



Christian Mentoring

JOHN MALLISON MINISTRIES

MAXIMISING A TRAINING EXPERIENCE

(Transferring the learning to where you minister)

“That was a very helpful Conference – I learnt so much which can improve my personal life and ministry.”

“I was personally challenged – I intend by God’s help to be a better leader.”

“I have many ideas and resources that will help me when I get back to my church.”

Many times I have read these comments on response forms, or heard participants make similar comments after attending a powerful learning event. But, did the learning ever take root and bear fruit? Did these people ever actually utilise what they learnt? A study by the Xerox Corporation in the United States showed that 87% of the information gained from a training session or large meeting is lost, unless it is followed up.

Learners need help to carry over new knowledge, ideas and experiences to the situations to which the learning applies. Here are some suggestions to help you maximise your training time and to ensure the transfer of the learning to your back-home situation.

BEFORE YOU GO:

- **Gather a small group of thoughtful and prayerful people from your own church, parish or organisation.**

Share with them what are your hopes and expectations in attending the Conference. Ask them to assist you to enable you to get to the Conference. Talk through issues related to:

- getting approval to go.
- sorting out finance - what will it cost you to attend (travel etc.)
- thinking through the implications for your family and ministry.

- **Paying for the Conference and Travel**

Some people will be in a position to pay their own way. Others will not. Not every organisation is in a position to offer sponsorships. Some of our suggestions for raising the money to attend are:

- Approach your church or organisation to assist in or to pay for you to attend.
- Talk with your support group about how to make contact with generous friends
- who would be willing to sponsor you. These may be members of your
- congregation, relatives, friends who believe in you and your ministry.
- Some denominations have study grants which can be applied for.
- Your church may have a special appeal.

There are probably lots of other ideas, but you shouldn’t feel it is all your responsibility. Pray about it and talk to your support group about it.

- **Preparing for the Conference**

List questions for which you shall seek answers, and areas of ministry for which you will try to find ideas and resources.

Discuss together any resources that arrive prior to the Conference. You may need to photocopy some for the group to read prior to your meetings.

Pray together about specific aspects of the Conference. Be sure to include not only those important up-front roles but all those who work behind the scenes and those coming at great cost to themselves.



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If you have a family, ask the group to pastor them during your absence. Get them to assure your spouse that they are available should special needs arise.

Set a time within two weeks of your return to meet with them to report on the experience.

- **Meet with some other participants.**
Try to meet with two or three others who are going to the Conference. Follow some of the suggestions above. You may plan to meet regularly during the Conference to support one another.

WHILE YOU ARE AT THE CONFERENCE:

- **Keep a Journal**
This need not be complex, but it will help focus your thinking. Note in it:
 - **Your response to each of the meetings attended** (including mentor groups and tracks)
 - One or two main things you learn, new ideas, resources, received or referred to, etc.
 - How you felt?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What was a special word of God to you personally?
 - **Note the names and addresses of new people you meet** and make a few comments about them.
 - **Summarise any significant experiences** you had.
 - **At the end of each day**, you might record:
 - What was your general impression of the day?
 - What was the most significant personal relationship you had?
 - What you will do differently as a result of what you learnt during the day's events.
 - What was reinforced that you want to make sure you will continue to do?
 - **If you have a close friend** attending the Conference, you may agree to **share your journal entries** on two or three occasions during the time.
- **In the last day or so of the Conference, set aside time for some action planning:**
 - **Review** your journal and focus on a few ideas or concepts.
 - **Detail** each idea or concept.
 - **List specific steps** you will need to take to apply each of these.
 - **Make a timetable** for each action step.
 - **List the names of people who will be involved** and what you may need to do in relation to some of them.
 - What **other resources** will be necessary to see it through.
- **Speak to the speakers:**
Don't be over-awed by major speakers or track leaders. Take the initiative in approaching them regarding specific issues which they may or may not have raised, upon which you need more information or on which you wish to question them.
- **Seek out new people:**
Don't keep to your own group all the time. Be alert to those who are lonely - some are coming on their own to the conference. Try to meet people from different states, take time to get to know them. Talk to people next to you in meetings, at meal tables, in the corridors, etc.
- **Try to get adequate rest:**
Conferences can be an exhausting time, and getting overtired will limit the value of



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the experience.

WHEN YOU RETURN:

The likelihood of you applying what you have learnt is significantly increased by reporting publicly.

- **Be patient and sensitive in sharing your experiences.**

You will no doubt come back all fired up with new ideas and probably with a vision for new directions in your ministry. Be patient in passing this on to those back home. You will be returning from a 5-day pressure-packed program - it will take time for others to catch up with where you are at. Many of them will be the early movers in any new program, so be sure to allow time for them to do some of the reading and listening to cassettes which made such an impact on you.

- **Report to your local small group.**

Endeavour to do this within two weeks of your return. Set the date before you go. Share some of the items from your journal.

Organise to work through your action plan with the group in future meetings. Build in some accountability.

- **Report to those you serve** (church, parish, organisation).

Speak of your experience in the regular meetings. Arrange a special meeting to report to your leaders. Use newsheets, pastoral letters and the like to report.

- **Meet up with others who attended the Conference.**

Mutual support and some degree of accountability of those involved will further enhance the transfer of the learning to the back-home situation.

- **Review**

Plan specific times when you can review your notes, hand-out materials and your journal.

By following these simple strategies, the Conference could be more than just another learning event, another folder of notes on your shelves!