

The Secrets to Workshop Success

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Contents

Preface	6
Part 1 7 secrets to choosing a topic for your workshop	7
Introduction	7
Secret 1 Put yourself up front and centre	7
Secret 2 Feel enthusiasm.	8
Secret 3 Know you are the expert	8
Secret 4 Know your audience	9
Secret 5 How long is the workshop?	10
Secret 6 Get in the flow	11
Secret 7 Choose a compelling title	12
Part 2 7 secrets to planning a successful run up to your workshop	14
Introduction	14
Secret 1 Event Venue	15
Secret 2 Publicity	16
Secret 3 Pricing	18

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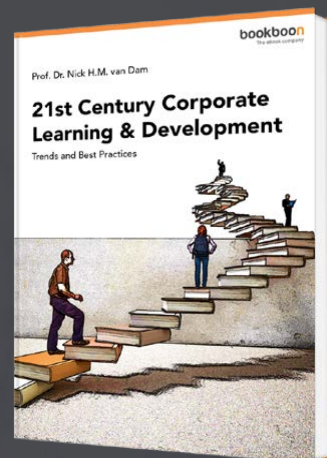


Secret 4	Blogging	19
Secret 5	Twitter	20
Secret 6	Discussion	21
Secret 7	Network, network, network.	21
Part 3	7 secrets to presenting a successful workshop	22
	Introduction	22
Secret 1	Your Mindset	22
Secret 2	Preparing the Room	26
Secret 3	Visual Aids	27
Secret 4	Opening the Workshop	28
Secret 5	Delivery	29
Secret 6	Closing the Workshop	30
Secret 7	Feedback	31
	Author Bio	32

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Preface

Have you ever had to speak on a subject you had no connection with? Or present a topic to an audience who did not connect with you? Have you felt embarrassed because you felt ill prepared for the training or workshop you were scheduled to give?

If you have then *The Secrets of Workshop Success* eBook is a must read in order to ensure your workshop provides a valuable experience for everyone involved. The e-book covers everything you need to know about:

- choosing a successful topic for your workshop
- planning a successful run up to your workshop
- presenting your successful workshop

The Secrets of Workshop Success is for everyone who is considering presenting a workshop, seminar or training. Whether you have been asked to present an event by your employers, or as an entrepreneur you have decided to run an event to showcase your business.

It may be that as an employee of a company you may feel constrained in your choices. You may feel that the topic of the training, workshop or seminar will be dictated by your company and the type of work you do, but don't let that put you off – you have as much at stake when selecting the topic and slant of the workshop as a business owner.

You want people to remember YOUR presentation, YOUR topic, and you want it to be memorable for all the RIGHT reasons.

You will know that you have presented a successful workshop when you feel energised and upbeat AFTER the workshop, when you walk away knowing you have performed well.

Part 1 7 secrets to choosing a topic for your workshop

Introduction

The key to the success of any event is choosing the best topic possible. Part 1 of The Secrets of Workshop Success e-book has been developed to help you select a topic you will enjoy presenting and one your audience will be excited to attend.

There are many ways of picking a topic for your workshop; brainstorming catchy titles, asking your friends, polling your prospective audience or going along with what your mother thinks is a really good idea will all get you a topic, but will probably leave you confused and undecided about which is really the best choice.

There is only one way that will give you your best topic, and that is to follow our Seven Secrets of Workshop Success formula. When you start the process of selecting the best topic for your workshop, ask yourself these four great questions first:

1. What topic makes me feel most comfortable?
2. What topic can I expand well?
3. What resources and content do I already have available?
4. What topic do I think my audience will find interesting?

Secret 1 Put yourself up front and centre

Take a moment to think about it. You are going to present this workshop. Everyone is going to be looking at you, and listening to you. Scary? Not if you really believe in your topic.

Think about what you enjoy most about your job or about running your business, then ask yourself

Who are you and what do you do?

- What are the specific problems you solve?
- Who do you solve them for?
- What are the results?

These three questions are designed to begin the planning process. They seem simple questions, but answering them gives you a really clear picture of the services or products you offer, the customers who are interested in your products, and the results these products or services give your customers.

It may be that your event is not based on your business, but on your volunteer work or community work. Don't worry because these three questions are still valid.

You really need to be able to say who you are and what you do, and who do you do it for, no matter whether you are thinking about running a first aid course for new parents, a training course for fellow employees, or presenting your own company to prospective clients.

Secret 2 Feel enthusiasm.

When you are going through these steps to choosing a topic, look out for those signs which tell you that this topic excites you. You are going to spend a lot of time working with the material, even before it comes to presenting the workshop on the day itself, so you really need to want to present this material, it has to inspire you, and then you will be half way to inspiring the audience with your topic.

So think about the following three questions:

Why you do it?

- Do I believe in this workshop?
- Why do I want to spread this message?
- Why should people come to this workshop?

When working on these questions it will really help if you have the feeling that you will never get tired of repeating these answers. These answers become the essence of what you want to achieve with this workshop.

The answers to these questions have nothing to do with presenting the workshop, but everything to do with how you connect with your audience.

