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INTRODUCTION

Successful seminars / workshops are a direct result of adequate previous preparation on the part of the organizer of the event. These events are costly and time consuming endeavors, therefore it is of paramount importance that the event meets or exceeds its desired objective of communicating the information presented to the selected target group. Globalization and technology has given us the opportunity to conduct seminars / workshops in a variety of ways, therefore, the resourceful organizer, whether in government or private enterprise, should be vigilant and receptive to embrace theses changes that occur in their working environment which can impact on their profitability, efficiency and effectiveness.

This Paper will examine the guidelines for planning and conducting workshops and seminars within the public sector as today's business environment places particular emphasis on 'good practices' that should be utilized by planners to achieve success.

Traditionally, workshop and seminars were conceived as being different types of training devices, but in contemporary times, the two are seen as being synonymous and are used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. For the purpose of this Paper, the latter interpretation will be used.

OBJECTIVES

This Paper will seek to achieve its objective by:

- Defining the words 'seminar' and 'workshop'

- Determining the similarities and differences between a seminar and a workshop

- Identifying the stages involved in planning a seminar / workshop

- Outlining the steps involved in planning and conducting seminars and workshops

- Decomposing the stages of a seminar / workshop

- Identifying different seating arrangements

- Outlining different presentation styles

- Defining different visual aids

- Defining evaluation levels

FRAME WORK

Workshops and seminars are among the most popular training devices in higher education. When properly designed, they are a time and cost efficient method of producing active involvement of learners compared to individual training activities.

Preparing a seminar / workshop involves understanding a wide variety of issues and concerns. Each seminar / workshop has a unique audience with unique skills and objectives, and perhaps a different number of participants. It is usually held in a different place with a different infrastructure. Two seminars / workshops are never identical, even if they cover the same topic. You don't want to be surprised when you arrive on site and meet the participants.

Whether you are conducting a workshop / seminar your main goal is to communicate your topic to an audience of mixed backgrounds and interests. Therefore, you should present your information in a way that everyone can understand and leave with some lesson learnt.

Definition of a Seminar:

Seminars are small group teaching and learning arrangements that use group interaction as a means of engaging participants. Although seminars usually begin with a presentation or mini-lecture to provide the basis for discussion, the word "seminar" also includes rather formal group discussions led by the teacher and focused on the content rather than on issues arising from students (Jaques, 1991).

Definition of a Workshop:

Workshops are teaching and learning arrangements, usually in small groups, that are structured to produce active participation in learning. Traditionally, workshops provide participants with the opportunity to practice skills and receive feedback. However, current usage is so loose that any learning event that aspires to engage the learners actively may be called a workshop.

Workshops and seminars are similar in that they both are learning and teaching arrangements which allow for active participation of participants, and they are usually conducted in small groups. They differ in the practical application of the topic under discussion. At a workshop, the participants are given the opportunity to practice skills and receive feedback while a seminar concentrates on delivering the information and discussion of the pertinent issues.

PROCESSES

There are a number of activities that are involved in preparing a seminar / workshop these activities can be organized into three (3) stages:

1 **Preparation**

2 **Implementation**

3 **Evaluation**

PREPARATION

Preparation for the seminar / workshop involves a number of activities listed below:

1. Determine the budget available to host event

2. Determine the theme / topic to be discussed at the seminar / workshop

3. Contact and secure the relevant Presenter(s)

4. Identify target group and number of participants required

5. Secure venue – (site visit of venue to ensure it is adequate)

6. Finalize event details – (breaks, resources needed)

7. Contact relevant Ministries, Departments or target group to inform them of event – (time, date, venue, duration, break information)

8. Follow up on 6 to ensure the information was received

9. Finalize list of persons attending

10. Source and prepare all necessary resources needed by organizer and Presenter – (books, manuals, projectors, name tags, etc)

11. Secure caterer to provide meals if not included in venue package

12. Contact Accountant and request a 'Local Purchase Order'

BUDGET

Funding is an integral part of any event, since the amount of funding available for the hosting of the event will determine a number of factors in planning the event.

