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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# The great debate

**Pauline Crofts**

When branch CPD advisers and membership advisers got together with CIPD membership development staff last month for their annual conference focusing on continuing professional development, the event took a novel approach to previous years.

Rather than taking a formal structure with lengthy speeches and PowerPoint presentations, the two-day event, based at a hotel in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, was designed as a more interactive conference where the 70 participants could collaborate in groups to share best practice and develop ideas for supporting members' CPD activities.

A major part of the event was taken up by group-based activities, designed and facilitated by Jean Floodgate and David Lock of Inside Outreach. As a member of the institute's CPD working party, Floodgate collaborated closely with Christine Williams, CIPD membership development manager, and others to structure the interactive event so that



CHRISTINE WILLIAMS: HELPED TO DEVELOP THE NEW, INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO CPD CONFERENCES

The process involved small, mixed groups of eight people from the branches, the working party and the CIPD. They formed self-managed teams to discuss key issues. This was designed to encourage collaboration and co-operation. Ideas were then fed back to the group as a whole for further debate and to help develop a shared vision for future CPD activities.

There was also a "graffiti wall" where participants could post questions, thoughts and comments throughout the conference and

vision of the future – and it meant they could have fun in the process

"Our aim by the end of the conference was that advisers had had the chance to establish stronger networks of shared knowledge and understanding," Williams said. "We wanted them to identify and understand what is changing, the implications for membership and new ways of supporting the institute's standards through CPD and branch events."

Feedback from the event has indicated that participants welcomed this novel approach. "Working in small groups helped us to discuss and resolve points straight away. We all took responsibility, which helped us to achieve a lot more than in the past," said one adviser.

As well as achieving greater awareness of continuing professional development, nearly a quarter of delegates highlighted the importance of networking. There was also a sense of a shared strategy of moving the CPD agenda forward.

Williams stressed that the conference had shown that, by sharing expertise and experience, branch advisers could play a pivotal role in developing practical CPD strategies at local level. A number of people were interested (for their own CPD) in the participative approach.

It was based on "whole systems" thinking and large group engagement methods.

For more information on this process and details of a new book/toolkit called Meetings by Design, contact Jean Floodgate on 01903 856517 (e-mail: enquiries@inside-outreach.co.uk).

## INSTITUTE NEWS

### READ ALL ABOUT IT

The CIPD's online Press Direct service has been expanded to include HR news stories from the regional press.

News summaries are categorised under headings, with references at the end of each story giving the publication and page number so that members can refer to the relevant newspaper through hyperlinks. The service can be found at [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk).

### INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

The CIPD's Wolverhampton and Black Country branch recently sponsored an international HR conference hosted by Wolverhampton Business School.

Run for students on the business school's postgraduate diploma in HRD/HRM (CIPD programmes), it highlighted the need for HR professionals to gain an understanding of the international trends developing within human resources.

Mark Green, chair of the Black Country branch, said: "Every organisation operates in a global marketplace, whether they realise it or not. HR professionals need to be aware of the implications. The CIPD is investing heavily in research into international HR as a means of developing cultural awareness, and workshops like these help to introduce and reinforce this awareness to new HR professionals."

The conference featured European speakers and comparative case studies of UK and international HR practices.

### REWARD REMINDER

The future of reward, pay and employer branding will be addressed at the institute's annual reward conference at the Novotel London West on 12 February.

An update conference on flexible benefits, chaired by Michael Armstrong, joint managing director of e-reward, will be held there on the following day.

## There was a 'graffiti wall' where people could post questions, thoughts and comments about the CPD conference

discussion and debate would be based on relevant work experiences and would generate real results. A cross-section of participants was invited to form an initial design group in order to fix the purpose and overall content of the next few days.

created a source of discussion. "This participatory, yet structured, approach enabled everyone to contribute their views in developing the CPD agenda," Floodgate said. Participants were encouraged to be creative – particularly in developing their