

ICES TCLETM REPORT 2012

Report of the ICES Training Course: How to Lead an Effective Technical Meeting (TCLETM)

20–21 June 2012



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

Conseil International pour
l'Exploration de la Mer

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Participants at the course “How to Lead an Effective Technical Meeting” Training Course 20–21 June 2012 at ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen. The course was given by Jim Berkson, Courtesy Associate Professor at the University of Florida (#2 from left) and Adi Kellermann, Head of Science for ICES (#3 from left).

Report of the ICES Training Course
“How to Lead an Effective Technical Meeting”,
20-21 June, 2012
by
Jim Berkson and Adi Kellermann

1 Summary

The training course “How to Lead an Effective Technical Meeting” was conducted for the first time under the ICES Training Programme 20-21 June 2012 at ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen. Twenty-two students from 11 countries participated in the course (Annex 1). From the perspective of the instructors, the course was a success although some adjustments can improve the knowledge and skill transfer to the trainees (see 2 Recommendations).

Feedback from students was solicited using a course evaluation questionnaire. Results indicate that both the amount of material covered and the degree of difficulty ranged from “below average” to above “average” with the mode being “average”. A large majority of the participants (95%) rated the helpfulness of the teaching staff and the clarity of the presentation as above average. Between 85% and 90% of the participants rated the course content, organisation of the course, and quality of teaching as “above average.” Ninety percent of the respondents rated the course overall as “above average” (Annex 2). Individual feedback from trainees to the question “Good features of this course/suggestions for improvement”:

- Thought it was really good. I would like some suggestions on how to conduct web seminars or how to incorporate computerized tools to facilitate meetings as well in future courses
- I heard about the meeting through Linked In
- I would like to receive an agenda (time schedule) and some more information before the beginning of the course.
- I was missing an agenda with times on the sharepoint before the course.
- With the level of experienced participants in the room, more hands on activities would have been preferred. The presentation of different techniques to address priority setting, brain storming etc was great. More technique presentations would have been my preference. The trainers were great and kept us well awake. Overall: good job.
- This time there was enough time for lunch. It will be great to have the agenda and if possible some material before the meeting.
- Need more "live" examples related to ICES EG
- Good - The content was excellent, well presented and animated. I enjoyed the exercises and felt they added to the course.
- Improvements - the section on DO's and DON'Ts was needed but too long. Maybe this section could have been improved by adding a couple of more activities to break that section up into more manageable chunks. Also the powerpoint needs to be clearer, the colours/text were not always clear. Overall, I feel this course is a must for any chair of an ICES group.
- Good illustration of techniques but I missed better exemplification of how these can be used to address specific issues rising in meetings. This is a good introductory course, with general techniques and key aspects on planning, organisation, role of chair and his performance. In a deeper level I think its important to focus more on practical examples, perhaps more role-play examples but in particular how to steer a discussion, where views are divergent

and a decision cannot be taken "democratically". I would have liked to have a practical demonstration of how to reach the conclusion that "all can live with" - i presume that there are some techniques to breakdown options into aspects that most people can agree and from there build-up a consensual decision. Really enjoyed the aspects on snacks, levels of energy, aspects that are often ignored but are so important.

- Enjoyed the course and will recommend to other colleagues. Overall, perhaps rather too many Powerpoint slides and it would perhaps have been useful to have had more input from the ICES instructor on the specific aspects of running an ICES technical meeting. In any event, having alternative presenters can often work well and add variety to the feel of the course.
- An agenda/course plan emailed out beforehand with timings would be helpful, rather than relying on access to Sharepoint. Powerpoint version of presentations as well as pdf would be useful if possible? Publication list is useful, are any of these or alternative information available on the web? Some parts (first half day 2) were frustratingly slow with some points over-emphasised. Room and facilities were excellent. The discussion on prioritisation of ICES training courses after the practical exercise strayed away from a critical analysis of the process we had just been through (which would have been useful), into the technicalities of ICES training courses, which was interesting, but not a purpose of the meeting. We then skipped over any analysis of the process and usefulness of techniques used, or not used.
- This was a great course and very well organized. Jim and Adi did a great job of leading by example on how to lead an effective technical meeting. The training session had clear goals outlined, we were reminded of mile posts, we had summaries of materials covered, we got theory and tools and got exercises to interactively apply these theory and tools. The course was refreshing and interesting. Something I would like to see more of are some personal anecdotes from Jim and Adi on dealing with scenarios. We did get plenty of great examples of techniques for dealing with scenarios and we also got some personal anecdotes, but I would like to hear of just a few more. For example in dealing with meeting challenges the do's and don'ts are very helpful but in some cases I still could not quite visualize how I would apply them so it would be great to hear from Jim or Adi how they applied them in a real life example.