1. Venue

2. Duration

3. Number of participants

4. Equipment – (Presentation Media)

5. Informational packets / Materials

6. Availability of refreshments

7. Expertise of Presenter

THEME / TOPIC

The seminar topic should address an issue / concern which has stimulated the interest of the business sector or the wider society. The selection of the topic should naturally lead to the seminar objective. The objectives in turn will determine the scope of the seminar and should deal specifically with those areas that are pertinent to the achievement of the seminar objectives.

SELECTION OF PRESENTER

The success of the seminar greatly depends upon the quality of the Presenters, therefore, you should choose speakers whom are appropriate for the topic chosen. Ideally, the speaker should be someone at the top of their field or someone who possesses an in-depth knowledge of the particular area either academically or professionally. The Presenter should be informed of the seminar scope and its desired objectives in order to facilitate

their preparation of the actual material they will be presenting. The material to be presented should be accurate and up-to-date. This will undoubtedly influence the equipment and visual media to be used in the presentation. Confirmation of speaker participation should be sought at this point.

Points to consider:

1. Expertise / strong research background
2. Ability to convey knowledge to a large audience
3. Unbiased and non-partisan (do not invite speakers that are aligned with a particular cause / group)
4. Honorarium
5. Travel expenses
6. Identify alternative speaker as a precaution

TARGET GROUP

The characteristics of participants will influence the structure, content and activities undertaken in a workshop. Some key questions to be taken into consideration:

1. What is the size and the composition of the group?
2. What are the ages, ethnicity, gender and teaching experience of the participants?
3. What is their level of interest?
4. What are their needs?
5. How to mitigate problems that might arise?
6. Personality types of group?

7. What is the best way to get the message across?

SECURE VENUE

The type of seminar being presented will influence the venue that is chosen. The facilities of the venue should be able to comfortably accommodate the participants while taking into consideration the needs of the Presenter and the budget.

Points to consider:

- Cost
- Capacity
- Security
- Computer accessibility
- Lighting & Acoustics
- Audio / visual requirements
- Temperature

FINALIZE DETAILS

Determine the length of the seminar, the mode(s) of deliverance, equipment needs of Presenter, handouts and other learning material for participants, breaks and refreshments, and deadlines for replying. Secure a caterer to provide refreshments if not included in venue package.

CONTACT RELEVANT DEPARTMENTS / PARTICIPANTS

Initial contact of those Departments or persons identified to attend the seminar, with the full details of the seminar included.

Includes:

1. Deadline for response

2. Seminar overview / outline

3. Requirements for eligibility

4. Number of participants required

FOLLOW UP

Liaising with Departments / participants to ensure that the information disseminated by the organizer was received. Ascertain the potential participants who are attending the seminar and remind them of start date.

PREPARE FINAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The final list of those persons attending the seminar is prepared. All relevant persons are notified of the number of participants (Caterer, Presenter, and Facilitator).

RESOURCES

All resources required for the seminar is acquired or sourced at this stage.

Checklist:

- Projectors, Laptop

- Flip charts

- Software – Microsoft PowerPoint

- Stationery – markers, pens, notepads

- Handouts

- Name tags

PAYMENT

All bills should be paid before the commencement of the seminar to avoid any embarrassing situations from occurring. The Local Purchase Order or other form of payment should be finalized and be ready for disbursement, unless there is a special arrangement for payment between the organizer and the recipient.

IMPLEMENTATION

This is the phase where the actual conducting of the seminar / workshop takes place.

1. Arrive early at venue to ensure the following:

    - Furniture is arranged as desired.

    - Name tags of participants are laid out.

    - Participants' informational packets are laid out.

    - Equipment and material required by Presenter are ready and working.

    - Completion of Registration forms (if necessary).

2. Welcome address and introduction of Presenter:

    - The facilitator formally welcomes all participants to the seminar.

    - The facilitator gives a brief synopsis of the seminar.

    - Explanation of their role in the seminar.

    - Answers any queries the participants may have.

        - The seminar time schedule

        - Refreshment times and location

        - What they are expected to do

        - Planned activities that require their participation

    - Introduces the Presenter and gives an insight into his background.
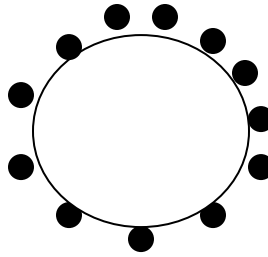
    - Hands over the seminar to the Presenter.

