Workshops

PEPS 691
Extension and Adoption
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Workshops are a great way to give people hands-on experience and to learn from each other. Unlike passively listening to a lecture, participants are engaged and interacting with one another.
Before the workshop…

Success starts with the development of an accurate description of the workshop so that the right people are recruited. On the registration form, ask participants for their expectations or issues they want covered so you can “customize” your workshop to meet their needs.
Focus

You have a topic – be organized and take time to determine the 3-4 key ideas or skills you want people to leave feeling they have down cold. Your goal is to empower, not overpower. Handouts reinforce what they learned and you can provide them with additional sources of information (websites, books, etc.).
At the beginning of the workshop…

If you have 30 or less participants, go around the room and ask each person to provide their name and organizational affiliation. This gives everyone a chance to speak in a non-threatening situation and will encourage participation in the workshop.
Take about three minutes (no longer) to let the participants know who you are – a brief summary of career, an experience that got you interested in the topic, etc.
During the workshop…

Think about stories you can share that help you make your points clearly and effectively. Stories provide concrete examples, create interest, and provide experiences to which the participants can relate.
Never go for more than 30 minutes without an activity that involves the participants. These “activities” can be as simple as “Share with your neighbor two ways...” or “Jot down one way you might use this idea....” The idea is to get minds out of neutral and into gear and simulate discussion. If you direct questions to the whole group, make the questions both easy and open-ended.
The best workshops provide opportunities to practice, apply, and reflect on new skills. They not only introduce people to new ideas, but also reassure them about their current practices. Send folks away with some “low-hanging fruit” – very simple suggestions for things that they can implement the next day.
Give people a break somewhere after about an hour and fifteen minutes. If they have been sitting all day, the afternoon break can include some stretching and moving around.
Finally, remember that if you are not having fun, probably nobody else is either. Humor helps create that vital affective bond between presenter and participant.
At the end of the workshop…

Say thanks and give participants a way to contact you with follow-up questions. Ask participants to fill out an evaluation form and find out what they liked about the workshop and ask them for ways you could improve it.
And this might be the most important factor of all, honor your participants’ time commitment by always starting and ending on time (or even a little early).