Enhancing Water Quality Education Using Demonstration Sites

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[Logo]
What do we mean by Demo site?

Any project where a team works with an individual, company, or organization for the purpose of learning and teaching about a technology, practice, or process that has the potential to significantly impact the target client group or industry.
What are some of the characteristics of a Demo?
Focused on a specific, important, topic or issue.
Typically involves an interdisciplinary team.

We generally can do nothing significant on our own.
It typically involves some aspect of discovery.
It always results in some kind of teaching.
Demos provide information for extension & research publications, case studies, DVD’s, video tapes, grant proposals, etc...
So what are the pieces needed for a successful demonstration?
It’s like a jigsaw puzzle. You need to begin putting it together with the end in mind!
What are the important issues for the target audience?

- Make a list of your ideas.
- Meet with other extension professionals to get their ideas.
- Ask key members of the target audience for input.
- Narrow the issues down to those that match available skills.
Now continue team building.

- Seek out a few individuals who have common interests.
- Make sure these people bring important skills that you do not have.
- The core team members need to be identified now.
- Others can be added later as needed.
Define the project goal & ...

- **Begin** developing the objectives.
- Develop a **rough** work plan.
- What are the desired outcomes?
- What kind of analyses will be needed?
Do not forget to evaluate the time commitment!
Find the right cooperator and site (if needed).

- Find out about all potential cooperators before you propose the demonstration project.
- Make site visits and have meetings - without telling them why you are there!
- Many will want to participate but, not all are suitable cooperators.
Be picky!

- Learn about the person.
  - Evaluate character.
  - Do they have an “educator” mentality.
  - Do they care about the process and learning or are they “just in it for themselves”?

- Are there site constraints that will prevent success?
Once you have selected the person and/or site...

- Present the project goal, objectives, rough work plan, and desired outcomes.
- Be able to clearly define what you are asking them to do.
- Get their input.
- Modify the objectives and work plan to accommodate the needs of the cooperator and site constraints.
- Make sure the project is a win-win. If not, you will probably lose.
Evaluate resources needed.

- Have your cooperator(s) help define needed resources.
- Do you have what you need in terms of people, equipment, and money to carry out your plan?
- If not, it may be time for the team to write a grant.
- Always consider a revised, simplified plan that will allow you to get started now.
Some do’s and don’ts

- Don’t start the planning process and worrying about funding. If you do, you will lose your creativity.

- Don’t criticize others’ ideas. Some people serve the group best by thinking out loud.

- Do separate the “idea” phase from the “funding” phase.

- Do consider a small project that can be done on a shoe-string budget.

- Do make sure the plan is a win-win for all team members.
Now work the plan!

- Expect delays and difficulties.
- Remember, the roadblocks and difficulties you experience often teach you and the cooperator more than anything else.
- You may have to alter the plan objectives to "work around" a problem but stay true to the goal.
- You may have to make up some things as you go along!
This sounds like a lot of work...and it can be.
So why do it?

What are the benefits?

Don’t we already have enough to do?
I like using demonstration sites because...

- It keeps me learning and developing as a professional.
- It expands my background.
- It helps me to use my time and resources more effectively since I can use the results to teach or impact hundreds instead of just a few.
- Demonstration meets the needs of all learning styles.

- I am often able to use the same project for extension, research, and teaching students.

- It gives me more credibility when I teach.

- It helps me to do things that are important to my client group.
Anything that I know or learn only has value if it helps people.
Demonstration is the most fundamental way of putting knowledge to work ... *for people.*