3.   Conducting the seminar

The Presenter should consider the following:

- Seating arrangements

- Presentation style

- Workshop methods

- Visual Aids

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

CIRCLE:

Place chairs in a circle if interactive discussion of a fairly small group will be the primary activity of the meeting.

SEMICIRCLE:
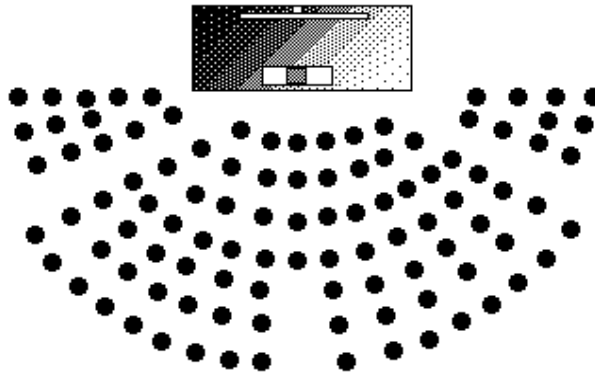
Semicircle provides all attendees good viewing and audience contact, and the Presenter has high audience density with great eye contact. Since center aisles are prime seating areas, the aisles are moved to the sides. All chairs face the Presenter. Ideal, if a projection device, chalkboard or flip chart will be used.

HERRINGBONE:
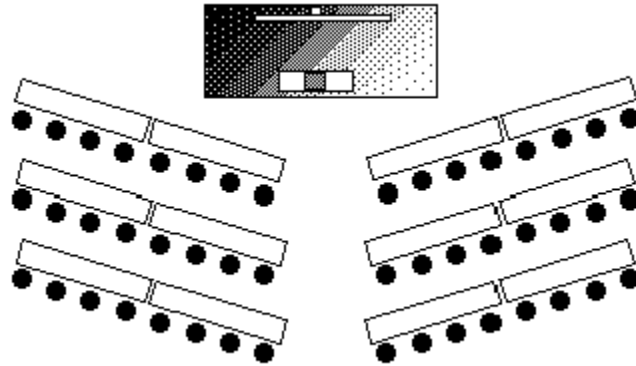
Theater or classroom seating, positioned in angles or curves to face the stage. This setup is both unique and functional. Each member of the audience can look straight forward and have a good view of the stage. It's the next best thing to Semicircle.

THEATER:
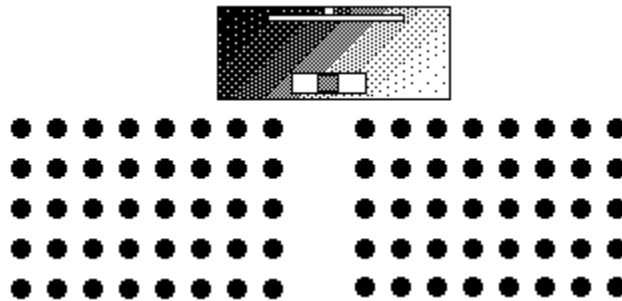
Straight rows of chairs facing the stage, without tables. It allows for the highest audience density and keeps them closest to the front to create increased audience responsiveness.

CLASSROOM:
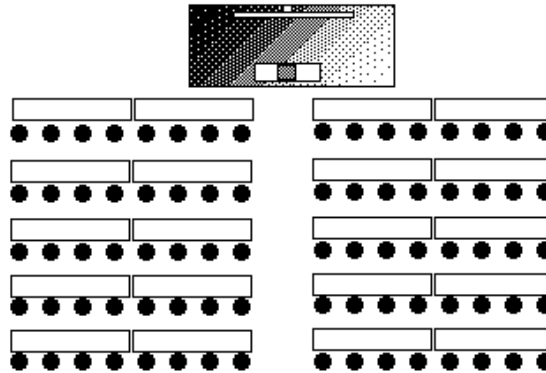
Rows of chairs, as in theater, placed at long, narrow tables. The best tables measure 18" x 6' or 8'. You lose some audience density and seating capacity, but gain comfort and writing ability for the attendees. For long seminars, this layout works best.

