Tips for Innovative Meetings/ Events (T.I.M.E.)
TOPIC: Evaluating Meetings
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1. TRICK OR TREAT

Did your meeting participants find that last meeting a trick or treat?

Determining the Return on Investment (ROI) of a meeting requires measurable information. Evaluations can provide a good basis for ROI calculations.

Evaluation forms can help you assess your value to the organization.

Evaluation forms can help you improve the next meeting.

Evaluation forms can help you plan the next meeting.

A meeting or event is not complete without allowing the participants to evaluate and comment on the experience.

Even routine meetings (staff meetings, weekly sales meetings) should go through a 1 or 2 times a year review to insure that they are meeting the organization's objectives.

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2. HOW TO EVALUATE

Borrowing from the training industry, another arena where determining effectiveness and ROI is a challenge, offers some parameters for evaluations. There are several components to an effective evaluation. One of the most comprehensive and widely referenced models of evaluation is Donald Kirkpatrick's (1979). The four levels of this model are as follows:

The simplest level of evaluation is called Level 1 or a Reaction Evaluation.

Reaction refers to how well the participants liked a meeting. Evaluation of participants' reactions consists of measuring their feelings; it does not include a measure of actual learning.

Often, these types of evaluations are called the “Smile Test”. Did people enjoy the meeting/event?

The next level of evaluation is called Level 2 or Learning Evaluation.

This level of analysis in the evaluation process determines whether principles, facts and techniques were understood and absorbed by the participants.

Each participant's knowledge should be measured by quantitative means. A pretest and posttest should be administered so that any learning can be attributed to the meeting.

The next level is called Level 3 or Transfer-of-Learning Evaluation

This level determines whether there has been a transfer of skills or knowledge to the job.

Kirkpatrick warns that "evaluation …in terms of on the job behavior is more difficult than the reaction and learning evaluations.

The simplest way to incorporate this type of analysis is to create a follow-up to a meeting. That follow-up can take the form of a letter drafted by the participant to him or herself to read 3 months (weeks, whenever) after the meeting, coaching from the management team, or a follow-up program or gift to remind the participants of the meeting and its purpose.

We are firm believers in "what isn’t used is forgotten". The breakthroughs and "ahas" that we can simulations create can be even more powerful with immediate and practical reinforcement and practice. On Track’s Booster Workshops can turn participants’ knowledge into skills and assist them in applying their learning and insights back on the job.

Level 4: Results Evaluation

Kirkpatrick's fourth level of evaluation is results or impact on the organization. This is the ultimate in ROI analysis.

What are some effective elements that can be tracked related to meetings? Consider this partial list:

Hard Measures:

- Sales
- Revenue
- Market Share
- Customer Referrals/Sales Leads
- Employee retention
- Training Hours

- Improving/Developing Skills
- Employee Recruitment

Soft Measures:

- Brand Development
- Improving Morale
- Delivering organization’s strategic direction or other message
- Motivation
- Public awareness/Public Relations

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3. MAKING IT SIMPLE FOR YOU

While it sounds impossible to conduct evaluations that get at Level 2, 3 or 4 information, it is truly not!

Use email or the Internet to survey participants before the meeting. Ask a few key questions that will help you determine the ROI of a meeting. You can ask questions about skills, knowledge, even attitudes.

On an evaluation form, ask participants to answer the question, “How am I going to make this a good learning experience for me”. People then have to think about what they themselves must do to make the experience productive. It also puts them in the framework of finding a relevant lesson. Finally, it makes them accountable for their own participation (and learning!).

For more hints, see Freebies below. Or we would be happy to work with you, specifically and individually, on evaluating ROI for your organization’s meetings.

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4. FREEBIES: SAMPLE EVALUATION FORMS

You can request a list of sample evaluation questions to evaluate a meeting.

We are also happy to provide you with sample questions that “get at” Level 3 analysis.

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5. MINDING YOUR BUSINESS OR CAREER

Whether you are minding and growing your business or advancing your career, getting feedback is the best way to learn how you’re doing.

Gathering and reacting to feedback is an invaluable marketing tool. It can help turn clients into valued partners. It can help you improve your services and delivery. It can help you find out what is important to your customers (which may differ from what you feel is important.)

Use evaluation results to bolster your career and credibility within the organization.

Ask the main stakeholder for a meeting to evaluate your processes and results.

Use feedback to evaluate, reconsider, modify and stay on track to success.

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6. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

Our November issue will talk about lessons from politics about meetings.

We welcome any comments or suggestions about the newsletter or topics you would like to read about.

Please forward this newsletter to your associates and colleagues! Your recommendations are key to our success. Or anyone can subscribe by sending an email to stinnish@ameritech.net.

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be requested by emailing us. Here is a list of past issue topics:

August: Quick and Effective Meeting Tips
July: Creating value alignment - particularly good for management retreats, all-employee meetings around organizational mission
June: Sales, Golf and Meetings
May: Teambuilding
