

Evaluation

YOU WILL WANT to evaluate the success of your forum on at least two levels.

1. AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Don't be afraid to ask attendees for their opinions on the event. By asking them to complete a simple evaluation form at the end of the forum, you can gather much useful information for future events, as well as obtain their thoughts about your efforts. The questionnaires can help you to make a judgment on the success of the venue, catering, registration process, quality of presentations in content and delivery as well as obtaining suggestions for future events.

Include an easy to complete evaluation form in each participant's information packet. The use of check boxes or a simple marking system wherever possible allows swift completion of the form. You may wish to include a grading system for each of the speakers, based on delivery and content. This can be particularly useful for future events, and speakers who have scored well are able to refer to it when being considered for other events.

The evaluation will help you gauge their response to the event and get a better understanding of what they learned.

Ask the moderator to remind participants throughout the day to complete the evaluation form before they leave. You have a much greater chance of having a substantial and worthwhile number returned while participants are still on site than posted or faxed back after they have returned home. Most participants will be happy to take a few

minutes to complete the form; after all it is in their best interests to do so as its purpose is to understand the participants' needs better for future events.

Post-event online evaluations are becoming more popular. These allow for more extensive questions since you will not be asking the participant to fill it out quickly at the end of the day. If using a post-event evaluation, you should e-mail it out immediately after the event, and then do one to two additional follow-up messages.

A sample evaluation form is included in the Tools and Resources.

2. FEEDBACK FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE AND SPEAKERS

After the event is over and your group has taken some time to relax, set up a time to meet and discuss how the event went. Go through the following questions to see what team members saw as successful aspects of the event and what areas could be improved for your next event.

- How did the location work out? Was it able to accommodate your needs?
- How successful was the publicity plan?
- What are ways you could get even more people to attend your next event?
- After checking the sign-in sheets against the list of people who said they would come, did individuals and other organizations produce the people they were committed to bring?

- Did you get walk-ins in response to flyers, posters or advance media coverage?
- Where the speakers and panels effective?
- Would you use the same speakers again?
- Were there any logistical problems that occurred?
- Did anything occur you were not prepared for?
- How could they be avoided in the future?
- Who didn't attend that should have been present, and whose presence would have aided the conversation? In other words, who "wasn't at the table"?

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did the forum satisfy the needs of the participants?
2. Did the forum meet the goals and satisfy the needs of the organizers?
3. Did it serve its purpose?
4. Did participants leave with the results that you wanted them to?
5. Are the sponsors happy?
6. What informal feedback did you receive from the participants that might prove helpful in future planning?