Secret 3 Know you are the expert

In fact when you have thoroughly prepared for this workshop you will BE the expert on this topic. The key to Secret 3 is to know your strengths and what makes you unique. Then you can put more of yourself into your presentation making it more interesting for the audience.

So take a few minutes to think about yourself, and answer the following question :

- What three things make you memorable?
- What have you been good at since you were little?
- What do other people always compliment you on?
- What is your favourite topic of conversation in your personal life?
- When asked about your work, what do you talk about with most enthusiasm?

Now decide whether any of these qualities can be worked into your presentation. If you are enthusiastic about football, and your presentation is about management styles, connect with your audience by applying your material on management styles to different football managers. If people always compliment you on your ability to trouble shoot and resolve complex issues, use your methods to bring over the topic of the workshop clearly and with a positive outcome.

It is not necessary to personalise the whole of your workshop, but letting people see a little of who you are, and what makes you tick will raise your workshop to another level, and make the whole workshop experience more memorable for the audience.

Secret 4 Know your audience

Knowing your audience is crucial to knowing whether you have chosen the right topic and just how you are going to develop it.

The following questions will help you know your audience. Who is your target audience?

1. Where can you find your audience?
2. Are they professionals or looking for a recreational workshop?
3. What do they think about you now?
4. What would you like them to think about you?
5. How will you attract them to your workshop?
6. Who else is successfully providing workshops to the same audience?



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Use all the resources at your disposal to get the answers. This can include visitors to your website, your current client list, your past client list; your friends, followers and fans in your social media network; your contacts in your real networks. Don't hold back at this point and check out your competitors audience too.

Secret 5 How long is the workshop?

It is important that your audience knows how long the workshop is going to be. Not only because they need to schedule time in their busy lives in order to attend, but also so they can mentally prepare for the level of concentration they will need to actively participate in the workshop.

So think about your workshop topic. Is it an in-depth presentation of a new accounting package, or an interactive creative workshop allowing participants to make their own flower arrangements?

It is possible both types of workshop will be the same length, and both workshops have their own pitfalls to be overcome.

Pitfall 1 – losing the audience.

This can happen with complex topics such as presenting a new accounting package. The audience want to engage with the presentation, as they have a big stake in understanding the materials. It's a big topic, however, and you may start to lose their attention as you go through the material.

Solution

Presenting technical information can be broken up into either smaller subsections detailing separate aspects of the topic, or progressive parts, moving from an overview of the whole to a more detailed presentation of the information.

Pitfall 2 – mixed skill levels within audience.

With a creative recreational workshop such as flower arranging you may have a mixed audience, some expecting a pleasant afternoon with friends, others desperately wanting to develop their skills further. Once they start to create their own arrangement, some participants will finish very quickly, whilst others take much longer to complete their piece.

Solution

In a creative, interactive workshop, the first part of the workshop would typically be a demonstration of the skills being practiced, the second part would be more hands on.

So how long should the workshop be?

In both cases holding the attention of the audience is crucial. To manage this, provide a clear agenda for the workshop to each participant, highlighting the time each section will take, and indicating where the breaks will be. As the workshop is in progress, keep a copy of the agenda in plain sight, or refer back to it as each section is drawing to a close.

Keep one goal in sight throughout the workshop and that is that you hold the attention of the audience until the end. Secret 6 will expand on this further

Secret 6 Get in the flow

As you saw in secret 5, you need to draw your audience with you through your workshop, and this is where the structure of your workshop is crucial. Decide now on your goal; the learning point that your audience needs to take away with them from the workshop and then make a list of points to include in the presentation which will bring them that information. Without this clear goal, there is no point in running a workshop.

Build a script for your presentation, and hone that script until you feel it includes all the points you want to bring in, and leaves out points which do not draw the audience towards the end of the workshop in a logical progression.



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To help you with this, watch out for two traps waiting to catch you out:

- **Trap 1** - brain dump your total knowledge of the topic into your presentation. If there is no flow or structure to the message your audience will not get the most out of the workshop.
- **Trap 2** – Add every detail, data chart, graph and diagram as support for your topic onto visual aids. This is an overload of information and can overwhelm the audience so that they leave feeling confused.

Work through your script critically, practice each part; the introduction, the demonstrations, the interactive sessions and the conclusion, to make sure your timings are spot on and your workshop will not overrun.

Include pauses or breaks where appropriate. This all adds to the information you will provide to your audience, (remember the agenda in Secret 5?) so they are able to stay focused on you and your presentation.

Secret 7 Choose a compelling title

In Secret 6 we talked about what your audience needs to take away with them from the workshop, but they won't take anything away with them, if they are not tempted to sign up for the workshop in the first place.

You may have been using a working title as you developed your ideas, but now is the time to decide on the best title for the workshop. Don't rush this process, you want to attract your audience, but never mislead them. The title needs to be clear, accessible and memorable. Here are several points to think about when choosing a workshop title.

