

No such thing as a free lunch

Karen Roem wonders why food is the biggest draw at her seminars, walks for charity and finds a pleasant surprise on Google

Wednesday 14 June

Like any other training company I ask participants' opinion on the course they attended. But as I know everyone hates filling out forms, I donate £3 to 'Children of Nepal', a small British charity, for every completed form I receive. I also actively support this small British charity by joining in their annual sponsored walk (my halo is choking me). But before you dismiss this five-mile walk in the Fens with mothers and push-chairs as a doddle, you need to know that one of my sponsors promised more money if I'd complete the walk wearing traditional Dutch footwear. Clever clogs.

Tuesday 20 June

Some of today's participants have been to one of my seminars before. During the coffee break they go on and on about how good lunch is at this conference centre. Well, tough luck. This seminar is half a day only. Guess I'm not surprised when I flick through the 'happy sheets' and see the 'List three things you think could be altered or improved' question sticking out. 'Lunch'. 'Include lunch'. 'Lunch at the training centre'. Come on, guys – although there is no such thing as a free lunch, there was free coffee.

Wednesday 28 June

I'm attending a seminar. 'Are there any trainers in the room?' the facilitator asks. Me and my big mouth. Before I know it I find myself scribbling the group's ideas about what they want to get out of the day on a flipchart. But in case you think there is nothing more hilarious than reminding me of this, it was a few minutes well spent. He now knew my name. And kept using me as an example throughout the morning. He even made an effort to pronounce it properly – that's Roem like Room, but with a rolling R.

Thursday 6 July

Here I am, printing off 16 training manuals. Myself. But hey, I have a spare hour. Or two. So I put on some nice music and get out the (manual) binding machine. Seven done, nine to go – and all hell breaks loose. One of those transparent binding cover-things gets stuck in the stupid device. 'Caution,' it says on the archaic piece of machinery. 'Punching more than one plastic cover at one time may cause damage to machine.' Well, I wasn't, but I spot heaps of small pieces of white and orange paper trying to push their way through the waste tray. After some DIY fails to remedy the situation, I decide on Plan B: slidebinders. And hire a student to do the next batch.



'Why is it that whenever I'm having a shower I get my best business ideas? The power of the shower'

Wednesday 19 July

Today was going to be the hottest July day in England ever. The trades unions had called upon employers to let their workers dress down to beat the heat. But knowing the importance of first impressions, I swap the flip-flops for high heels, black trousers and a nice shirt. Bad idea. The room did not have any aircon and with the windows open I could not make myself heard above the noise of the busy city streets. I live in hope that the course participants retained the bits they were awake for.

Saturday 19 August

OK, it might sound a tad narcissistic to want to find out how many hits you get when you do a Google search on yourself (679, in case you're at all interested) but it keeps me abreast of my profile. And, as bizarre surprises go, this has to be right up there: one of my tips is published in Microsoft's newsletter. (Yes, that Microsoft.) Me, gloat? Never.

Wednesday 30 August

'Please do not send me any more advertisements, thank you.' Yikes! An angry 'Do Not Spam Me Or Else'-type email. Turns out someone has been sending spoofed email messages that appear to come from WeightLossDrops@roem.co.uk. Needless to say, it's extremely annoying, especially if you have to explain to the recipients that they're from other people, hiding behind smoke and mirrors. So, if you'll excuse me, I have some email to attend to.

Wednesday 20 September

In an attempt to get feedback during the training day I always tell delegates the Dutch are known to be uninhibited. This often gets them to open up, which in turn helps me shape the course content. Anyway, at lunch time one of my course participants walks up to me. 'Hope you won't take this the wrong way,' she starts, reminding me of my heritage. 'But do you realise that your skirt is see-through?' Omigod.

Tuesday 3 October

Why is it that whenever I'm having a shower I get my best business ideas? Same again this morning. Same problem... shampoo in my eyes and no paper in sight. Perhaps I ought to look into patenting waterproof paper. Oh, and put aside time in my diary for more time in the bathroom. The power of the shower.

Karen Roem is the founder of software training and support firm Roem Limited. Diary of a training consultant is an extract from Karen's Blog: www.roem.co.uk/blog.html