

SECTION 2: TRAINING, TRAINERS AND METHODS

The point was made earlier when reviewing entrepreneur development programmes that the "personality" of the trainer is an important element in the success of entrepreneurial development. In addition his/her experience and background are also important. It is not enough for the trainer merely to 'know' the subject - he or she also needs to have credibility with the trainees. (This applies equally to institutions through which training or assistance is channelled). Trainers with formal academic qualifications in a management subject are not necessarily the best people to run programmes for small business owner/managers. A greater impact will often be made by a person with whom the trainees can identify and/or who is credible for the particular role. The owners of successful small businesses who are also articulate are an important source of instructors. Secondly, the bank manager, professional accountant or lawyer, with experience of dealing with small businesses, will be useful in explaining, for example, what should be in a business proposal, the importance of keeping the books, how to prepare accounts and taxation, or the law and its effect of the small business. Thirdly, there is the role of the credible example - thus, a programme to train refugees might find it advantageous to invite a refugee who has been successful in business to instruct.

Clearly, trainers have themselves to be well-trained. In addition, they should employ techniques and methods appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the trainees and their businesses. Many experts now contend that the classroom is not always the best place to conduct training, as it can be too artificial and/or alien to the 'culture' of the small business, and the trainee may have difficulty in applying the concepts taught in the classroom to the rigours of the market place. Small business owner/managers may not wish to spend too much time away from their place of work. For these reasons, extension - defined as a proactive service reaching out (reviewed in Part I, section 5.2) - is increasingly favoured for providing management advice and assistance to small businesses.

Where training is to be done in a classroom it should be related as closely as possible to the environment in which the trainees are to operate. Case studies, preferably those written within the context of the environment in which the entrepreneurs work, should be extensively used. Training should be done by action learning - that is, the course should be structured in such a way that trainees are brought into the classroom for a brief period at a time, returning after a day or two to their own or other people's businesses to apply the techniques they have learnt, with this supervised application phase followed by a further class session for feedback, review and further planning.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS AND TRAINING METHODS - suggested further reading

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