



Tips on Running a Successful Training Workshop

Succeeding *With* Workshops

Web Design Imagineers

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Foreword

Workshops are great for brainstorming, interactive learning, building relationships and problem solving. To reap the rewards from a workshop it is important that is well planned. Get the info here.

Succeeding With Workshops

Tips on Running a Successful Training Workshop

Chapter 1:

The Basics

Synopsis

Before the workshop it is necessary that the organisation has a clear overall goal – is the workshop being run as a team building exercise or a training activity? Decisions must then be made as to who will attend. Knowing exactly who will attend directly relates to the objective.

The Basics

The Venue

To be successful the choice of the location for the workshop must be right. The size of the group attending will determine the type of facility to be looked for.

Thought needs to go to the logistics and practical details of the workshop such as the visibility of any visual aids and whether or not the location can support any technology that might have to be used.

Accommodation & Catering

Consideration needs to be given to organising accommodation for people attending from afar, the catering facilities provided and if the venue has appropriate spaces available for breakout sessions.

Once the primary objective and attendees have been ascertained it will be necessary to develop outlines of how to achieve the workshop goal.

Workshop Goal

Thought has to be put into the main points to discuss and then each major point broken down into details and the visual aids listed that will be needed for each point.

Consideration then has to be given to which discussion points will be raised when and which activities will be held when and how much time will be allocated to each.

Feedback

The only way to determine how successful the workshop was is to have a feedback plan. A questionnaire must be devised to give to all participants time to share their opinions on how well it went. (Or not, if there were any problems)

The Key To Success

Getting everyone involved is the key to success. Everyone needs to participate and keeping groups small will help people contribute better.

Careful planning and attention to detail will ensure workshop success.

Chapter 2:

Defining The Goals

Synopsis

Workshops need to be valuable experiences for everyone who attends. Many workshops are a waste of time because there is no clear goal kept at the centre of discussion and attendees come away from the workshop wondering what it was all about or what its purpose was.

Without this clear goal there is no real point in getting people together to attend a workshop in the first place.

What Do You Want To Accomplish

Setting Out Your Goals

Every workshop must have clearly defined goals. The goal is the desired result that the organisation envisions, plans and commits to achieve. The reasons behind organising a workshop may be many and various.

It may be that an organisation wants to focus on its recruitment procedure. Other businesses may need to undertake some team building activities for newly formed teams. Another reason could be to teach better organisational skills to a section of the staff.

The workshop organiser has to define the workshop goals that represent the intended outcomes of the workshop and are aligned to the participant's needs and interests.

It is important to **define at least two goals**; one goal that focuses on the workshop content and one goal that focuses on taking actions. Coupled with this it is important to identify objectives for each session of the workshop, the objectives being the steps leading to achieving these goals.

Thought must be given to what it is the organisation wants the participants to know at the end of the session. Once that is known, it is possible to form well constructed goals.

With well defined goals the presenter of the workshop can organise appropriate challenges for the participants, challenges that will direct and motivate their learning.

It is important to remember that the work shop goals are not the same as the workshop objectives. The objectives are the steps to achieving the workshop goals.

Each element of the workshop is an objective aimed at achieving the workshop goals.

A workshop with clearly defined goals is on track to being successful.

Chapter 3:

Attendees And Location

Synopsis

Once an organisation has established that it needs to organise a workshop, there has to be time allocated to establishing the exact reason as to why it is felt that a workshop is actually necessary.

The Plan

Thought has to be given as to what needs to be developed within an organisation or what needs to be addressed and improved. Once that has been ascertained it is possible to give consideration to which personnel ought to attend the workshop in order to benefit from it.

When the proposed number of workshop attendees has been established then the next item to be addressed is the location of the venue for the workshop.

Personnel should only attend workshops that are relevant to them and the work that they are doing. Nothing will be gained by issuing blanket attendance request to task specific or skill specific workshops.

Staff whose sphere of interest is not part of the proposed workshop parameters will only become bored and dissatisfied and not only that they have been removed from their work station and production will suffer by their absence from work to attend a meaningless workshop.

From time to time there will be certain workshops that are pertinent to all staff members but usually that is not the case.

Once the total number of attendees of a proposed workshop has been determined then it is possible to give consideration to finding a suitable venue.

The Right Place For Your Workshop

Somewhere will have to be found that will accommodate all attendees in a satisfactory manner. **The size of the venue is important** for whilst too small a venue will obviously be unsuitable and conversely, so will too large a space.

As most workshops incorporate sessions involving group work the proposed venue needs to have spaces where groups can adjourn to (Breakouts). Thought will have to be given to how suitable or otherwise a venue will be to supporting necessary technology for the workshop, like wi-fi, multimedia, presentation aids etc.

Consideration will have to be given to basic logistics such as accessibility to the venue and car parking, along with provision for such basics as food and beverages and sufficient sanitary facilities for the number of attendees.

