

The Interactive Workshop – How to do it!

A workshop should really be just that – an opportunity to work on ideas you have, present research you've done, and to get other people to think or “work” on those ideas with you. It should be a comfortable conversation, rather than a formal presentation. Connecting with your audience is the most important element of a successful workshop. Here are some ideas about how you can do that.

Start on time!

- 1. Take the temperature of the room** – say hello, find out who is with you, and how much they might know about your topic, or why they are there (extra credit? Interest in the topic? Curiosity?) If there are very few people in your workshop (less than 5) sit down. It would be silly for you to stand up and speak at a small group.
- 2. Introduce yourself and your topic** - be brief, but tell them who you are and why YOU care about this topic and explain any terms/titles, etc that they might not be familiar with
- 3. Provide a rough agenda (and be willing to change it)** Nothing formal here, just tell them what you plan to tell them and the order you plan to do it in.
- 4. Make your point** Remember you are probably the expert in the room, so be as clear as you can and speak in words that a general audience will understand
- 5. Give specific examples (more than one)** If you are talking about theory – connect it to reality. Help your audience connect to the importance of your topic by understanding how it applies to them or their world.
- 6. Welcome discussion – acknowledge each other by name** - ask if there are questions. When someone raises their hand or starts to speak, ask their name and repeat it after they say it. Make direct eye contact with them and really hear them. If you don't know the answer, tell them that. And ask if someone else in the room might know or have thoughts about the question. It's ok not to have all the answers, remember this is a workshop – we're working on ideas here.
- 7. Encourage divergent thinking** - If someone in the audience wants to go off on a tangent.... Listen. It might not actually be a tangent and then you can take it back and relate it to your main point. If it IS a tangent, still listen it might actually be interesting!
- 8. Breakout groups** – If you have time, and when most of the questions seem to have died down, or if people are reluctant to ask questions, ask your audience to talk

to each other in pairs or small bunches. Tell them how much time you're going to give them to talk, and then actually give them that much time (don't say I'll give you 5 minutes to talk about it to the person next to you, and then give them only 2 minutes, that just makes people anxious). Spend this time organizing your thoughts and make a few notes about what you might have forgotten to say. Or, you can sit in on one of the small group and participate with them.

9. Report out - ask people to report out what they talked about. It's not necessary for ALL groups to report out, but if you have time you can do that too.

10. Have a take away - let people know you are coming to the end of the workshop and you appreciate their participation and their contributions. Ask them to say one or two words about what they are taking away from the workshop. What did they learn? What will they do to take action now? What do they want to know more about? What did they hear from their partner in the small group?

End on Time! Thank everyone, smile and let them know you will be around to talk more if they want to come and talk to you later in the day.

You should be the last person to leave the room. Someone might want to stick around and talk to you one-on-one. Make sure the room is clean, put leftover garbage in the trash, pick up leftover handouts, and make sure the room is ready for the next presenters.