- **Manage expectations:** A short title does not offer many words to help you, but it should describe the essence and content of the whole workshop. Don't let your participants feel disappointed or they won't come back!
- **Make it short and catchy** – You need something memorable, and not too long and complicated. Remember that it not only has to fit well on a poster or press release, but in these days of online publicity, it needs to be searchable in Google, and quick to type into your mobile phone!
- **Work your brand into the title** –It's a great idea to fit your company name or your slogan into the title in some way. But if you have a complicated name make sure it is easy to spell in phone conversations, or when sending an SMS. Make sure press reports will not make spelling mistakes.
- **Use the same language as your participants** – You are the expert, it's easy to forget that others may have different meanings for some words. Do not assume that people have the same points of reference.

- Your title should address the workshops intended audience – and determine the focus whether fun in nature or its serious aims, etc. Limit specialist jargon unless the workshop is aimed at specialists who understand the jargon.

Finally, play around with your ideas and have fun with them. Use alliteration, or rhymes, or a famous quote or catchphrase. Put yourself in the place of your audience and find the idea that resonates with you. The chances are that is the one will resonate with your audience too.



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Part 2 7 secrets to planning a successful run up to your workshop

Introduction

This part of The Secrets to Workshop Success e-book has been developed to help you organise the run up to the day of your event, be it a workshop, training or seminar.

- We know you are an expert in your subject. You have great workshop topic,
- your presentation materials are ready,
- you know the workshop is interesting and informative,
- you know the audience you want to attract.

Part 2 looks at what needs to be done *now* to make this event happen.

Following the steps outlined in this section will help you to keep your goal in sight at every stage of the process and enable you to provide a workshop, seminar or training in a great location, at the perfect price to attract your audience and provide profit for you.

The four questions you need to answer before you begin working through these Seven Secrets are:

- Who are your target audience?
- Where are they?
- What are they willing to pay?
- How will they reach the venue?

Secret 1 Event Venue

The venue for your workshop is a framework to showcase you and your skills and specialties. There are five important points to consider before making your decision.

1. **The Wow Factor.**

A spectacular venue is an added attraction to potential workshop attendees, creating a Christmas wreath in a Dickensian hall has more pizzazz than the local community centre after all! But there is no need to get carried away, and you can choose a venue which suits both your workshop topic and your potential attendees without it costing the earth.

2. **Size matters.**

It's a basic question, but how big is the venue? The venue size should be able to accommodate all of your attendees, without overcrowding, and without them feeling lost in a great room.

It is important that the room should create a good atmosphere, so consider what materials you have provided for the workshop and make sure there is enough room for attendees to manage their workshop materials properly. If the room is very large, check that everyone will be able to hear you, and see your presentation materials. Make sure that there is space at the back of the venue to set out your promotional material, or products you have to sell.

3. **Getting there**

You want your event to start on time so your audience must be able to get to the venue easily, so make sure that the venue is easy to find, and get to. If the venue is centrally located in an urban area check the public transport links, and whether there is plenty of free or affordable parking in the vicinity. For more remote venues, a hotel in the country, perhaps, or simply in an outlying district of a big urban area, make sure that attendees know how to get there and how long the journey will take.

It will help the success of the workshop if people can arrive in good time and be able to settle down before your workshop starts. A successful workshop should start (and finish) on time.

4. **Room hire costs.**

Ask lots of questions when it comes to the cost of the room hire, it is important to know the total cost up front, and also what the cancellation policy is for the venue.

Find out what is usually included in the room hire; do you have the use of flip charts and overhead projector? Is there internet access? Are refreshments included in the hire? How much help will you get with setting up the room itself, moving desks and chairs etc?

Some venues have their own publicity and promotion avenues to advertise events; they may have a mailing list, or include your event on their website. Services such as these may cost extra but it is often possible to negotiate.

5. **Hidden costs.**

Take into consideration whether there will be any hidden costs associated with using this venue. It may be that you need to spend extra for your own parking fees, or travel expenses, and your own meals and refreshments.

If you do have to pay extra for refreshments for your audience, make sure that is factored into your pricing.

Secret 2 Publicity

Getting the publicity right is really the most crucial part of guaranteeing attendance at your event. Without it no one will know about your workshop, and no one will come to it. So think about where your potential audience is. Do they read the local press? Listen to local radio? Watch local TV? Do they use events websites?

There are lots of ways to publicise, and of course you sometimes have to pay, but often you can get free advertising space. Let's look at what the possibilities for free advertising are.

The Venue

Sometimes a venue adds events to their newsletter or their own website. Check whether this should be paid for or if it is part of their room hire package.

Newspapers

Local papers often have a special section for local events and it is even possible they will run an article about you, if what you do is interesting enough. There is also a chance you can pay to run an advertorial.

Sometimes a group of local papers offer syndicated advertising space, where you pay for your advert to appear in different papers within the same time frame.

