



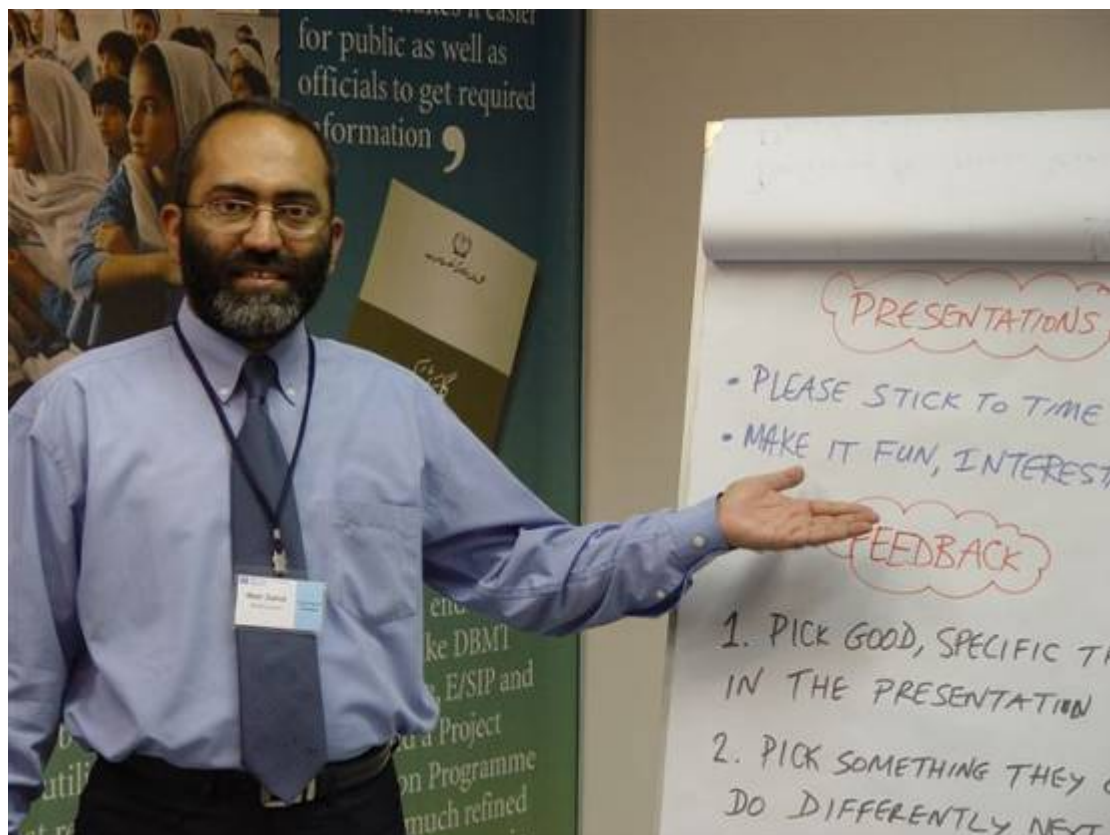
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## About the e-book

Have you ever wondered why some training courses that you have been to are more effective than others? And why are some trainers able to connect with you more than others? It's not coincidental; much of the success can be attributed to the preparation by the trainer in designing the course with attention to detail and his or her handling of individuals and groups during the course.

Since I conduct training of trainers' workshops and my job at British Council involves spotting and inviting top trainers – both here in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world – to conduct management workshops for corporate managers, sometimes I am asked for tips on making the training sessions fun and memorable. Although nothing what I say is new but some of the parts are often neglected even by the experienced trainers.

In these pages, I have tried to list down the very essential bits that a trainer needs to do – kind of things that you'd do if you only had 10 days to transform into a great trainer.



## Day 1: Think Learner!

It's a *workshop*, not a lecture or a seminar. People learn by doing, or participating in discussions. Our success as trainer depends on their active motivation and participation.

Think learner! Remember: Learning takes place from the learner's perspective, not from the trainer's.

Keep the group size to about 12 to 15 people. Their existing knowledge or skill level doesn't need to be the same; diversity is welcome.

Envisage/find out participants' needs. Ask yourself: Why should they be attending your programme? What would happen if they don't? If the answer is nothing much, there's no point in you giving this training.



