HOW TO...

CUT YOUR TRAINING DESIGN TIME

Many people think that good training can be designed in a few hours. It can't. To PROPERLY write a full-day workshop expect it to take at least 3 days. There's a LOT involved in design. Design is where you:

- Meet the client (or stakeholder) and get a brief
- Do some research
- Identify the concepts and key points that need to be covered
- Think about how the content will be covered
- Structure it
- Create a course outline for approval and amend it if required
- Create exercises and activities
- Write pre-course work and post-course exercises
- Produce a session plan, slides and delegate materials
- Write case studies and role plays
- Check back with stakeholders that you'll be delivering what they want.

OK, not everyone needs to do ALL of these steps, but when you think about it, that's a LOT of work! So perhaps it is unrealistic to think you can get everything done in a day.

However, when people say they want to cut their design time, they tend not to include research and approval... they are thinking mostly about the time it takes to create the session plan, slides, delegate materials and activities.

So here are my tips to keep that time to a minimum.

1. **Be clear about the purpose and objectives -** Keep them front and centre of your mind at all times. If you've done your research properly, these should be fixed. One of the main reasons that training design takes longer than it should is we get distracted by non-essential (and sometimes even irrelevant) content.

2. **Sketch it out** – Whether you create a mindmap, a flowchart or just a list, sketch out (very broad strokes) what your learning event will look like. Before you go any further use this sketch to think about the logical flow of the event and fix that in your mind.

3. **Visualise the event running** – Write down what you see. What are you doing? How do the exercises work? What learning points re being identified. For extra speed **dictate** this... you can always improve the formatting and layout later.

4. **Use SessionLab –** This package allows you to move things around (should it be necessary) easily amend times and crucially, re-use sections in other events instantly.

5. **Create your own library –** OK, it won't save you time the first time you write it down, but writing you exercises out in detail (Facilitator notes and Delegate briefs) and storing them as separate documents means that next time you want to use this exercise, you can just slot it in. Or maybe you can amend it for a future course, which is also much easier than writing every exercise from scratch .

6. **Create the CORE slides and delegate materials** – What's the MINIMUM that you need to produce to run this session? Make sure they are done and to an acceptable standard so if pushed, you COULD run the sessions using these.

7. **Add the Details**. – If you are designing for yourself to deliver, simply add extra trainer instructions where you need those reminders. Adding detail really helps with the mental prep before an event, so maybe this is something you do close to the delivery date? Again, when you've done it once, it doesn't need doing again. Now is also the time to add extra (nice to have) slides and delegate materials if you have time.

8. **Delegate the visual design –** If possible, ask someone else to enhance the look of your materials – you can lose hours and hours looking for pictures or typesetting documents. If you really can't delegate it, or subcontract it, do it last.

Finally, please **set aside time to design**, just like you would if you were facilitating. You need to be focused mentally, and if you are trying to fit in an hour here and there, it will take so much longer than if you set aside 4 half-days and switch off all distractions!