Brainstorming workshop-26-27 March 2015

JRC-MAHB, Ispra (IT)

Brief notes on experiences from training

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None of the following is particularly new or innovative – it is a collection of thoughts on things which are probably well known by the majority, but despite this shouldn't be forgotten.

1. **Be prepared**
   Whilst this may be sound obvious, it is extremely important to make sure that any intervention is as successful as possible.

   a. Being prepared means not only having all of the content prepared and tested on the computer system available. Remember that standard setups in different countries can mean that PowerPoint slides can suddenly become unreadable. Thus it is recommended to have printed and pdf versions available too. If you are not going to be presenting from your own laptop/computer, then it is worth becoming familiar either with the menu selections in the language of the software in use or alternatively the standardised short-cuts.

   b. Being prepared means understanding who your target audience is. It is important to work together with the organisers to understand the levels of understanding, the roles, the working language of the training (with or without interpreters), etc.

2. **Assume nothing**
   Just because particular concepts work in your own working environment / field of experience there is no guarantee that this will be the case in a different environment. Therefore trainers should check things they are unsure about if this important for their presentation / training session, e.g. what sort of electrical power supply is available, do the videos run, is there a sound system. It is also worth checking to see what the expectations on dress code, temperature of the room, particular forms of address and communication, etc. are expected.

3. **Be flexible / Expect the unexpected**
   The agenda should be fixed before the event, however changes may occur and be necessary for a number of reasons. In addition it may be necessary to adjust the approach of particular units in the light of a better understanding of the group's strengths, weaknesses and capabilities.

4. **Listen to the audience**
   The audience has a store of knowledge, in particular relating to the county and situation in question. Trainers should endeavour to tap into this store. This means interactive sessions, group work and discussions are useful elements which should be built into the training

schedule. This also helps the audience understand which people and institutions hold which information.

5. **Tell stories**
   Sharing anecdotes is a very effective way of communicating. They make the presentations / training more colourful, and also make it clear that chemical accident prevention and preparedness is not just theoretical and about regulation. Anecdotes are always good when they are personal experiences; however “borrowing” stories from others is also valid as long as they are used appropriately.

6. **Simple things are sometimes the best**
   For the training in Cambodia it was discovered that the engineering understanding of the audience was not particularly high. It had been intended to carry out a group exercise to identify the hazards and appropriate risk control measures for a petroleum tank storage site. The solution chosen in the end was to use a PowerPoint slide in which a flat-bottom tank was drawn. Only the tank was visible. The presenter led a dialogue with the group about how the tank should operate and how these various mechanisms could fail and what action could be taken. As this progressed and “discoveries” of “new knowledge” were made a mouse-click on appropriate areas of the diagram added more information.
   This approach allowed a step-wise development of understanding as a preliminary to making a site visit on the following day. Carrying out the group exercise as originally intended would have been too difficult and not produced satisfactory results. In the Philippines the audience was all engineers (many of professional engineer status) or natural scientists. This group hat few problems in carrying out a HAZOP analysis of a stirred batch reactor.