Specialist Magazines

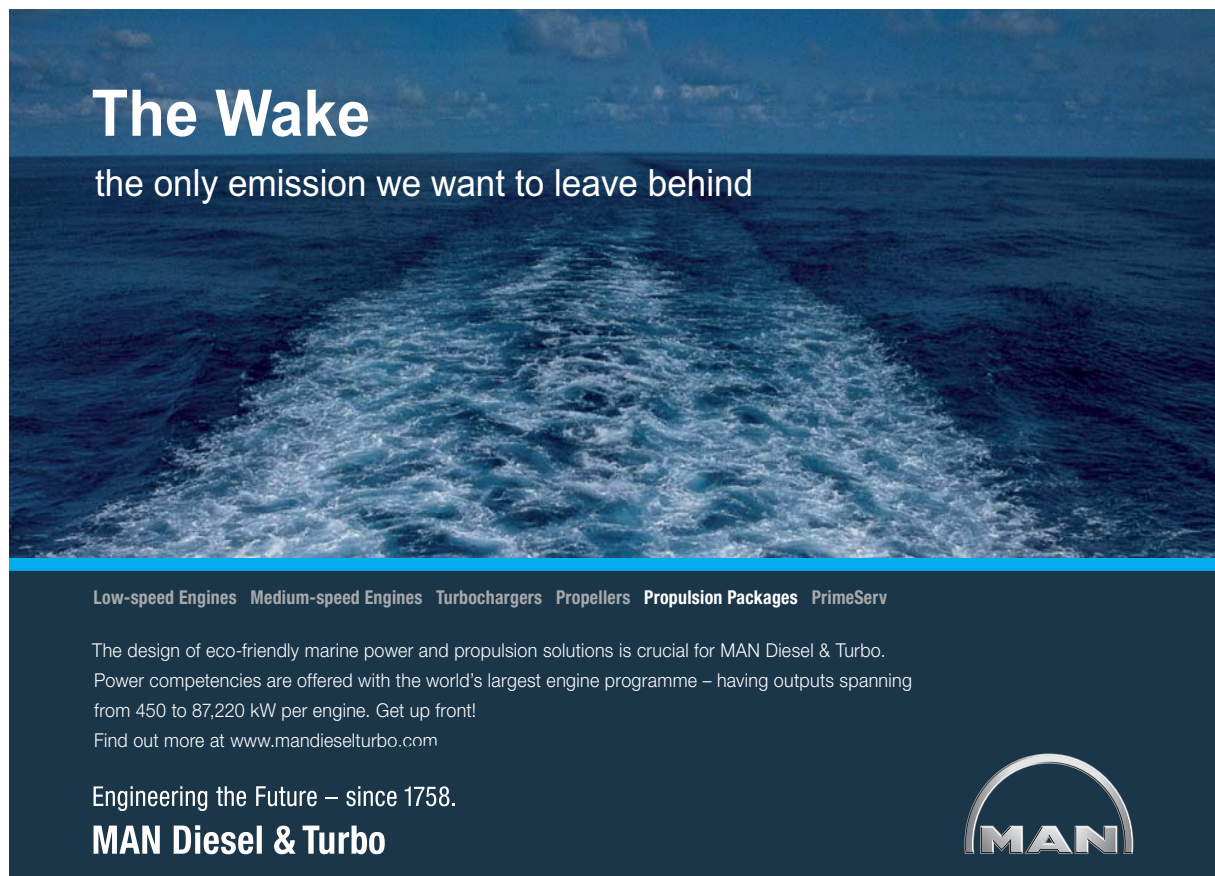
These will guarantee your advert reaches your target market, but in general, magazines have a long lead time, so you have to get your advertising in place many weeks before the workshop. It's worth contacting them to see if they have a free "What's On" section, but often they need their advertising revenues to survive so you may have to pay for a good placement.

Local Radio / TV

Get in touch with local radio or TV and see if they want a short filler interview about a topic related either to your workshop or about the venue. You should be able to get in a plug about the workshop within the interview time.

Internet

This has a huge capability to communicate to both global and niche markets, and we will cover that further on in the e-book, but for now, find out whether your community has an events website. Check whether it is free to advertise your event.




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Posters

Find out whether you can put up posters in the venue itself. Your local library, supermarket and post office often has a bulletin board for local events which are free or a minimum charge.

Again, think about your target audience, will you find them in your local schools, or hospitals, doctors' surgeries or churches? Wherever they are, you can ask to hang a poster publicising your event.

Secret 3 Pricing

Setting the pricing for the event greatly influences the success of the workshop. You need to feel absolutely comfortable with what you are charging to your audience, and feel happy providing your valuable time at this price.

So to calculate a price you feel comfortable with, consider the following questions first:

What is the purpose for you of this event, is it:

- to make a lot of money on the day?
- to generate product sales to the audience?
- build awareness of you and your company?
- another reason?

Having the answers to these questions will help you to set your price. Taking a piece of paper write down what costs you know:

Venue hire.

Hidden costs of the venue.

Publicity costs.

Workshop materials cost

Your own expenses.

Make a sum of these amounts and divide this by the number of workshop attendees to get a price per head. Now you know how much you need to cover your costs, and on top of this price add in the profit you want to make per workshop attendee.

To make it easier here is a very simple example

Pricing example workshop for 10 participants		Euro
Room hire costs		200

Hidden costs of venue (sandwich lunch for participants)	10 per person	100
Publicity costs	Local newspaper advert	60
Workshop Materials Cost	Notebooks and pens	25
Your own expenses	parking	15
Total costs		400
Cost per participant	40	
Total Ticket price	85 per person	850
Profit to yourself		450

As I said this was a very simple example, but once you have calculated your own figures, ask yourself, “is it realistic?”

