

# Co-working with Other Trainers

## Aims:

- To highlight the benefit of co-working approaches
- To share educational issues at a fairly deep level
- To assess our own co-working potential

## Resources required:

Training room and small group spaces; flipchart, OHP and pens

- 3.1 'Benefits of co-training' OHP transparency
  - 3.2 'Co-working presentation techniques' OHP transparency
  - 4.1 'Sharing Dialogue' exercise booklets
  - 4.2 'Co-working Inventory' worksheets
  - 4.3 'Message to You' exercise sheets
- 'Learning log' sheets

## 1 Background notes



There are two main and obvious reasons for considering co-working approaches: they make life easier and more enjoyable for both trainers and participants! Trainers who spend a lot of time 'on the road' actually delivering training sessions generally find it to be a demanding and lonely job. Co-working can both spread the burden of preparation and responsibility for the event as well as easing the loneliness.

Participants benefit from exposure to the different training styles of two people and this tends to make for a more dynamic and interesting course. Other benefits for participants and trainers are listed below and in 3.1. These are adapted from Peter Sheal's 'How to Develop and Present Staff Training Courses'.

**Benefits for trainers:** allows them to *test ideas on each other and reassess direction*, both before and during the training event. The pressure of being solely responsible for the course is removed; each trainer can have their 'time-outs' and will therefore bring *increased energy* into the course. Enabling trainers to come to each other's *rescue* if they 'dry up' or 'fluff' a question is a major factor in creating trainer 'peace of mind' and smooth-running events.

**Benefits for participants:** they experience a *range of individual training and presentation styles* as well as the 'composite' style of the co-working duo; this can make for very dynamic and stimulating courses. The combined training and cultural experience of the 'partners' together with their uniquely individual viewpoints *increases the diversity, variety and richness of the course experience*. Closer

*monitoring and greater attention to individual needs and interests* can be provided. Co-training *increases participants' attention* as they have two trainers to focus on as well as the interaction between them.

These benefits are considerable and we advise trainers to co-work whenever possible in order to reduce their own stress levels and provide a better service to participants.

Peter Sheal's excellent book also outlines some presentation techniques often used in co-working. They are listed here and shown in OHP 3.2:

**Duet:** both trainers are involved in a presentation which 'flows' from one to the other, cued by voice tempo, intonation and a variety of non-verbal signals including eye contact, time signals and hand gestures.

**Turn-taking:** the trainers take it in turns to present. This technique is useful when there is a lot of material to present or when one or both of you haven't yet assimilated new material.

**Speak and add:** one trainer takes the lead, supported by the other. *Speak and add* allows the duo to make best use of their different perspectives and experiences by allowing the support to 'chip in' material which may have been overlooked by the lead or which contributes helpful information or analysis. A support trainer should bring the lead 'back on track' if there is undue digression and is well placed to intervene in discussions which digress or get 'stuck'.

**Speak and record:** the support trainer acts as the group's 'recorder' by noting responses, group decisions etc. on a flipchart. The role of 'clarifier' can be taken by either trainer but the support must possess the writing skills to be able to summarise participants' ideas quickly without distorting concepts or language. The recorder role is a neutral one and the support must not evaluate responses or express opinions. The task is to produce an objective record which is acceptable to everyone.

**Rapt attention:** co-workers should do anything necessary to produce a positive course outcome, including interrupting each other or acting as 'dogsbody'. You should pay particular attention to your support needs and making each of you look good. Start by modelling rapt attention to each other's words.

The key implication of co-working is that planning, preparation and delivery must be carefully co-ordinated. This doesn't mean that co-trainers have to do all of this together; rather there is opportunity for tasks to be allocated to one another (or shared when appropriate). This kind of collaborative approach may not come easy to 'solo' trainers who are used to planning and preparing at their own convenience, but the 'spin-offs' for personal and professional development are well worth having.

The fundamental need when co-working is to have an open and participative relationship with your colleague, which not only encompasses but welcomes constructive

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criticism. In this way you will be able to learn more about, and improve, your own 'personal style' as a trainer 'on the job'. You will also have a 'buddy' on hand when the going gets tough and you need rescuing – a rather big plus point when it comes to peace of mind!

The 'Sharing Dialogue' exercise (4.1) is an opportunity for your participants to have the kind of in-depth conversation and exchange of views with a person which is required *before* you enter a co-working relationship.

The 'Co-working Inventory' exercise (4.2) will help your participants assess their own ability to co-work and the characteristics needed from potential partners. The 'Message to You' exercise (4.3) encourages disclosure and clarification of issues in order to maximise the benefits of co-working.

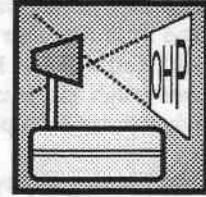
## 2 Suggestions for using these materials



- 1 Outline the aims of the session and introduce it.
- 2 Provide introductory input on the benefits of co-working and techniques of co-presenting using the background notes (2) and OHP transparencies 3.1 and 3.2.
- 3 Split participants into pairs who *do not know each other well* and introduce the 'Sharing Dialogue' exercise (4.1). Stress that this dialogue is entirely confidential within each pairing and make sure that the physical surroundings are conducive to this. Ask participants to carefully read the introduction to the booklet before proceeding and remind them that the aim is to share educational issues at a deep level. Allow each pairing to complete their conversation at their own pace within the time limit you set for the exercise.
- 4 Lead discussion on the insights derived from this exercise.
- 5 Now invite participants to remain in their pairings while they individually complete the 'Co-working Inventory' worksheets (4.2). On completion, pairs should discuss their co-working potential using the discussion points at the beginning of the worksheet as a guide.
- 6 Debrief the learning points from this exercise and then invite the pairs to give 'improving messages' to one another (exercise 4.3).
- 7 Distribute 'Learning log' sheets for completion.
- 8 Close the session by reviewing its aims and learning outcomes and making reference to future sessions if appropriate.

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## 3.1 OHP Transparency

**Benefits of trainers co-working**

**For Trainers**  
 test ideas and re-assess direction  
 adds energy  
 rescue!

**For Participants**  
 variety of styles and presentation  
 richness of course experience  
 monitoring and attention to needs  
 increased participant attention