2 Recommendations

- 1) A detailed course agenda and schedule should be made available to participants at least one week prior to the start of the course.
- 2) More ICES-specific examples should be provided throughout the course.

3 Course description

Nearly every scientist attends technical meetings, spending and wasting hours in meeting rooms and on conference calls. Over time they'll see some meetings run efficiently, making good use of the time to accomplish the meeting's objectives, and others meetings run poorly, where objectives are never met. Why are some meetings effective and others aren't? More often than not, it's due to the meeting leader.

Anyone can become an effective technical meeting leader. As with anything else, it requires learning the skills and gaining experience. During this course, you will do both. The goal of the course is to prepare you to tackle a leadership assignment, and teach you to expect and adapt to challenges you'll likely face along the way.

The course is different from traditional facilitation courses in the following ways:

- 1) The entire meeting process is covered from meeting design to completion and follow-up;
- 2) Active learning exercises are utilized to immerse course participants in the methods of leadership, allowing participants to learn from each others' experiences;
- 3) The course is designed for fisheries scientists, with content and exercises having real world relevance for course participants.
- 4) Significant time is spent learning how to deal with meeting challenges (e.g., facing difficult personalities, having insufficient time to accomplish meeting goals, lacking proper authority to lead a meeting, failing to establish rules of behaviour).

The general objective of the course is to train scientists and advisors how to be effective technical meeting leaders. Specific objectives include:

- 1) Understanding the factors involved in a meeting's creation that determine its likelihood of success and how those can be modified;
- 2) Understanding what background information is and is not needed for a meeting leader;
- 3) Understanding how to apply a wide variety of facilitation tools to have a successful meeting, particularly in dealing with problems;
- 4) Applying this information to take greater control of your life.

By the end of the course, the participants will:

- Be able to assess whether a leadership position is being created in a way that will lead to its successful completion;
- Be able to utilize skills to do the preparation needed for a successful technical meeting;
- Be able to achieve a meeting's goals and objectives by utilizing sound facilitation skills;

Be able to build on their success by integrating what they've learned into not only their meetings, but into their daily lives.

4 Course programme and instructors

The two-day course was organized as a combination of presentations, discussions, and class exercises.

The programme was designed with an about even split between lectures/discussions and tutorials. In summary form the programme was:

Programme:

Section	Topic
1	What works and what doesn't? <i>The good, bad, and ugly</i>
2	When should you accept leadership? <i>To lead or not to lead</i>
3	What preparation is required? <i>The world is not enough, or is it?</i>
4	How do you lead a meeting? <i>Herding cats: Lion taming or kitten coaxing?</i>
5	How can you apply these skills everyday? <i>Dirigo, Ergo Vivo ("I direct, therefore I live")</i>

Instructors:

Dr. Jim Berkson has worked as both an academic and an agency scientist, participating in a large number of fisheries forums, for more than 25 years. He has an international reputation for leading successful technical meetings. Combining his experience in both creating active learning courses and in leading national and international technical meetings, Dr. Berkson brings this highly unique and helpful course to ICES.

Dr. Adi Kellermann has worked as both an academic and a governmental scientist for 23 years. He brings solid experience in mediation and facilitation to this course. As Head of Science Program in ICES since 2004, he will incorporate facets of meeting leadership unique to ICES into the course.

