



ON WORKSHOPS

We take your goals and objectives, and formulate a programme of activities that will take a group of people from where they are to where you want them to be.

Why run a workshop?

When you have a team, or group of people who you need to take through a programme, then a great way to help them focus on the material, is to use a facilitator to take them through it. Facilitation is the landing of people through a programme. Workshops are the structure of the programme. A good facilitator and workshop designer can make the dulllest experience thrilling and purposeful - the structure and pace of the session is highly flexible.

What it does

You might use a workshop, rather than a talk or presentation when you particularly want:

- To get some people to think about an idea with you
- To hear what they have to say
- To gather feedback in a constructive way

If you don't feel that you want to run the workshop yourself - maybe you'd actually like to be in the workshop - you can get someone like Plot to come and do it for you. Having someone else facilitate allows you to focus on the work whilst we make sure people are feeling engaged, enjoying and expressing themselves.

How we work

At Plot, we do both workshop design, and facilitation. In fact it's our way of operating as

designers - to work with and not for. We have found that doing the work together makes the work so much more useful.

Our workshops are inclusive and considerate, pacy and stimulating, generative, purposeful and meaningful. There is a strategic purpose to the session which we always try and clarify, then make sure the path to making that happen is as enjoyable as possible. This means that it is participatory in the right ways - people can bring themselves to the outcomes.

We make sure that workshops are a considered a great use of peoples time, and we try and make everything count for you and them. We take your goals and objectives, and formulate a programme of activities that will take a group of people from where they are to where you want them to be.

We make sure we have the people dynamics right, and put together a detailed script for the workshop making sure it's got the best ambience. We even might move things around (and great refreshments help!)

Read on to find out more about how we have designed and led some great active and highly participatory workshops for our clients and their stakeholders.



Workshops we've done

We have been designing and running workshops for 30 years. We have run workshops with tiny science startups on technology parks, or in arts institutions with huge groups of people who have never met, and have become friends in the process. As they're so key to Plot we often add workshops into strategic design or research projects.

Nokia PeX Workshop

Focus: A shared culture of prototyping across silos within the organisation

This was a big one. 70-plus, inter-disciplinary people in a 2-day workshop to get the whole place prototyping much more, sharing tools and knowhow, constructing a shared language and forging new relationships between different parts of the company. Held at the ICA in London it was a well-resourced, big production with mics, good food and a proper stage.

We had to make sure that it was well designed and scripted into a simple and elegant format. We devised spaces for the teams to work where they could move the contents, so portable huge 'birthday card' props were constructed for them to work on. A team was hired to film and capture the output. The first workshop was so successful that the project owner ran another, and we helped them via Skype with filmed backup. After that, Nokia took the whole thing on and started to run it themselves. For us that's a great result, it became theirs. Watch the film here.

Nokia Life Tools

Focus: Get international teams working on the next generation of social innovation tools
150 designers from Bangalore and other Life Tools designers and engineers came together to explore what could be the next version of a successful SMS-based product for Nokia. Working in teams they explored particular themes, and over the course of two days put together sufficient ideas to make proposals for the ideas. The workshop ended with a voting system based on Eurovision (we love to borrow formats) and a few concepts were then elevated into real products.

Change Model & Action Framing

Focus: Sometimes we are asked to bring in our skills to support activists in the social innovation sector who are trying to make different kinds of change through the actions of their organizations. With a keynote from Bill Moggridge, Mohamed Yunnus and the Grameen Creative Labs we created a workshop for people working in the voluntary sector. Held in New York City, over 2 days the sessions were devised to reveal and incorporate the different models of change that people have, and help them share and evolve these models together. Making their models explicit was a part of the design, that way, we could see the range of perspectives, spot patterns and compare strategies and tactics for change. Essentially a collective benchmarking session, the workshop ultimately helped participants develop some new thinking about collaborating across areas of interest and across the city.

A workshop about workshops.

Focus: How to get people great at designing and facilitating workshops
We designed and ran a workshop to help people to get better doing it for AntiUniversity. They had a number of people signed up to run workshops who wanted to get themselves well prepared. 30 people went through a 90-minute session, and from what they said, it made them feel more confident. This is an example of the kinds of Training the Trainers sessions we can create.

Working together better

Focus: Workshop to create a shared concept and plan of change
Sometimes clients want to do workshops around making change happen, and deciding what form that change takes together. We ran a workshop for a team of 50 people from Nokia who wanted to re-design how they worked together and similar sessions for the BBC and Uovo - a small but rapidly growing digital agency. At those moments of change within companies, we can help people make that change tangible and with a pace and scale that fits their needs.





If you would like to talk to us about this work, or any challenges you have with running workshops with different audiences or users, please contact us on 07966209615, or alternatively email gill@plotlondon.net

Exploring themes

Sometimes design managers want to get their teams to think about new design ideas. We're brought in to help designers explore a specific theme (they've varied from magic and play to simplicity and complexity) by providing some research background, or some provocative activities to get them familiar with the theme.

Running Labs for clients

We have designed and run many different kinds of Labs: for the BBC Innovation Labs, Hyper Island Experience Design Lab. Longer term labs include Happy Lab, Strategy Lab, Digital City Lab and Future City Services Lab. They have a particular rhythm, focus and ability to get a lot of work done in a concentrated period of time.

Toolkit

We have also developed a workshop toolkit, which we are testing now. It contains our expertise from years of doing these, and helps people to design better workshops, and to get better at facilitating them.