BANQUET, ROUNDS:
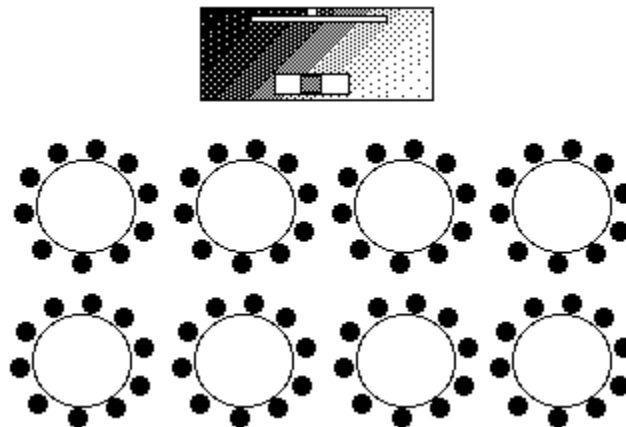
A series of round tables set with 8-10 chairs. This is a good setup for meals and/or networking among the people at the table. It has the drawback of severely limiting seating capacity, spreading the audience too far from the stage, and forcing half the audience to crane their neck or rotate their chairs.

U-SHAPE:
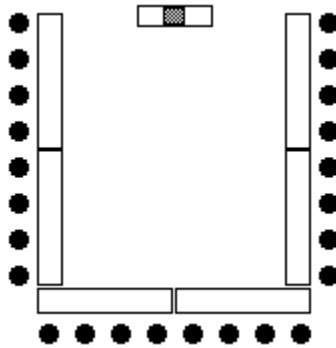
Rows of long, narrow tables shaped to form a "U". Best for interaction between attendees as in a meeting, but least effective if you want attention placed on the Presenter. The Presenter is always looking away from the majority of the attendees and has a space gap between all of them.

PRESENTATION STYLE

The Presenter should seek to present the seminar in a smooth manner without sounding too rehearsed.

Points to consider:

- Learn your speech – to avoid having to read it. A helpful technique is to use cue card with a list of the main points to guide you.

- Practice – this is important for a successful presentation. It allows the speaker to spot flaws and enables smoother transitions from section to section. Try to rehearse with an audience of friends or peers to get feedback and constructive criticism.

- Dress – Seek to look and act professional. Develop a confident (But not arrogant) stage presence. Look at your audience and make eye contact with them. This conveys an air of confidence and knowledge ability about the subject matter.

- Avoid doing any distracting mannerisms

- Avoid showing your nervousness – the internal nervousness most speakers feel during presentations is usually not seen externally. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the selected environment.

- Speech – speak loudly and clearly, as if to a person at the very back of the room. Keep up the intensity of your voice right to the end of each sentence. Show enthusiasm by varying the pitch of your voice since this makes listening more interesting and gives you a tool for emphasizing. Do

not speak too fast and keep your sentences short. Main points should be repeated to aid memory and understanding.

- Time Management – The Presenter should be aware of the time allocated for the presentation and package his material to suit.

WORKSHOP METHODS

The methods used in the workshop must suit the objectives of the workshop. Objectives can be classified as knowledge, skills or attitudes.

PRESENTING INFORMATION

1. Brief presentation followed by questions

   This method works well when participants know enough about the topic to generate stimulating questions.

2. Presentations with designated respondents

   Assign specific tasks to various participants. You assign tasks that engage the learners.

3. A panel discussion

   This is an informal discussion among members of a selected group in front of an audience. This method is suitable for teaching large groups where there are too many people in the audience for audience interaction. Not ideal for encouraging interaction in a small group.

4. A debate

   This is an engaging method for presenting material since the participants themselves take part. Debaters should be encouraged to focus on

convincing one another of their arguments rather than on discrediting or attacking their opponents.

5. Prepared media

This method is used to stimulate conversation and not to replace it. A popular form of videotaped presentation for use with small groups is the "trigger tape", a brief, dramatic presentation that triggers interaction among participants. Slides or graphical information can be used in this way.

READING

1. Requiring an assignment

Participants may be asked to take a position based on the readings or to develop a case or example from their own practices.

2. Brief position papers

Participants may be required to write a position paper or statement (a few paragraphs or one page) stating their position or response.

3. Reading during the workshop

Participants read brief assignments during the workshop, and then the assignments are discussed or reported to the larger group.

4. Jigsaw Technique

Participants read different assignments. Each assignment is designed to bring out a separate component of the issue at hand. The participants in the team then combine their knowledge to generate a complete picture of the phenomenon. According to this technique, originally described by Aronson et. al. (1978), the problem, question or assignment is divided into parts and each part is parceled out to a different team, called the "expert" teams. The first task of these teams is to make themselves "expert" at their particular part of the problem. But they must also discuss how each of them will teach what they know because, in the next phase of the process, the expert teams regroup into "home" teams consisting of one member of every expert team. The task of the home groups is to put together the entire issue or solve the entire problem by combining the components.

DEMONSTRATIONS AND DRAMATIC ENACTMENTS

Demonstrations are useful as a component in skill learning to model either proper or incorrect procedures. By themselves, they cannot teach skills unless they are followed by actual practice by the participants, with constructive feedback. Demonstrations can encourage learners by convincing them of the effectiveness of a procedure.

PRACTICE WITH FEEDBACK

This method is the standard method of skills learning, including complex cognitive skills like problem solving and critical thinking.

1. Helping Trios

    The group divides into teams of three. One member of the team performs a procedure (e.g. giving feedback to the other), while the third observes. After the performance all three give feedback to one another. This process is reiterated until everyone has taken each role, all of the triads join a general discussion of the problems and issues involved in the targeted performance. This method increases the active engagement of participants to 100%.

2. Paired Interviewing

    This method consists of a pair of learners who interview one another. Learners who think that they understand something after reading about it find that the task of being able to explain their understanding to someone else requires a much deeper level of understanding and integration of the material. The interviewer who is confused by the answer to his / her question is providing indirect feedback to the questioner about the clarity of the answer. After two pairs engage in this interviewing process they can join one another to discuss problems of understanding the material. The

goal of this procedure is integration of knowledge, not the learning of skills. This method was developed by Kagan (cited in Millis, 1995).

3. Testing One Another

    This is one method (Sherman, 1991, cited in Millis, 1995) that takes the pain out of learning from testing. Prior to the workshop each participant prepares a question and a thorough answer. During the workshop participants are organized into pairs and they exchange questions and work independently for 20 minutes or so answering their partner's question. The two then compare their answers with those generated at the workshop.

4. Videotape feedback

    This is a useful aid in practice sessions, particularly when the target behavior is visible on video.

5. Concentric Circles / Fish Bowl Technique

    This method consists of a small circle of group members within a larger circle. Members of the inner circle "practice" by interacting in some way (problem solving, discussing, teaching) while the outer circle observes them and provides feedback.

6. Separating the Idea Generating Phase from the Critical Phase

The group is broken into smaller groups, each of which addresses a problem, question or an issue. They are encouraged to generate as many solutions as possible but not to be critical of any of them. Each group passes its solutions on to another whose task is to critically examine the solutions offered for feasibility, cost effectiveness and to suggest ways that the various solutions might be tested.

ELICITING AUDIENCE REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. Brainstorming

   This is a creative thinking technique in which group members storm a problem with their brains. A recorder lists the ideas while the leader keeps vigilant to remind contributors when the rules are violated. The rules are: no critical judgments until later; don't be concerned with quality of ideas, quantity is all that counts; wild ideas are encouraged and improvements on someone else's idea is legitimate. Only one participant can speak at a time.

2. Buzz Group

   This technique is highly effective for getting participation from everyone in the group. The leader divides the group into small clusters of three to six and then provides each cluster with a question or two. A recorder in each group reports to the larger group and a discussion usually follows. In brainstorming only one participant can speak at a time, in buzz groups a participant can be speaking in each cluster.

