

Tips for trainers

by ROBERT CHAMBERS

ENDING

The certificate snare

There is often a demand for certificates after a workshop, training or course. With some training workshops organisers spring on you, near the end, a beautifully printed set of certificates, which includes your name and a place for you to sign. Oh dear. With PRA-related workshops I have decided I will not sign them.

Three main things can be wrong with signing certificates:

1. The certificate culture in which appearances are valued more than reality. People take part less to learn and change and more to get the piece of paper.

2. Deception. Some get the spirit of PRA and participation quickly and its behaviour and attitudes. Others think they have it, but have not. Others sense they have not got it and it is not for them. There is no way of separating out who is who. In any case, giving certificates to some and not others would be a horrendous way to end. But if all receive them, they are debased and some will give a false impression. Quite simply, certificates mislead.

3. Abuse. There is no control on how certificates are used. All are free to photocopy them, add them to their CVs, frame them on their office walls and use them in job applications. Opinions differ about solutions. A refuses to sign certificates at all. B will sign them only after feedback on follow-up. C will sign a 'certificate of attendance', which simply says that the person was there. But there are two neat solutions. Both need careful anticipation.

The pledge certificate

A South African innovation. The original certificate is self-explanatory. It reads:



Community Consultation and Facility Management Workshop, Sebokeng 16–24 November 1999

This is to certify that

I,,
attended the above workshop. In so doing, I have pledged to:

.....
.....

SIGNED.....[participant]

SIGNED.....[Barbara Masakela, Deputy Chairperson SA Sports Commission]

SIGNED.....[Peter Bryant, Manager UK/SA Sports Initiative]

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Group photograph and farewell certificates

I like these.

Group photograph certificate.

There is a group photograph for everyone. These are best mounted on paper with a margin for writing on. The photos are passed round.

Everyone signs each photo. If there is time and space personal messages can be included.

Source: Regional Participation Workshop, Amman, October 1997.

Farewell certificate. A robust piece of paper is fixed to the back of

each person. All move around and write messages of appreciation and farewell on the backs of others. This gives everyone a very personal memento and reminder to take home.

Source: James Mascarenhas

Source: Chambers, R. (2002) Participatory Workshops: A sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities, Earthscan Publications Ltd., London, pp.48 – 49 (see In-Touch section for more details on this publication).