## Day 2: Design Common-Sense Training

Divide the course into clear parts, at most three or four. It will help people in remembering what they covered. Present critical information at the beginning and recap at the end of sessions.

Set clear objectives for each session and task. Put them in a sequence, so it aids memory.

'Under-plan' the content - there would always be minor digressions and then you wouldn't be pressured for time.

Restrict your input to a maximum of 7 pieces of new information at a time (so says the research!). Do not overload learners with information (nobody is going to give you a Nobel Prize for content!). Remember: words are only 7% of what we communicate. The rest is body language and the tone of voice.

Course workbooks, or manuals, should be lightweight and easy to glance through. Use bullet points rather than long texts. Manuals should have space for taking notes; loose sheets are lost as soon as the course is over.



## Day 3: Create Opportunities for Practice and Interaction

Bring in opportunities for individual, pair and group work.

**Individual:** for reflection. **Pair:** for looking at pros and cons of an issue. **Group:** for ideas and diversity. **Group work with presentation:** for competition among groups and learning from each other's thoughts and experience.

Participants may have different learning preferences: auditory, visual or kinaesthetic. Include activities that attract all sorts of learners.

When developing the course, ask yourself several times: how could the task be 'spiced up', made more interesting or fun for the participants? If short on ideas, consult a more creative colleague.

Ask yourself: how could the task be made more workplace-related, so that the participants see it as relevant to them? Bring examples from participants' sectors.



## Day 4: Consider Training Room Layout and Your Visual Aids

Use a room layout having roundtables with three or four participants on each table. This will encourage the group to gel and bond. This layout will also help during group work. Although there are several supporters of u-shape layout, I am not for it. At the end of the workshop using u-shape, most people are still strangers to each other.

Use appropriate visual aids. In spite of the advent of high-tech AV aids like animated PowerPoint presentations, flip charts and overhead projector are your best friends.

Dress? Be one-level up. It's ok to wear a tie if you ask participants to dress 'smart casual'. Wear a white or a blue shirt, with black trousers. Wear dress shoes. Female trainers wear conservative, business colours; your dress or jewellery should not draw participants' unnecessary attention towards you.



## Day 5: Get Ready for Training Delivery

Start with a bang that suits your personality and make the participants sit up and take notice. But be yourself!

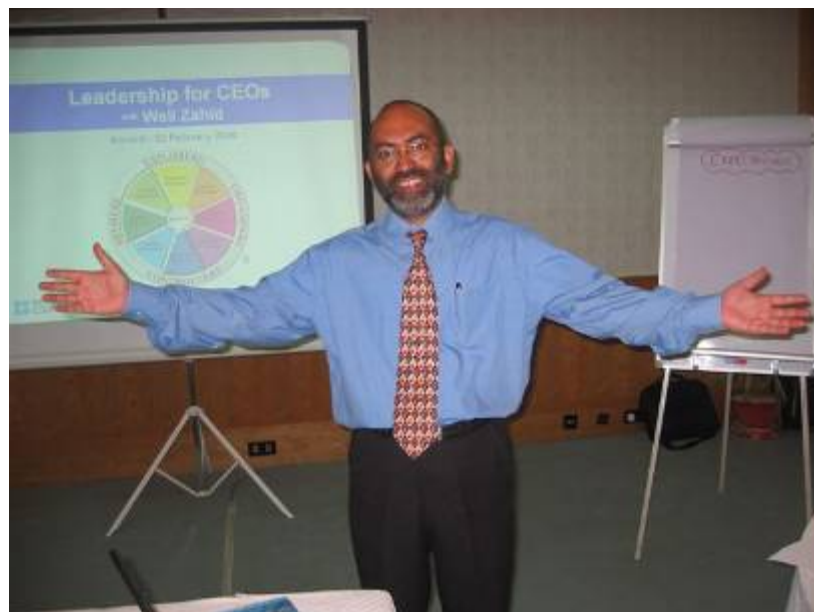
Ask participant their expectations from this course. Match your delivery with those expectations.

Set the stage for a learning environment through establishing norms or 'rules of engagement' although I prefer not using the word rules. This will pre-empt likely problems or challenges and help in handling 'difficult' or challenging participants later.

