Designing Workshops That Promote Active Learning and Behavior Change: An Outline for Success

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Workshop Definition: "A workshop is a short-term learning experience that encourages active, experiential learning and uses a variety of learning activities to meet the needs of diverse learners." (Brooks-Harris JE and Stock-Ward SR from Workshops: Designing and Facilitating Experiential Learning)

When is a workshop not a workshop: When it is a lecture and the learners are passive participants during the experience.

Characteristics of an effective workshop:
- Active involvement
- Application of new learning
- Behavior change as an outcome
- Variety of learning activities
- Interaction among participants
- Presenter acts as a facilitator not as a teacher or instructor
- Experiential learning experiences
- Relevant and practical information
- Emphasis on problem solving, skill building or development of competence

Pre-workshop Planning: Prior to developing a workshop, information must be collected and preliminary decisions must be made before embarking on the design of the session. Without analysis, you risk the chance that your workshop will not be successful.
1. Collecting preliminary data (who, what, when, where and why):
    a. Why is this workshop being requested or offered?
    b. Who will be attending (audience characteristics) and expected numbers?
    c. When will it occur (time of day, length of session)?
    d. What content should be covered and what outcome(s) or main emphasis of the workshop is expected? (problem solving, knowledge acquisition, skill building, development of competence etc)
    e. Where will the workshop be conducted (physical space and layout of the room, AV equipment, multimedia and internet capabilities)?
2. Deciding whether or not a workshop will fill the gap. There may be a myriad of solutions to fill a performance gap. Therefore it is necessary to determine if a workshop is the best method. For example, a job aid, mentoring or automation of a process may fill the gap better than a workshop.
3. Assessing or predicting the learning needs of the participants. In order for training to be successful you must find out what the participant need to know to be successful. Good analysis always takes time but don't over-analyze the problem. Too much analysis is just as bad as too little analysis. Techniques that can be used include the following:
    a. Interviews
    b. Questionnaires
    c. Focus groups
    d. Observation

     e. Analysis of previously collected data
     f. Reviewing the literature
     g. Brainstorming sessions
     h. Contacting others (programs, individuals, departments etc.)

4. Setting workshop goals and objectives.
   a. Base your objectives on your analysis of what is needed to fill the gap between current and expected performance.
   b. Objectives will help you stay on track and keep the session relevant and focused
   c. They will let others know what will be covered during the session.
   d. Objectives serve as a roadmap for the learners to help them determine what they should get out of this training.
5. Identifying resources that will enhance the workshop

Basic Workshop Framework. Experience is a crucial aspect of workshop learning. Therefore, I prefer a model of experiential learning first described by David Kolb. It has four stages

1. Reflecting on Experience
2. Assimilating and Conceptualizing Information
3. Experimenting and Practicing
4. Planning for Application

Based on this framework, I have used the following model as a method to design workshops and to maximize learning of all individuals regardless of their learning style.

1. Introductions/Goals and Objectives/Agenda. (Feedback on the proposed agenda from the participants is helpful in ensuring consensus between your plan and the group's needs)
2. Reflective exercise and/or Ice Breaker - warm up exercise, promote interaction, comfort and/or reflection
3. Brief didactics - tell them something that they will later practice/apply
4. Active learning "work" Below is a list of a few examples:
   a. individually think or write
   b. think-pair-share
   c. small group breakouts
   d. large group brainstorming
   e. role plays
   f. games
   g. video analysis
   h. case discussions
5. Application - get a commitment on how this will be incorporated into their day-to-day practices
6. Wrap-up and evaluation (evaluation allows one to continuously improve the presentation, what worked and what did not work)

Additional considerations:
- Breaks
- Sign in sheets
- CME
- Food
- Room configuration
- Handouts
- Leave with or send a product
- Flexibility
- How to handle questions

Below is a template that can be used for designing workshops:

Topic _____

Length _____   **Target audience** _____

Goals	
Objectives	1. 2. 3.
Ice breaker/reflection/ attention getter	
Share/Didactics	
Practice/Activities	
Application	
Summary/Conclusion	

AV equipment needed:

Handouts:

Lesson Plan	Clock Time	Allotted Time	Activity	Facilitator

Tips for Developing Workshops:

- Start planning early. Developing a workshop takes more time than one might think. This will also give you time to pilot the workshop for colleagues and get feedback before you actually have to do the workshop for your learners.
- Limit the amount of material covered, less content learned well is better than a lot of content that is not remembered
- Be conversational in your delivery and create a relaxed atmosphere for learning
- Each participant is unique in their needs and learning styles
- Less talk, more action - break your training into bite-size chunks
- Be flexible during the delivery of the workshop and allow for changes that arise during the presentation. As important as it is to plan ahead, it is even more important to be prepared to abandon your prepared agenda
- Invite others to work with you on your projects
- Facilitate learning - do not lecture
- Always evaluate
- Urge participants to ask questions.
- Use icebreakers to engage the learner from the beginning
- Have learners teach each other
- Keep teacher talk time to a minimum
- Vary learning activities and teaching style to account for different learning styles of the participants
- Facilitate learning, don't lecture
- Provide opportunities for active listening
- Have learners review what they have learned
- Ask questions that stimulate problem solving and thinking instead of just regurgitation of facts
- Enhance learning through experiential activities and practice
- Make the end unforgettable
- Blend technology wisely
- Introduce the group members to you and to each other
- Request feedback from the group as to whether you have accomplished your stated objectives and how they would improve the session in the future
- Remember principles of adult learning - respect the groups previous knowledge and experience, their motivation to learn, their potential resistance to change, and their ability to serve as co-learners
- Provide relevant and practical information
- Enjoy yourself and have fun

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