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International Centre for
the Study of Planned Events

25 Ways to Improve the Measurement and Evaluation of Your Next Meeting and / or Event

Background

Traditionally, most meeting and event planners conduct a survey style evaluation of their meeting or event to determine guest satisfaction. However, proper evaluation requires a strong plan, suitable resources and direction. The following report lists 25 ways you may rapidly improve the measurement and evaluation of Your Next Meeting and / or Event.

TIPS

1. Meet with your internal stakeholders and determine what it is you wish to learn from the evaluation.
2. Typical evaluation outcomes include, but are not limited to, guest satisfaction with the programme, speakers, location, food and beverage and other key components.
3. Determine the best methodology for collecting this information for future analysis. Typically surveys (paper) are used at many meetings and events to collect a snapshot of the participants feelings. However, the timing of the evaluation may influence the outcome.
4. Consider using a comprehensive methodology for conducting the evaluation. The comprehensive method would include the following components.
5. Conduct a focus panel of 10-15 persons who will potentially attend the meeting or event. This may be conducted on line through a chat room or in person. During the focus panel encourage the participants to share with you their experiences at previous meetings and events as well as their expectations for the upcoming meeting.

6. Transcribe the notes from the focus panel and use this report to create a series of questions for use through a pre-meeting and / or event survey instrument.
7. Create a survey instrument using a Likert scale (the Likert scale rates the responses of the participants using a 1-5 scale such as 1=Very dissatisfied, 2=Somewhat dissatisfied, 3=No opinion, 4=Somewhat satisfied and 5=Very Satisfied). Include in the survey instrument some open ended questions such as “What recommendations can you provide to enhance the programme for your benefit?”
8. Conduct a pre-meeting and / or event survey to identify the expectations of your prospective participants.
9. Conduct a on site survey to identify the immediate responses of the participants.
10. Conduct a post event survey to determine the final perception of the participants. Make certain you do not allow too much time to transpire between the actual meeting / and or event and the survey.
11. Consider using on line survey systems such as Bristol Surveys (www.survey.bris.ac.uk) MeetingMetrics (www.meetingmetrics.com) or Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com).
12. Seek a minimum response rate of at least 40 percent of all eligible participants. You may wish to offer an incentive such as a prize or a registration at the next meeting and / or event to promote participation in the survey.
13. Use ethnographic (participant / observer) research to further promote comprehensive assessment. This type of research relies upon field workers who observe and conduct brief interviews to report on the actual behaviors and feelings of the participants at your meeting and / or event. These findings are then recorded in field notes and analyzed to identify outcomes such as the level of engagement and happiness of the participants.
14. Use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) to measure the participation and movement patterns of your participants. RFID technology requires the inclusion of a small chip in the name badge of the participants and radio receivers located throughout the venue to record information generated by the participants.
15. Use semi-structured long form interviews with a selection of your participants to determine their feelings, aspirations and recommendations regarding your meeting and / or event. Always follow up your first question by asking probing questions such as “Why do you feel this way? How do you know this? What else would you like to tell me about this topic?”
16. Use social media such as Facebook (www.facebook.com) Twitter (www.twitter.com) or Xing (www.xing.com) to monitor the comments of your participants about your meeting and / or event.
17. Use Instant Messenger and text messaging with mobile technologies to identify the immediate reactions and feelings of your participants before, during and following the meeting and / or event.

18. Publish your findings in easy to understand format using pie charts, bar graphs and easy to understand short quotes from the participants.
19. Publish your findings as rapidly as possible to allow those who participated in the survey or study to see that you are sympathetic to their need for continuous quality improvement information about the outcome of the meeting and / or event.
20. Publish the findings both in hard copy as well as through the Internet for maximum distribution to all of your target audiences.
21. At the conclusion of your findings list the quality improvement initiatives your organization will employ to improve the next meeting / and or event.
22. Continually survey your participants and prospective participants in the months before and following the meeting and / or event to find out how they feel about changing trends and fads in their industry and profession.
23. Use a online survey tool on the flash (home page) of your web site to continually survey your participants and publish the results in a brief summary on the home page and more extensively on a dedicated page within your site.
24. Regularly call or email five participants or more per month and find out from a personal level their views, their desires, their aspirations and recommendations for improving your meeting and / or event. By the end of the year you will have contacted over 50 persons and received some very good feedback. More important, 50 members of your organization or future participants will know that you sincerely care about their thoughts and opinions.
25. Conduct a planning session to improve the measurement and evaluation of your meeting for next year by inviting various key stakeholders and reviewing the results form the previous year.