

LEARNING AT MEETINGS

MORE THAN A SPEAKER WITH A POWERPOINT.

LEARNING IS THE SECOND ELEMENT YOU MEASURE IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN CALCULATING ROI FOR MEETINGS OR EVENTS.

If your participants learn nothing new, your event is just a cost. If they did learn something and they apply it so it has an impact and generates an income: ROI, that is when your meeting or event has become a revenue generator for the company, not a cost. Rather than cutting 10% of the budget annually corporations and institutions now will want to invest in meetings. Learning is crucial to that effect so should meeting planners be educational specialists?

ADULT LEARNING AT MEETINGS

There is a lot to be learned about learning at meetings. This is a complex and vast terrain and here are just a few basics we can cover in this article. First thing you need to consider is that adults at meetings do not learn optimally from lectures or presentations. Adults learn much more from each-other. This is studied by the Learning Lab in Denmark and is based on 50 years of educational research.

We call these educational directions top-down for presentations and horizontal for peer to peer learning (learning from each other). A good presentation (top down) is short and provides material for discussion. The real learning than happens at round tables, where small groups of participants share ideas, cases and best practices. Smart organization see the powerful potential this has to make the organization even smarter; through bottom-up education. This happens when the participants share their knowledge with the group and the organization. "Harvesting wisdom" (cfr: Lary Cherri) is what smart organizations do at every meeting to stay smart. This can be done in different ways and with different systems, before, during and after a meeting. To name just a few: use Synthetron as an online brainstorm tool before the conference, use the cyber café to do an on site survey, use Group vision, or Chrystal interactive as high end collaboration tools. Use Spotme-ll for live brainstorming during sessions. (more on www.meetingsupport.org) Any of

those tools, (or even paper and pens) will help you to retrieve rich information, ton's of ideas and great improvement suggestions form your participants.

NEW FORMAT FOR YOUR SESSIONSS

A possible session format for your next conference could be 5 minute presentation followed by 10 minute discussion about the presented topic at the tables, including note taking or the use of one of the mentioned tools, and than 10 minutes feedback to the whole group. And repeat this 3 or 4 times for one session.

This touches briefly on the format of a session and the use top down, horizontal and bottom up education (aka spherical education).

THE MEETING CONTENT MANAGER

The profession of adult education at meetings is yet to be invented and looking at its scope, it will be a profession. For more, check out the knowledge base on www.meetingsupport.org and you will see there is lots more to discover to learn about adult learning at meetings. There is even more to develop and let's hope this industry will be able to get the funding behind research projects that will build this new profession that I would call Meeting Content Management.



© Maarten Vanneste 10 November 2006

Members of the Meeting Support Instituut:



swisscom eurospot



Sponsors of the Meeting Support Instituut:

