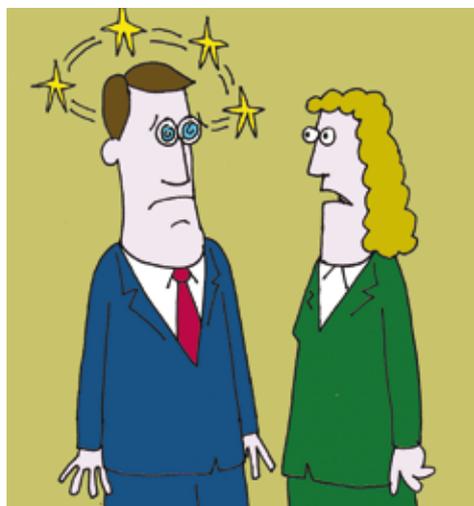


Glittering gems in a conference bubble

You've made it. Up early, battle through the traffic, a tussle with rush-hour commuters, a snatched coffee, and you've found a seat. It's the opening plenary.

Words of welcome, a keynote speaker and an hour later you're queuing for morning refreshments and trying to spot someone in the crowd who looks friendly.

Memories of where you've come from, of the charity you're representing and the joys and sorrows of being a trustee, fade with



'I see you've just been to the trustee conference..'

the clammer to work out which room your workshop is in. Berkley, Bryanston, Portman, Montague, upstairs, downstairs, round the corner? I'll just follow the crowds. For the day of your trustee conference, you're launched into a whole new world loaded with gems for you to gather. It's a conference bubble – and it's a world apart.

On holiday it's fine to float in a bubble and be transported to another world. It's refreshing and necessary and it's good

to get away. But the fact that your badge carries the name of your charity is a handy clue to the truth – that you're there on business, albeit as a volunteer, to gather the gems on offer and to use them to bring lustre and learning to your role as a trustee.

The day progresses. An engaging workshop, followed by one which is less so, and then a plenary with a PowerPoint with more points than power, held together with navigation through crowds and queues and topped off with tired legs and a drinks reception.

A lot of stimulation. By the end of it all you're feeling overloaded. The real world of your organisation seems as if it is on another planet and as you head home it dawns on you that you've dropped some gems on the way. (What did that nice young man say in the snatched but interesting conversation over a sandwich? What was that fact in the opening session?) Oh dear, glittering gems have slipped away.

Have you ever been in a conference bubble? Maybe it was a day networking conference, a half-day training event or an evening lecture. How well did it facilitate your sorting and sifting the glistening perspectives and sparkling facts and figures on offer and help you bundle them up and take home?

Here's an idea. How would it be if the next event you went to gave you time...to think about the gems you'd gathered...to reflect on what you could take home...how you might adapt that really good idea to fit with your own special situation?

And how would it be if the event programme gave you time...to write down your freshly gathered insights, so that it was not submerged by everything that would be competing for your attention the next day? And imagine if you had just a few minutes...to share all this with another participant to help embed it in your thinking before you head home.

With some care and forethought, all conferences could so easily be like that.

You could get home with a swag bag full of gems and goodies and share them around the board table...and all those glittering gems could turn to gold. ●

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