A good tactic to take with pricing is to find out what prices are charged for other similar workshops in your locality. This helps you establish what your audience will be willing to pay.

To guarantee you know the numbers attending before the event you can ask people to book and pay for a place on the workshop in advance.

However it really depends how comfortable you are with this, and also what is common practice in your locality. If it is not a normal procedure for people to pay in advance then they will just come along and pay on the door.

Secret 4 Blogging

Do you blog?

Have you thought about starting a blog?

It's a pretty painless process if you chose one of the well known blogging platforms such as Wordpress or Blogger. They provide lots of online tutorials and help to get you started, and you can make it as simple or complex as you like.

Blog posts do not have to be long, but they do have to be interesting. You can add a relevant image to the post, or even a video clip, but if that feels too technical, follow these six tips when you create your first blog post:

1. Get a great headline
2. Grab the reader's attention in the first paragraph
3. Focus on the problem

4. Give them a nugget of useful information
5. Hold back on giving away the whole solution
6. Get them to take action in the last paragraph

If you have a blog it's a great way to build awareness of the topic of the workshop. At the end of each blog post, call your readers to action, and ask them to contact you to book a place on the workshop.

Secret 5 Twitter

Twitter is the way to reach a really big audience. Do you have a Twitter account?

Again they are easy to set up, and there is lots of information online to help you get started.

The trick to Twitter is to keep building your network so keep building the list of people you follow and hopefully a good number of them will follow you back.

As your Twitter following grows:

- tweet each blog post you write (you can set your blog posts to tweet automatically if you want);
- tweet how the preparations for the workshop are going;



- tweet to let people know there is an early bird discount;
 - tweet to say there are only two places left;
 - tweet about the workshop day;
- And
- tweet about how it went!

Secret 6 Discussion

Do your audience gather in discussion groups either online or offline?

Make the effort to enter these discussions to demonstrate that you are an expert and you have valuable information which can help them solve their problem.

Pose questions yourself and get opinions and views on the topic from your audience.

Discussion forums can be on LinkedIn, or other online bulletin boards, but can also be more local, i.e. face to face networking groups or discussion boards you have access to.

Secret 7 Network, network, network.

It's your first workshop event, so pull out all the stops, and use all your contacts.

Family and friends want you to succeed too, so don't be shy. Over time you will build up a mailing list of interested people, but for now mail, phone or text everyone you know.

Keep spreading the word and ask them to spread the word for you. The goal is to get a full venue and a successful workshop.

Once the workshop is over don't forget to thank everyone who helped, tell them what a success it was, and how happy you were with their valuable contribution.

Receiving that message will pave the way for them helping you again next time.

Part 3 7 secrets to presenting a successful workshop

Introduction

This part of The Secrets to Workshop Success e-book has been developed to help you on the day of your event, be it a workshop, training or seminar.

- We know you are an expert in your subject. You have great workshop topic.
- You have chosen a great location for your workshop.
- You have been busy with the publicity for your event.
- You know your audience and you have been actively networking with them.

The Secrets to Workshop Success – Part 3 - looks at what needs to be done on the day to ensure your workshop is a success.

Following Part 3 will help you to keep your goal in sight at every stage of the process and enable you to deliver a memorable workshop, seminar or training that will have the attendees talking positively about it for a long time.

The five questions you need to answer before you begin working through these Seven Secrets are:

- Why are you giving this workshop?
- What can you expect your audience to learn in the time available?
- Who are your audience?
- When – is this the right day/time to be giving this workshop?
- Where – do you need to change the layout of the venue to suit your purposes?

Secret 1 Your Mindset

There are several things that you can do before your workshop in order to ensure that you are in the right frame of mind so that your presentation is upbeat and delivered with confidence. Some of these may appear extremely obvious but they can easily be overlooked due to nerves so be sure to use this as a checklist:

1. **Practice, practice, practice**

Know your subject inside out. If you really know your subject, how you want to present it and in what order, you will instantly feel more confident.

2. Delivery

Find a method of delivering the information that suits you and be sure to use examples and exercises to get your message across. It is important that you do not mumble or talk too fast. This is often due to nerves. If you feel that happening, take a moment to compose yourself – silence can be a very effective form of punctuation so don't be afraid to use it.

3. Have notes

There is nothing wrong with having notes in front of you to use as cues so long as they are short notes that you only occasionally refer to. Do not have sheets of A4 to read as this will stop you looking at and engaging with your audience.

4. Be flexible

Have alternative exercises and back up information to use when a particular exercise isn't working or your audience are struggling with a particular topic. Having extra information and additional exercises will also boost your confidence and is useful if you feel the audience are working faster than you had predicted. Being flexible will help you stop panicking that the workshop is not going to finish on schedule.

5. Fake it!

While we strongly believe in being authentic and transparent, this is one time when we would advocate faking it, at least for the first couple of minutes! Preparing properly for your workshop will help your confidence. However, if you are one of the people who find public speaking extremely daunting, here is a tip to get over that feeling of nausea in the first couple of minutes.

