



Conference Tips - