

WORKSHOPS

A guide for internal auditors
from ThinkingAudit



WHY USE WORKSHOPS?

As internal auditors we strive to be forward looking, and to spend our time working with the business on the areas where we can add value.

One of the best ways of ensuring that you're in a position to do just that is to make sure that internal audit is focusing on the right risks, understands the business and is engaging with the right people to plan. **Workshops are a great way to do that.**

WHEN DO WORKSHOPS WORK?

Here are some of the situations when running a workshop can add value to your internal audit function. It doesn't have to be a formal workshop setting, facilitation skills and techniques can help internal auditors in many situations:

- **Getting the scope right:** when planning an audit, or understanding how advisory input can help the most, a workshop can be a useful way of working with the business to determine your scope.
- **Drawing out views from top management:** facilitating a discussion with senior management, for example when developing the audit plan, is a great opportunity to hear different views and discuss management's potentially competing priorities. This can also make the most of limited time with senior people in the same room.
- **Supporting effective risk management:** running a risk workshop to support the organisation as it develops its risk framework is something many auditors will do.
- **Ensuring team buy-in:** working within the audit team to focus on improvements and enhancements to working practices. A workshop structure helps encourage input from the whole team.

GETTING IT RIGHT

Common pitfalls of workshops and how to avoid them

1: LACK OF CONTRIBUTION

Workshops can be painful if no-one is contributing.

- Make sure that you have the **right people invited** and in the room.
- Send out an **advance briefing** so everyone knows the purpose of the session and why they are there.
- Before the day, **share** initial ideas (for example some first thoughts on risks) to get people thinking.
- **Use names** when asking for contributions or ideas.
- **Small rewards**, even a simple chocolate or sweet, can create laughter and a bit of friendly competition to encourage contributions.
- It can be difficult to do, but sometimes saying nothing and **leaving a silence** for someone to fill can encourage that first input.
- **Encourage**. Rather than dismissing ideas that are off the mark, try to find something to build on.
- Try to **mimimise distractions** such as mobile phones and emails.
- Set **ground rules** such as comments on others' contributions must be constructive.

2: DEFAULT TO TRAINING

If you accidentally lapse in to training mode, you could spend more time talking to participants than gaining their input.

- Plan an **outline agenda** for the session so you know when you will be talking, and when others should be. Stick to it!
- **Prepare your introduction** so that you start the day confidently and with purpose - limit yourself to this input.
- **Setting rules** for the day and **briefing** participants in advance should limit the amount of talking for the facilitator.
- **Review progress** in the breaks.
- **Set a clear objective** for the session and remind yourself and the wider group of it throughout the day.
- Once you've introduced the session, limit yourself to only **asking questions**. It's a challenge, but worth it.

GETTING IT RIGHT

Common pitfalls of workshops and how to avoid them

3: INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Having too many contributions at once, or input that seems irrelevant can be overwhelming and difficult to manage.

- Have someone acting as **scribe** to capture contributions.
- Decide a **format for capturing information** before the session.
- Set **rules** and share them with your participants, for example explain that only one person is to speak at once, or that
- Plan the session - and make sure people know what they should be **focusing on right now** to keep the session on track.
- If someone flags an idea that is not relevant (or if you're not sure what to do with the contribution) capture it on an **issues list** to discuss later or agree how it will be picked up outside of the session.
- Keep up the tempo of the workshop and keep it on track by periodically **summarising discussions**.
- **Set a structure** for contributions. If you're running a risk workshop for example, agree or set a structure for how risks are described, and the framework against which they will be assessed.
- **Avoid a cast of thousands**. Keep the participants to a sensible list of relevant people who can contribute to the topic.

4: LACK OF IMPACT

A workshop needs to lead to outcomes to be a useful exercise.

- **Communicate the key messages** after the session, ideally within a week to maintain momentum.
- **Agree next steps**, and where relevant, assign actions with owners and target dates.
- **Follow up** with action owners, and **demonstrate** that you are progressing any actions you are personally due to deliver.
- Saying **thank you** at the end of the session and in the follow up communications can go a long way to encouraging people to participate again, and it helps remind them how they contributed and **why the workshop was important**.
- **Set reasonable expectations** before and at the end of the workshop. Make sure everyone understands the objectives.

Workshop preparation checklist

Title:

Date:

Facilitator:

ONE MONTH TO GO

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book room & any technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Outline agenda |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appoint & brief a scribe | <input type="checkbox"/> Send invites & briefing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block time in your diary for prep & follow-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Decide how to capture contributions & actions |

TWO WEEKS TO GO

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send out any pre-reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Detailed plan of the session |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm room set-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Appoint a scribe and ensure they are briefed |

ONE WEEK TO GO

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reminder email (incl.pre-reading) | <input type="checkbox"/> Finalise any materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Familiarise yourself with the room | <input type="checkbox"/> Write your introduction |

ONE DAY TO GO

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check refreshments are ordered | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice your introduction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, get the room set up | <input type="checkbox"/> Check technology is working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share a few ideas on email to warm up your attendees | |

ON THE DAY

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plan arrival before your attendees | <input type="checkbox"/> Set ground rules (no phones etc) |
|---|---|

DON'T FORGET THE FOLLOW UP

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send a thank you email with summary thoughts / outcomes | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete any actions & follow-up with others charged with actions |
|--|--|

The **considered,**
collaborative approach



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