The technique we recommend is visualisation. Before your workshop or presentation, take some time to yourself in a quiet place and close your eyes and visualise someone you believe is full of confidence, delivering your workshop. Watch their movements, how they stand, sit, walk around the room; how they look and sound; how they interact with the audience. Then imagine how they feel and what they are hearing. The next step is to move into that person and see and feel what you believe they were seeing and feeling. See yourself moving the way they were moving. See yourself presenting a successful workshop and hearing the positive feedback from the audience. Finally, tell yourself that what you are feeling is actually excitement and not fear - this will really help you to get over most of your confidence issues.

6. Be aware of your audience

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- Goal setting
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- Coaching

Prepare to find out more about your attendees before the workshop through LinkedIn and other forms of social media. Remember that your audience will be very quick to form a first impression of you and so from the minute they arrive at the venue be aware of how you are presenting yourself. Put the attendees at ease (this is where knowing a little about them in advance can help). Take time to acknowledge each arrival and show that you value their presence. Be aware of how much you can also learn from your audience.

7. **Co-presenting**

Working with a colleague to present a workshop can be a very effective way to help boost your confidence and has several advantages to working on your own, for example:

- You have someone to bounce ideas off;
- You have someone to debrief with afterwards;
- You can take turns at presenting different aspects of the workshop or leading exercises;
- Two different presenters will keep your audience interested as they are listening to changing presentation methods;
- It gives the person who isn't presenting the opportunity to monitor the audience.

Secret 2 Preparing the Room

You should have checked out the venue thoroughly prior to booking it (for more information re-read Part 2) but it is still important to arrive early in order to check out the space and make any last minute alterations in the layout to suit your workshop.

There are several things you need to think about:

1. **Space**

Is there enough room for you to move around if you want to or are you going to be sitting or standing behind a table or microphone – you need to consider which works best for you and the delivery of your presentation. A very large room may feel intimidating so be sure to visualise yourself being in control of it.

2. **Seating arrangements**

Seating needs to be comfortable and well spaced. If people need to write then you must also have an adequate writing surface for each participant. This usually means you'll need tables so give careful consideration to where these are placed.

There are several different room layouts you can consider each with their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, U shaped, V shaped, circle, theatre, small groups etc. Think about what layout will work best for your particular workshop and consider that you want everyone to be able to see you and your audio visual equipment easily. We recommend that you:

- Steer away from a school classroom look (this can bring back too many memories for some participants – not always pleasant ones!)
- Avoid rows of seating where possible. This reduces interaction by participants as people at the back can't always hear those at the front whereas those at the front have to twist round to interact with the ones at the back.
- Do not have too much distance between you and each participant – people in the back row are less likely to interact than those at the front who are closer to you.
- Changing seats during the workshop can be psychologically upsetting for some people. Decide whether you want to encourage interaction and networking by asking people to do this. You can also encourage networking during the breaks or allow time at the end.

3. **Name cards**

Make sure that each participant is given a card that they can write their name on. These can then be placed on the table in front of them and means that you don't have to worry about remembering everyone's name.

4. Distractions

Are there any potential distractions in the room? For example large windows which people, including you, may feel tempted to look out of – it just takes one person doing this to get your entire audience wondering what is so interesting out there as well!

Secret 3 Visual Aids

The use of visual aids helps to make your workshop or event more memorable however, it is important to remember that while the visual presentation supports YOU and your workshop material, it is not the central part of your workshop. You want to stand out so make sure that visual aids are all made to a high standard. It is also a good idea to vary the aids you are using at regular intervals during the workshop in order to keep everyone's attention.

PowerPoint

PowerPoint is a great tool and to use it effectively it is useful to review the steps to creating great visual presentations. These are briefly:

- Key Point – make the headline for each slide a clear message of what this section is about.
- Clean and Uncluttered – Each slide should provide one message whatever the visual (graphs, diagrams and photos).
- Powerful Visual - play around with words and phrases to find the best match for the visuals you want on each slide.
- Be Selective – make sure each slide reinforces your message, if not leave it out.
- Connection – each visual should link up to the next so your points progress towards your conclusion.

Handouts

Handouts, in particular, should be high quality as this is what people take away with them and might impress them to either come to or refer others to future workshops. Be sure to have more copies than you think you'll need and, unless you want your audience to refer to the handouts during the workshop, it is often better to hand them out at the end in order to prevent people being distracted from your presentation.

Audio-visual equipment

Never presume that the audio-visual equipment is working! If you are going to use overhead projectors or other equipment provided by the venue, be sure that they are working properly and that you know how to work them. This is why it is best just to use them as aids rather than relying on them for your entire workshop – if they break down your workshop should be able to continue without them.

For the most effective use of audio-visual equipment, make sure that you use very few words on overheads because words are not really visuals. If using a flip chart, prepare as many of the charts as possible in advance and include any notes for yourself in small writing in the top corner.

