

Tips for Training

Preparing for a training session

1. Agree aims and objectives
2. Develop a number of activities to ensure that aims and objectives are achieved.

1. Establish aims and objectives

It really helps to know what you are trying to achieve – and to ensure that everyone in the session is clear about the aims and objectives of the session.

Take, for example, a workshop on how to organise a seminar. You might think, 'I'll give a short presentation covering everything involved in organising a seminar. I'll explain the importance of booking speakers on time, finding a suitable venue etc.' This would be a less helpful than determining why this workshop is required, and establishing aims for the session

e.g.

seminars have been running well but they have been making a loss, the main aim of the session is to ensure we all develop the skills to price and market seminars.

OR

A whole new group of people have become involved in organising seminars, they want to look at developing innovative new seminar programmes - the aim might be to ensure they know how to run a seminar, and also think through the pros and cons of developing a new approach to seminars.

2. Developing a session that will achieve your aims and objectives

A workshop involves a contract between the participants and the facilitator - the facilitator takes responsibility for generating an environment in which views can be shared, contributions will be listened to, and aims and objectives are achieved. A participant takes responsibility for their own participation, signs up to shared ground rules and is open and honest in sharing their views and information.

The facilitators role is to provide:

- some input (pose key questions, provide new information, provide new ways of looking at issues etc) – not all facilitators will need to give input
- a format for activities that will help everyone participate and get the most out of the session

Barriers to participation

Participants are not blank sheets of paper. They come with experience and knowledge to share, but they also come with baggage.

The facilitator needs to understand the source of some of this baggage. Baggage can include negative experience and perspectives on the subject, or about the organisation responsible for the event. Some baggage may be current preoccupations (personal things going on in their own lives that make them edgy or bad tempered, or distant and unwilling to participate. Commentators suggest that the main barriers to participation are:

Emotional/intuitive eg fear of failure or embarrassment; other things on your mind
Logical/critical eg belief that the subject matter is inappropriate, or the group is not the right group to be discussing it
Biological/medical eg room too hot or too cold
Cultural/social eg peer pressure

Don't take negativity personally. Be positive, be prepared.

Learning and thinking styles

Participants come with preferred ways of processing information:

e.g. internal/external
generalities/specifics
proactive/reactive
similarity/difference
flexible/rule governed

Make sure you offer different ways of approaching the subject matter, and value different perspectives on issues (even if you do not share those perspectives, or the approach of the participant).

Running the workshop

The training session will have 4 distinct phases. You need to facilitate each phase.

Warming
Norming
Storming
Mourning

Warming

Getting going. Ice breakers, introductions, expectations. Ground rules. Breaking the silence.

Norming

Establishing aims and objectives, developing key themes

Storming

In the swing of the session. Make sure everyone gets the opportunity to participate ('park' issues for which there is no time)

Mourning

Reviewing, agreeing on what to report back.

Techniques for making the most of the Storming session

1. Posing key questions
2. Discussion - brainstorming, buzz groups - freestyle or structured
Turn to the person next to you and discuss what training you have done. Or brainstorming in the group. See notes on using flipcharts.
3. Case-studies

4. Models e.g. Johari Window, quadrants, SWOT, PEST,