

Spreading Knowledge

The Past

At the beginning of my career in the environmental engineering and consulting industry, trenchless technologies were new and exciting construction advancements. There was so much to learn, to decipher and to absorb. As my career progressed, so did my awareness that clients (municipalities and utilities) and staff were not receiving the education and training that I was privy to as a specialist in the discipline – ultimately stifling the benefits these technologies could provide.

With passion, enthusiasm and the desire to educate, I developed learning materials to inform my clients about the trenchless technologies being recommended and/or installed in their collection and distribution systems. Educating my clients helped them make accurate and cost-saving decisions, teaching them to trust consultant and contractor recommendations and guidance.

The Present

__ years later, it is still paramount to edify clients and staff about trenchless technologies, especially during hard economic times. Municipalities hesitate sending their personnel to workshops and conferences because of declining revenue and restricted budgets. Therefore, industry professionals, consultants, vendors, and contractors working with these technologies are challenged with distributing information using a more client-focused approach.



Some clients are able to participate in two-day workshops with classroom instruction and

field demonstrations, while others are only able to accommodate simple field demonstrations of certain applications. No matter how elaborate or simple the presentation/demonstration, the information presented is always received with great interest and appreciation.

The Details

Several factors must be considered when organizing an educational opportunity with a client, such as: quantity and complexity of the information, number of invitees and attendees, time and budget constraints. Typically the best approach to obtain a large number of attendees is by providing a lunch-time presentation followed by a live demonstration. Alternatively, a presentation and demonstration can be held at the project site for smaller groups and/or singular subjects and technologies.

The last demonstration that I lead took place during a manhole lining project. The main goal of the demonstration was to present the various methods and proper procedure of testing newly installed or rehabilitated manholes/structures. Warren Environmental, a frequent collaborator in workshops and demonstrations, assisted with the presentation of a vacuum test, bond test, and spark test, while the field crew performed live demonstrations. Several municipalities and utilities in the area attended the demonstration along with numerous members of the client's staff. While the cost of the demonstration was minor, the knowledge gained was valuable.

Helpful rules to follow when organizing a cost-effective workshop and/or demonstration aimed at attracting the desired attendance and results are as follows:

- **Invite as many municipalities or utilities as possible.** It is my experience that 20 to 40 percent of the total number invited will participate.
- **E-mail the invitations.** Follow up with a phone call at least one (1) week before the event.
- **Attach a simple flyer with your contact information.** Make sure the flyer covers who, what, where, when and why.
- **Avoid scheduling events on Monday and Friday.** The beginning and end of the week is typically not convenient to schedule an event.
- **Avoid early and late start times.** Lunchtime presentations are the most popular.
- **Involve vendors and contractors.** Vendors and contractors will often share the associated event costs. However, if the demonstration does not correspond with a current project, the vendor or contractor will be responsible for the demonstration expense.
- **DO NOT MAKE THIS INTO A SALES SHOW.** Nothing turns-off an audience faster than attending a sales show instead of a learning event. The vendor or contractor should discuss their product at the demonstration, or if necessary, after the presentation.
- **Do not get discouraged by a small audience.** Spreading industry knowledge to one or two attendees is better than none.

Consultants, vendors, contractors, municipalities and utilities that install these technologies should actively educate their staff, clients and the community about the benefits of trenchless technologies, as they can save money, time, and the environment.

As a consultant who primarily works with municipalities and utilities, business does not decrease when I share the depth of my expertise with them, nor do I worry that my clients will not need my services. I understand that clients look for a professional helping-hand when their resources are strained, and it is best when they know what technologies are available and being recommended to them. Clients want assurances that the product they invest in will be installed correctly and will last the promised life expectancy. The more knowledge that they have, the more comfortable they feel.



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