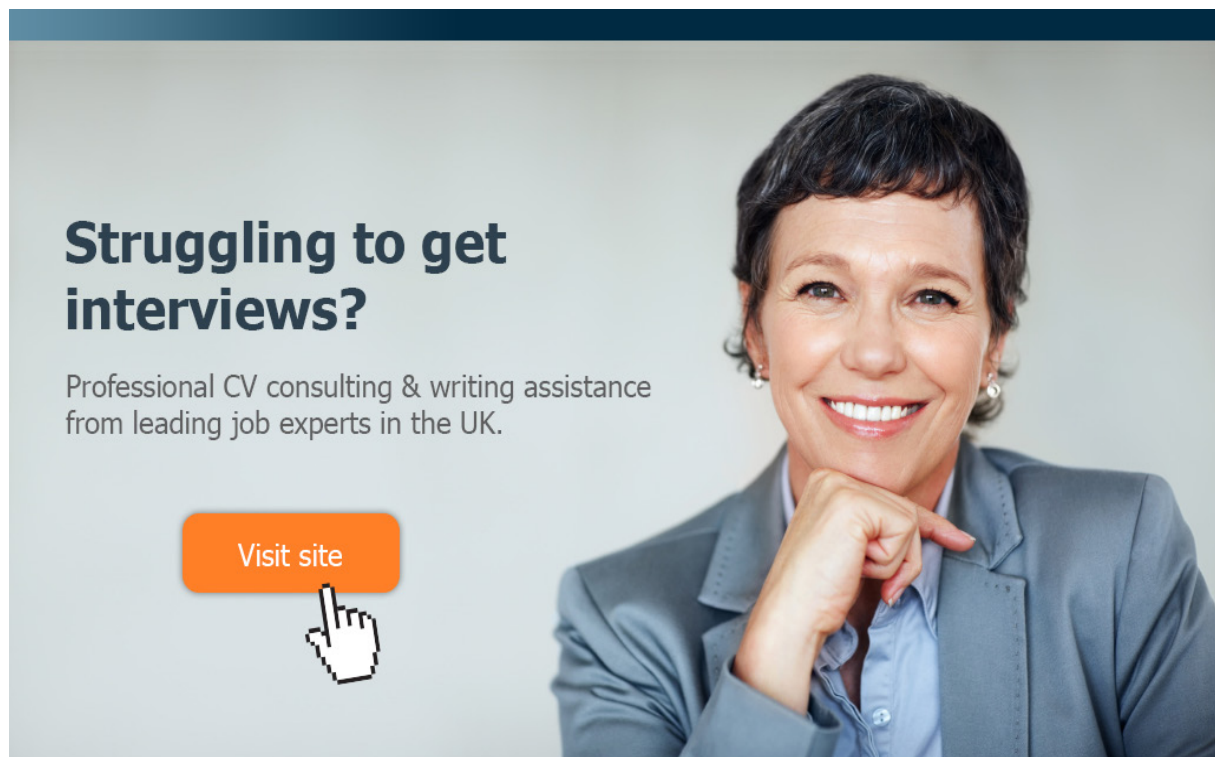
With all visual aids, make sure that they can be clearly viewed by everyone in the room; that they make good use of colour, space and pictures; and use headlines, to grab people's attention.

Secret 4 Opening the Workshop

Once you have given any relevant safety information, for example pointing out the fire exits etc, as well as indicating where the toilets are and where smoking is permitted; the next thing to do is to give a brief introduction of yourself. Include a little about your background and why you are qualified to run the workshop.

Then tell your audience about the content and structure of the workshop, what they are to expect as well as what is expected of them and how many breaks there will be.


Now that you have got the essentials out of the way, your workshop needs to open with a bang! Something that grabs people's attention and is memorable. Something that will also get your audience to introduce themselves and tell you what they hope to get out of your workshop, in a fun and unthreatening way.



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There are several ways of doing this and a couple are listed below. I suggest that you take time to come up with an 'icebreaker' that works best for the type of workshop/event that you are running and the number of attendees you anticipate. When trying to decide on an 'icebreaker' make sure that:

- it is linked to the topic of your event if possible;
- it is fun;
- attendees are unlikely to have done it before;
- it is easy to explain and organise;
- it lasts only 5 – 10 minutes; and
- it is non-threatening and creates positive atmosphere.

Here are some examples to get you started:

- Everyone is asked to take their keys out of their pocket or bag and place them on the table. They then take turns to introduce themselves by talking about their keys and what is significant about them.
- You pass round a roll of toilet paper and everyone is asked to take as much as they want/need – you do not give any further explanation. Everyone then has to tell something about themselves for every sheet of toilet paper they took.
- Give everyone a sheet of paper and a pencil when they arrive and ask them to spend 5 minutes drawing a picture that shows who they are without using words or numbers. After 5 minutes, you collect in the pictures and show them one at a time and everyone has to guess who it is. Each participant can then explain how their picture clearly shows who they are.

Secret 5 Delivery

The most important thing is to start on time, take breaks on time, resume on time and finish on time as this shows that you value the participants time.

There are several things to consider during the delivery of your workshop - only some of which you will have been able to plan for.