Questions are your biggest ally, a key tool for maximising learning. So instead of providing answers, ask questions,. Elicit. Chances are that participants themselves will have and come up with answers. Remember: *good* teachers have answers while *great* teachers only have questions. And remember what Peter Senge says, *Knowledge is in the network*.

Encourage learners to ask questions. Question them frequently. Encourage them to challenge each other and allow them to challenge you. Creative tension and a healthy stress are good for learning. Be a facilitator, rather than a trainer.

Learning does not just happen through what you say or do. This happens at coffee breaks, one-to-one trainer-participant interaction, conversations among participants, during group discussions and tasks, etc. Maximise each occasion.



## Day 6: Spend More Time on Delivery

Trainees observe your each move; you are a kind of visual medium. Make sure that you send the right, positive vibes.

Attention span for any one training method is no more than 20 minutes. Change your method or activity after this time. Use an energiser - a light-hearted joke - or take short (one-minute) breaks.

Do not use jargon. It's a deadly sin!

Tell relevant anecdotes; these add to your credibility. When compared to straight trainer-type advice, they also save you from yes-butted.

Quote authorities and experts on the subject.

If you are rushed, do not sacrifice breaks (a lot of learning happens there). Rather, leave some content uncovered.

Gesture naturally and clearly. Exaggerate hand and body movements if the group is large. Stand straight. Walk around the room in a measured pace.



## Day 7: Manage Participants Well

It's not your course; it's his and hers. Get out of initial nervousness quick. Throw the monkey - make it their course. Then you can relax into delivering the training.

Make eye contact with everyone, but no more than two seconds at a time. Be aware of your blind spots (mine is the participant on extreme left). Reach out to quiet participants during breaks or before the sessions.

Use participants' names; This makes it personalised.

Do not embarrass participants. Do not put anyone on spot. And do not ridicule any participant (sometimes we unknowingly do).

You can regroup participants several times during the workshop. When you do, do it randomly. People resent carefully-chosen regrouping and try to find 'meaning' and the trainer bias in that.

Offer a lot of praise by picking what participants are doing right. Hold on to the negative criticism. We need energy to change and when we are criticised, it's a drain on our energy and stops us from improving.



## Day 8: Give Positive Feedback to Participants

When giving feedback, keep it positive, simple and focused. And always be forward-looking. You can't change the past, but you can influence the future.

In feedback, use the sandwich approach. Positive-negative-positive. Start with what they have done well. Next, state how they could do differently next time. Then, close on a positive note.

When handling routine interruptions, be flexible. Manuals and course structures are not sacred; participants are! Let the process take care of difficulties. In a session, routinely leave 15/20 minutes' room for detours.



## Day 9: Handle Challenging Participants Tactfully

When the challenging or 'difficult' participants interject, do not reply; do not take the bait. Pause, rephrase their interjection showing to the person you have understood their viewpoint. Then refer back to the group. Remember: Peer pressure is more powerful than the trainer pressure. Make it your second nature not to respond directly to these challengers.

When handling conflict situations among participants, allow them to air their point of views. Intervene only when the steam is out. Do not fear losing control. Also, do not offer an opinion unless it's a clear-cut black & white situation. Ask others what they think of their issue. Because it's not your course, it's theirs.

In most challenging situations, humour could be your best bet. It defuses the situation without making you or them losing face. Against popular perception, it will also help you from losing control of the situation.

Finally, be fair and respectful to all, particularly to genders. No favourites! Be sensitive to their 'sensitivities'.

Close on a definite, positive note.



## Day 10: Reflect – Always

After the course is over, reflect on what you have achieved well. Always. Consider the areas you need to work on for your next course – the whole course, the parts, the content, the methods, the delivery, the participants' management, etc.

You may ask a trusted colleague to sit on course as observer. Often, someone else's feedback can give us quantum leaps in improvement.

If you want to excel, reflection and continuous improvement should be ongoing process.



## Conclusion

If you follow these tips, in 10 days you'll be on your way to be a great and an effective trainer. Your trainings would then be more fun and memorable. Who knows one day you will be writing a few training tips for next generation of trainers!

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