



Minerals geophysics



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Conference workshops: do they work for you?

Workshops are an integral part of our ASEG Conferences, and I try to attend at least one at each conference. This year it was 'IP Processing and QC – from amps in the ground to an Inversion input' convened and organised by Kim Frankcombe, in part at least a follow on to Steve Collins' 2015 Perth Conference workshop 'Modern 3D-IP surveying. Practical techniques and short cuts – benefits, limitations and pitfalls'.

It set me thinking about the role that these workshops play, what makes a successful workshop, and how to get the most out of them.

Workshops styles might be considered to be in one of two formats – tuition or interaction. Kim's workshop definitely fell in the latter category. Tuition style workshops clearly have education as their prime purpose. They can be as general as 'Geophysics for geologists' or as specific as a software training course. While interaction is not discouraged, the prime purpose of this style of workshop is the

imparting of knowledge, usually by personnel experienced in the topic. I have found software-specific workshops to be more effective if the participants have had some prior exposure to the software in question – less time is spent coming to terms with terminology and basic processes, so more time can be devoted to finding out just what the software really can do for the participants.

With interaction workshops, education is again the aim, but the process is somewhat different. Rather than principally a teaching exercise, interaction between presenters and participants, and often between presenters themselves, is encouraged.

Participants with practical experience in the workshop topic benefit particularly from these exchanges.

The workshop format adopted by Kim was well-suited for interaction. In the morning session, four industry practitioners who had processed the same data set (of unknown provenance) to a final 3D inversion model prior to the workshop, explained their processing routines and presented their results. The four 3D inversion models generated were then assessed by an experienced independent arbiter (Bob Smith). In the afternoon session, invited individuals, mainly from commercial geophysical contracting organisations, elaborated on their individual approaches to data collection, processing and presentation. In some cases, not unexpectedly, this tended to become a sales pitch.

Interestingly, despite the somewhat different approaches, all four participants

in the 3D inversion exercise produced broadly similar models, although there were differences in detail. I found this heartening – mineral exploration geophysics is by no means an exact science where a formulaic approach can be taken. There's often more than one pathway, so there's scope for individuality, intuition, flair, experience, etc. For example, one divergence of

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opinion that emerged from the workshop was the role that 2D inversion played as an intermediate step in the 3D inversion process. Opinions differed – some felt that 2D inversions were essential, and others by-passed them completely. This, in turn, led to differing approaches to survey design. For

practitioners, exposure to the different approaches taken can be very beneficial.

Was this a good approach for an interaction workshop? I think it was – a good blend of participation and education, and stimulating to boot.

And my thoughts on workshops at our Conferences? To my mind they are a valuable component of the industry education and communication process, and should definitely be fostered. Person to person interaction is a great way to impart knowledge and exchange ideas. The tuition style workshops fulfil specific education needs; the interaction style workshops provide an ideal forum and encourage dialogue between industry practitioners. And our Conferences provide a purpose built opportunity, sometimes the only opportunity, to get presenters and participants together.

What do you think?