Annex 1: List of participants

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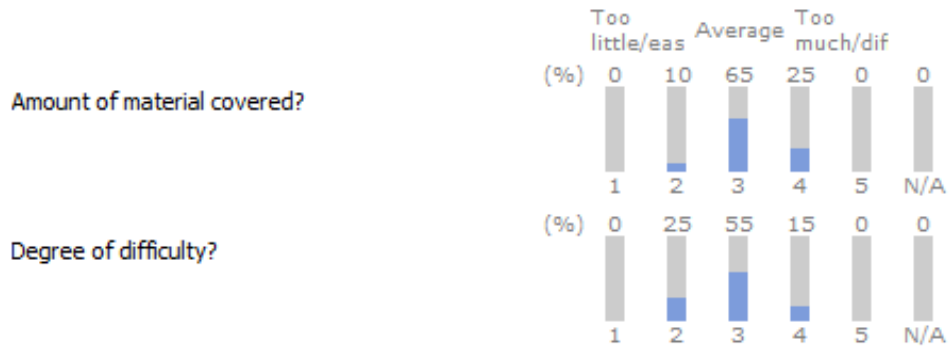
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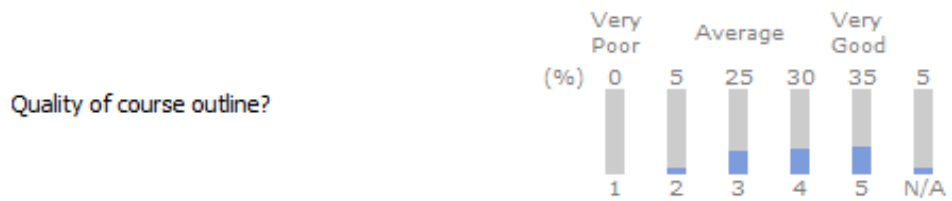
Annex 2: Course evaluation questionnaire responses

2. Course Content

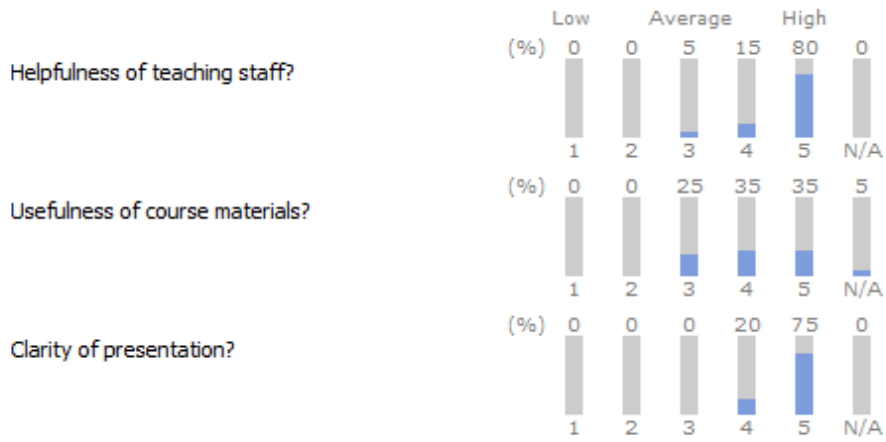


Total: 20

3. Course Organization

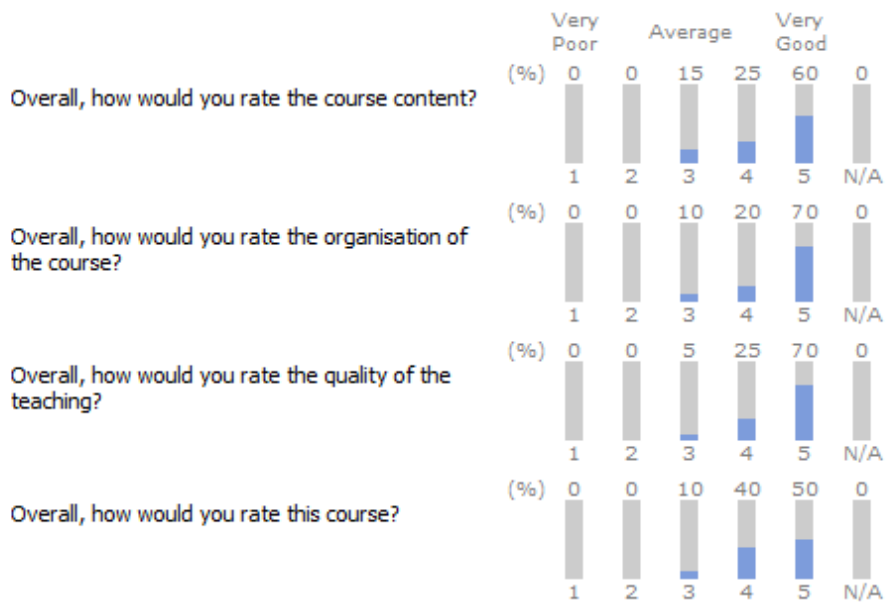


4. Teaching and Learning Support



Total: 20

5. Overall Evaluation



Total: 20