3. Think-Pair-Share

   This technique was developed by Frank Lyman (Cited in Millis, 1995), it allows more than one person to speak at the same time. In the first phase, all of the participants are engaged in 'thinking' about a problem or question that the teacher presents. After a few minutes, participants are invited to form 'pairs' and share the problem with their partners. During

the third phase, learners can share their thoughts with larger groups or the entire workshop.

4. Voting with your Feet / Stand up and be counted / Value Lines

There are several versions of this method, but one version developed by Ivan Silver (1992) for use in a medical education context, is called "Stand Up and be Counted". Participants are given two minutes to write down whether they agree or disagree with the way that a particular case or problem was handled and their reasons. They are then asked to share their thoughts with the participant next to them. In the third phase, participants are asked to get up from their chairs and stand at the point in a line that corresponds to their opinion on the issue. The facilitator draws a huge Likert-type scale on the wall of the class marked at five points by the words "Strongly agree", "disagree", "don't know", "agree" and "strongly disagree". If the class is too large for the size of the wall available, the facilitator asks for half or a quarter of the class at one time. The facilitator then interviews participants to find out why they chose their particular position in the line. For about 10 or 15 minutes the facilitator encourages a debate, beginning with those at opposite ends of the line. The debate is gradually widened to include others at various places on the line and those who are seated. Finally, the facilitator asks everyone to sit and he summarizes the discussion.

Another version, called "Value Lines" is described by Barbara Millis in the Teaching at UNL newsletter, (1994). In this version there are two anchors, one at each end, such as "Strong disagreement" and "strong agreement". Persons are invited to share their ideas with others at different points on the line or opposite ends may be invited to pair up.

5. Card-Sorting

A card-sorting game called "Do You Have Any Fives?" developed by Ivan Silver and Nathan Hermann (1996) provides an opportunity for all participants to test their knowledge by placing cards in the appropriate categories and by teaching one another. At the start of the game each participant has in front of him or her, a pile of twenty to thirty cards that he or she must sort into four to six categories. Each card has a characteristic written on it that more accurately describes one of the categories than the others. Participants would then explain to others why they chose that category for this particular card. After participants have sorted all the cards into categories, the facilitator will review all the cards in the categories, and make necessary corrections by providing additional information and explanations.

6. Writing

This method of eliciting responses from the learners and ensuring their engagement in the task is the use of a "**reaction sheet**". Sheets of paper

with instructions to answer a few questions are distributed to the group at an appropriate moment. Typically, they ask questions designed to elicit useful feedback from the participants about their learning: Write down ideas that are new to you; Ideas that you question; Ideas that really "hit home", for whatever reason.

7. Group Leader Skills – Active Listening

This guide focuses on exercises that can be conducted in class. A skilled group leader can make a huge difference to the willingness of participants to share their thoughts and feelings.

PROBLEM-SOLVING / CASE BASED LEARNING

1. Structured Case / Problem Scenario

A case or problem scenario is presented to the whole group or, if the group is large, to subgroups of three or four. After the groups discuss the problem for 5 or 10 minutes, the teacher goes around the room listening to their solutions, approaches, conclusions.

2. Variation 1.: Random Reporting

One weakness of this procedure is that the more assertive learners nearly always become the reporters for the group. Another weakness is that some learners who do not fully understand the solutions or conclusions offered by their group might not catch up. A modification of this method, described by Barbara Millis (1995) overcomes the problem: once the group has discussed the question or solved the problem they are required to make certain that every group member can summarize the group's conclusions. The teacher goes from one subgroup to another calling on one of its members at random and asking her or him to report to the entire workshop. Those chosen to report are less inhibited because they are reporting the group consensus rather than their own views.

3. Variation 2.: The Jigsaw Technique

As discussed previously

4. Dramatic Enactment

As discussed previously

5. Problem-based-learning

As practiced in most medical schools, this material is too time-consuming for the typical workshop. In the course of tackling the problem, participants identify gaps in their knowledge or understanding which they then fill by individual study and by sharing information with their peers. Workshops and seminars can use this method but the materials must be prepared and available for the group participants.