Chapter 4:

Create Agenda And Follow Up Plan

Synopsis

Organising a successful workshop takes a great deal of very careful planning and a considerable amount of time. Whilst all personnel are busy and it might seem that the workshop is detracting from productivity, nothing could be further from the truth.

Correct Planning

A successful workshop should lead to improved morale and production and the raising of skill and performance levels.

Failure to plan for success will mean the loss of potential.

Having established the importance of there being a workshop and establishing its goal the workshop organiser has to give careful attention to the **formulation of an agenda and a follow up plan.**

Knowing the goal/s of the workshop, the organiser needs to develop a list of **discussion topics** for the workshop. They should be sequenced in a logical way and ranked in importance. Points to come from the discussion topics can then be formulated.

The next consideration is working out the time allocation for each point. This is critical so that any supporting visual aid material can be sought and researched to ensure that it can fit into the allocated time slot.

Thought will have to be given to allowing time at the beginning for ice breakers and time given at the end to receive **feedback from the attendees.**

Bearing all those points in mind an agenda covering all areas for development should then be drawn up ensuring that the workshop can fit into its allocated time slot.

It is not possible to assess how successful or otherwise any workshop has been unless there has been feedback from the workshop

attendees. Bearing that point in mind the workshop organiser has to formulate a **follow up plan**.

This normally consists of a questionnaire to determine the value of the workshop to the attendees. Time needs to be allowed so that attendees can voice their opinions about the workshop and how effective or otherwise it might have been.

Assessments of staff performance later will also indicate how valuable the workshop had been.

Chapter 5:

Involving People During The Workshop

Synopsis

In order for a workshop to be successful there has to be an opportunity for the all attendees to participate in an interactive way.

If this does not happen then it will not be a workshop. It will be a lecture. Who likes lectures especially when one is expecting a workshop?

Include People

Whilst some staff might gain from being in a lecture situation there is a very good chance that other individuals will day dream, doodle, text or in other ways fail to be alert and receptive to the goal of the workshop.

So the underlying task for all workshop organisers is to plan for them to be interactive. Because unless all attendees gain from the workshop then the workshop has been a disservice to the organisation as valuable production and service time will have been lost.

Some staff will attend and participate in workshops willingly, whilst others are intimidated and uncomfortable in workshop settings. It is the role of the workshop organiser to come up with ideas and ways to put this latter group at ease so that they can participate well.

One very common technique that works well to put people at ease with one another is the employment of icebreakers at the beginning of the session. The funny and non challenging activities generally manage to get staff to relax and to feel more comfortable being with each other.

It is a good idea to ensure that all group work is organised into small groups. Large groups can be threatening to certain staff members

and some will not contribute well in such settings. Making the groups smaller encourages the shy members to participate.

Another way of ensuring that people remain involved and are actively participating in the workshop is to allocate specific tasks to each group member.

Such tasks might include: recorder, time keeper, reporter etc. The organiser should arrange to ensure that all groups get a chance to report to the entire workshop. This adds value to the attendees presence and gives them a sense of involvement.

The organiser should also indicate that they value receiving the ideas and thoughts of the attendees.

Chapter 6:

Let Your Creativity Shine

Synopsis

Nowhere is it stipulated that workshops have to be conducted in a specific way, although many often are. Workshops are an extremely flexible and effective method for training, learning, developing, changing methodology, team building, problem solving and virtually any organisational challenges.

Let It Show

It is possible for an organiser to run a workshop in any way they want. The options are as wide as the organiser's imagination. The incorporation of different activities, materials and challenges can help to add variety and to maintain interest and involvement.

Attendees can be more readily engaged if the organiser contacts the attendees before the workshop to assess what their needs are.

Organisers and presenters should try to tailor the content and structure of the workshop for the particular situation and not just use off-the-shelf formats.

Unless there is a good reason for using laptops and projectors, delegates should use flip chart paper and coloured marker pens and hang the sheets around the walls. This enables the attendees to be more dynamic and creative than modern technology media does.

Organisers should encourage people to use creative methods that are appropriate for their personal style and their learning style. Visual, spatial, creative people enjoy working with flip charts, colours and post-it notes etc.

People-centred individuals and teams enjoy human interaction involving role plays, discussions, and mutual interviews. Logical,

numerate and process oriented people are happier working with more structured planning tools and computers.

Considering the needs of the attendees and being creative will greatly assist workshop success.

The more pre-planning you manage to do, giving plenty of thought as to who you will be inviting to attend... the better your workshop will be for the organisation and of course those attending.

Wrapping Up

Workshop organisers will be faced with having to deal with attendees who have participated in workshops before. Indeed some seasoned staff members will no doubt have had to attend numerous workshops and might even be quite negative when attending a workshop.

As long as staff attitudes are known, it is up to the workshop organiser and presenter to come up with challenges and to ring the changes to ensure that all attendees have a **positive experience** at the workshop so that they gain fully from it.

That will help make your workshop successful.

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