participants with respect?
- Do you know your stuff?

Work on your opening. Make it strong, enthusiastic and positive!



## 6. Manage the learners

You may have a wide variety of learners in the room. Some are keen and enthusiastic, others are not.

Some are quite knowledgeable on your topic, some are not. Your task as a presenter is to manage the room to maximise learning. Sometimes this may mean managing difficult participants. Though rare, they have the potential to 'throw' you. My recommendation, don't let yourself be drawn into their space. What I mean is, remain professional, listen to their view, perhaps explain your points in a different way to help understanding, but NEVER allow yourself to lose control. If needs be suggest that you can discuss their thoughts afterwards before continuing. Remember, there are other participants, keep your focus!

## 7. Don't run late

Be on time beginning and don't be late ending. It's pretty easy to tell when a presenter is running out of time, they suddenly rush through points. Were these points less important? Probably not, but they now seem that way to the learners. A key part of preparation is knowing how much

time you need to deliver your workshop.

Here are a few suggestions that may help:

- have a couple of activities that are able to be omitted if time is running short. your audience will not be aware that you time is tight.
- oppositely, have a couple of extra activities on hand in case your workshop looks likely to finish too early
- Always finish early! No-one will complain if you finish 5-10 minutes early, but they will if you're late. Finishing early leaves room for questions.

## 8. Tangent management

OK, sometimes discussions go in directions you didn't expect. That's what discussions do



and to cut them off could mean that interesting new ideas are not heard. What you don't want though is a discussion that goes a long way off topic for a long time, eating into the rest of the workshop's time. To avoid this stay on your toes. If you are getting off topic, be aware and lead discussion back on topic. If there is something that cannot be resolved in the workshop, 'carpark' it. This means recording the question on a separate board and committing to answering the question and getting back to learners after the workshop (you'd better do this!)