



## How Should I Deliver My Extension Program?

Educational theory suggests that people learn best in different ways (Mancuso, 2001; Knowles, 1995; Galbraith, 1990). Some learn best from *written* materials such as newspaper articles, web sites, newsletters or handouts. Others learn best from *verbal* interaction such as discussion or lectures. Still others require a *graphic* presentation found on video.

The question arises, how can an extension educator identify the delivery method that the target audience in a particular program will respond to the most?

### Solution

Salmen (1989) in his influential book on needs assessment, stresses the most obvious solution, listen to what the target audience tells you. Develop a question you can ask your target audience at a committee planning meeting, a workshop, in a focus group, or survey. Adapt the following depending on the context:

*WHEN WORKING WITH EXTENSION ABOUT MANURE MANAGEMENT, HOW DO YOU BEST LEARN?*

- *WRITTEN MATERIALS (BROCHURE, FLYER, OR NEWSLETTER)*
- *DISCUSSION*
- *INSTRUCTOR'S PRESENTATION OR LECTURE*
- *VIDEO*

### When To Use

Take advantage of the many opportunities you have to integrate this question in written or verbal situations. Here are just a few opportunities:

- Give the question to a variety of your current workshop participants over a three month period.
- Add the question to the next evaluation in your program.
- Insert the question the next time the extension office sends out a letter to newsletter subscribers asking whether they want to renew, and asking for affirmative action data. In this context, you may want respondents to designate the program area in which they participate in order for the data to be meaningful to your program area.
- In a focus group, use the question in an open ended way; don't provide answer categories.

### Other Tips

- Not only will the data from this type of question help you understand how your target audience learns best, you can highlight the chosen delivery method in your marketing of the program! The delivery method should have an added appeal to this targeted audience.
- Modify and develop the answer categories as needed for your program. Provide answers that identify the delivery methods you believe you have the resources to actually develop, if you don't have them already. However, retain the general designation of written materials, discussion, lecture, etc. as the principal categories.



## Added Thought

If you typically present data in your presentations or written materials, you might want to add a second question. Ask the target audience how they prefer to have data or numbers presented, and provide answers with an array of alternatives such as:

- in tables
- in charts
- in graphs
- in the text

Some people like data in charts and tables. Other people don't, and thus don't read charts and tables! These people learn more when the numbers are integrated in the text.

The important point is to ask your target audience.

## References

Galbraith, M. W. (1990). *Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction*. Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company.

Knowles, M.S. (1995). *Designs for Adult Learning. Practical resources, exercises, and course outlines from the father of adult learning*. Alexandria, Virginia: American Society for Training and Development.

Mancuso, S. (2001). Adult-centered practices: Benchmarking study in higher education. *Journal of Innovative Higher Education*, 25, 165-181.

Salmen, L. F. (1989). *Listen to the People*. World Bank, Washington, DC: Oxford University Press.

Nancy Ellen Kiernan, Ph.D., Program Evaluator, [nekiernan@psu.edu](mailto:nekiernan@psu.edu)

The reference citation for this Tipsheet is: Kiernan, Nancy Ellen (2004). How Should I Deliver My Extension Program? Tipsheet #72, University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension.  
Available at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS72.pdf>

This Web site is copyrighted by The Pennsylvania State University. The information may be used for educational purposes but not sold for profit.