1. Make sure that you have allowed plenty of time for open discussion of the content of the workshop. Encourage people to ask questions and allow others to suggest answers as this creates a great learning environment for everyone. Be flexible in your approach and don't shut down a relevant discussion even if it means you have to miss out a planned activity.
2. If you are asked a particularly difficult question, buy yourself some time by going back to the questioner to clarify your understanding of the question. Then open it up to the rest of the room and ask what they think about it or whether they have faced that problem before. You can even go back to the questioner and ask what their view on the matter is.

3. Be aware of those who may try to take over any discussions as well as encouraging input from quieter participants without giving them the feeling that they are being put on the spot.
4. Use practical exercises to help reinforce the information you are giving and keep your audience involved. This makes it far more interesting for participants. Some of these activities can be in teams or small groups to encourage more discussion and interaction between participants. It is important that you give clear instructions, broken down into simple steps, for each exercise and ask for confirmation that everyone has understood what they have to do. Give each exercise a clear time limit to ensure that people don't lose focus. And don't forget to have more than enough pens, paper or whatever else is required for the exercises.
5. Make sure that you take adequate comfort breaks which allow a little time for networking between attendees. This will also give you time to talk to individuals about any specific questions they may have. Refreshments should be available during breaks and water should be available for the duration of the workshop.
6. Pay attention to your audience at all times and monitor their reactions to what you are saying. If you feel nervous you may want to hide behind your notes but by looking at your audience, not only will you see their reactions but you will give off the impression that you are confident and interested in them. Be conscious of your use of body language to emphasise what you are saying. By paying attention to your audience you can sense if they are becoming less attentive, for example after a lunch break, and add a quick exercise to get them moving around.

And, be enthusiastic at all times!

Secret 6 Closing the Workshop

The way in which you end your workshop is as equally important as how you start it and as with 'icebreakers' there are many ways in which you can close a workshop – just make sure to choose one which suits your particular event. The key here is to have a way of summarising the workshop that leaves the participants feeling that they have achieved something positive from it. Some examples of good 'closing' exercises include:

- Ask participants to give a brief account of the main points of the workshop that they will take away with them – if it is a large workshop you can divide participants into groups. This is a great way to reinforce the key points of the workshop as well as reminding everyone of all they have done.
- Give everyone a piece of paper or a card and ask them to write down one thing that they have learnt from the workshop that they will definitely use. Read each card out and remind everyone of what they have achieved.

Don't forget to thank people for attending and for all their hard work which has contributed to the success of the workshop.

Secret 7 Feedback

It is important that you ask attendees to complete a feedback questionnaire at the end of your workshop. Make sure that you bring plenty of copies with you and ask people to leave it on a table as they leave. Resist the temptation to look at the questionnaires until everyone has left.

Feedback is critical to the success of your next workshop as it will provide you with a clear idea of what went well and any areas that may need some attention. However, be aware that you cannot please all of the people all of the time and there is little you can do if one person's feedback states that the workshop wasn't long enough while another thought it a bit too long!

Before reviewing the feedback questionnaires it is important that you sit down and go through in your mind (or with a co-presenter) what you felt went well and what you feel you could have done better. This is the best way for you to clear your head and switch off at the end of the workshop.

And Finally

We hope this e-book has revealed to you the secrets of a successful workshop, as well as answering some of the questions you may have had about running your own event.

We use this practical and effective template every time we develop a new workshop, and our experience shows that the template works. Running an event such as a workshop, training or seminar does not have to be a daunting experience if you follow our suggestions for choosing your topic, planning the run up to the event and presenting the workshop to your audience.

When you follow our template you will know that you have done everything you can to ensure you have a full and profitable training event. We hope it inspires you to take the plunge and run a workshop yourself, and we know that if you follow these templates you will have done everything you can to ensure you have a full and profitable workshop.

Author Bio



Jane Stephenson and Anne Galloway are experienced, qualified coaches. Although originally from the UK, they now both have their own coaching practices based in North Holland.

Jane worked for many years in international business finance. Over the last 10 years she has developed her career as psychologist, coach and writer, fitting this in around the demands of a growing family. She gained her BSc Hons Psychology with the Open University and followed that with a diploma in coach counselling with the Nederlandse Academy van Psychotherapy. She now runs her own communication coaching business knowboundaries¹ providing individual coaching to businesses and private clients in the Netherlands. Her professional writing career began when she joined the writing team of “Amsterdam - The complete residents guide” published by Explorer Publishing.

Through her own business, power-to-change, Anne specialises in career and small business coaching working primarily with individuals. Her aim is to inspire people to put the fun and passion back into their working week. She contributes articles to several online forums and continues to produce her ‘Inspirational Toolkit’ which provides monthly tips on a wide range of business and career issues. Born and brought up in the North of Scotland, Anne worked for a long time as a Cost and Contracts Engineer for a multi national company before setting up her own small business consultancy service and then retraining as a career and business coach.

Jane and Anne have combined their unique skills in their partnership “Two Motivating Minds” and have been developing and delivering highly successful workshops together since 2009. They published their first book “Your Future - A Practical Guide to Action” in 2011; this e-book “The Secrets to Workshop Success” is their second book collaboration.

For more information about Anne and Jane’s work visit their website www.two-motivating-minds.com.

1 <http://knowboundaries.nl/>