

FOLLOW UP TO GET QUALITY EVENT FEEDBACK

"Well, how did it go?" asked the CEO as he wandered past Siobhan's desk on his weekly tour of the offices. He was referring to the conference Siobhan had organized and run to involve their industry in standardization guidelines. Although her first impression was that the conference was a real success, she knew that she only had a small proportion of the total feedback. "I'm still in the middle of collecting feedback data", admitted Siobhan, "but the initial data looks more positive than we hoped. I'll have the full results at next week's review meeting."

Seminars, roadshows or workshops are held for a very specific reason and they will belong in one of the following categories:

- To generate sales opportunities for your products or services
- To spread information or increase productivity throughout an organization
- To raise general awareness about a topic
- To gain support for a change (political, legal, social or environmental)

It may be tempting, once the event is over, to sit back and wait for a reaction but, because you have invested time, emotion and money into developing and running an event, you ought to be pro-active in testing its effectiveness. Events are like all other products, some do everything they were expected to do whereas others fall short and need to be improved either by modification or enhanced design, if they are to be repeated.

With an event you cannot expect to satisfy everyone 100%, but you can get close by understanding what worked and what did not. As you will see, not everyone is prepared to give their true opinion during or directly after the event and some degree of post-event follow-up will be necessary to draw a balanced picture of audience perception.

Because your delegates have different learning styles, you will not have seen a complete and considered reaction from all of them during your event.

Delegates, whatever their background, can be pigeon-holed into 4 categories:

- Activists
- Pragmatists
- Theorists

and

- Reflectors

The activists and pragmatists are most likely to have responded immediately to the information or activities that you provided as they enjoy interaction. Activists and pragmatists, by nature, have a strong tendency to engage and take on board new ideas. Pragmatists will test the realism of the new idea whereas activists just enjoy the thrill of the new.

Theorists, as you might expect, like to take time to break ideas down and think things through step-by-step. Reflectors prefer to gather information, stand back and consider things from different perspectives. Both of these learning types may need a little more time and space to assimilate what has been said and would probably respond well to a follow-up process.

Siobhan was right to hold back on boasting about her success. Some of the later feedback demonstrated that there were real practical problems that would take time and money to overcome. These had only surfaced once the delegates had returned to base to analyze the in-depth business implications for themselves.