6. Case-Based Learning

This method was developed in the Harvard School of Business and is carried out in relatively large classes, sixty or so. But it can be adapted easily to a workshop format. First, a number of subgroups read a rather detailed case and discuss it. Their task is to develop a response to questions posed by the case. Then, all of the subgroups come together for a kind of debate about what is the best course of action. The teacher points to individuals and asks each of them, "What would you do in this situation?" The large group sessions can become highly confrontational as individuals are intentionally pitted against one another by a skillful teacher. In the workshop situation, it would be better to pit subgroups against one another rather than individuals. Letting groups rather than individuals argue about the best course of action produces a safer interpersonal climate.

UNPLANNED STRATEGIES

Opportunities may arise for spontaneous interventions during the workshop. For example, you may notice an example of the phenomenon that you are trying to teach within the

learning group itself. Pointing out such parallels is a powerful strategy for connecting the

lesson to the real context of the learners.

VISUAL AIDS

A visual aid is something your audience can see that aids your speech content. Visuals should be proof read to ensure there are no errors or discrepancies.

Points to consider:

- **Font**

  The font should be big enough to be seen from the back of the venue. Titles should be in a larger font than the body of the information. Keep similar text the same size from one visual to the next.

- **Color**

  Care should be taken in choosing the colors for your presentation especially, if you will be using slides. The tried and proven 'colors' for slides are white on blue and black on white.

- **Background**

  The background should form a contrast in relation to the text used.

- **Layout**

  The slide should not be overcrowded with information. Information should be spaced so that it is easy to read.

- **Text**

Use point form or short simple phrases instead of sentences or paragraphs. Using all capital is harder to read therefore use a combination of upper and lower case lettering. Each visual should have:

- One main point
- One thought per line
- No more than 5-7 words per line
- No more than 5-7 lines per visual

- **Graphs and Tables**

Graphs and tables are the best way to summarize large quantities of raw data. You should note the following:

- Simplify the data
- Show only the essential information
- Be consistent in style and terminology, font, color
- Data elements should be the thickest and the brightest colors. Frames, grid lines, axis lines, and error bars should be lighter in color and weight
- X and Y axis lines should end at the last data point
- Include legends

EVALUATION

An evaluation is an important part of any workshop for two reasons. First, evaluations provide concrete feedback to the facilitator about how the workshop was received. This information should be considered in the planning of future workshops. Second, evaluations require the participants to reflect upon the workshop, including the facilitation, content, processes, facilities, how they might use what they have learnt, etc. An evaluation process which allows you as the facilitator to participate would continue the process of sharing and group activity which should have been established through the workshop.

The following steps are levels of evaluation taken from Dixon, 1978:

Level I: Opinions and Satisfaction

The most common means of evaluating workshops are attendance plus a measure of customer satisfaction, a questionnaire composed of rating scale items asking participants whether they got what they expected, what they learnt and whether they think it will be useful in the real setting. Qualitative methods, including focus groups or individual interviews, can provide the opportunity for participants to raise unanticipated issues.

Attendance and satisfaction are usually accepted as evidence by administrators and workshop planners of the successfulness of a workshop. But, sometimes, the customer does not know best. Participants can be overly optimistic about the value of new learning while still feeling the high of an exciting workshop. A delayed measure may provide a more accurate reflection of the workshop participants' satisfaction. Questionnaires sent to

participants several weeks or months after the workshop may provide a more accurate measure of the impact of the workshop.

Level II: Competence Measures

Quantitative measures of competence include measures of knowledge, skills and attitudes using instruments such as multiple choice exams and OSCE stations. Qualitative measures include attitude assessing questionnaires and interviews.

Level III: Performance

In the health professions, performance might be measured by quantitative indices such as prescribing data and x-ray utilization or, qualitative indices, such as explorations of barriers to change and chart stimulated recall.

Level IV: Outcome Measures

Evaluation of the behaviour, that is, the target of the workshop, under conditions as similar as possible to those in the real setting. The actual impact of the learned behaviour in the real setting may be the gold standard, but it is difficult to measure because of the problems of isolating the impact of the workshop from all of the other variables that effect the real environment. Moreover, the workshop may be successful in the sense that participants learn the skills, but still they may not be transferred to the workplace because of adverse conditions there.

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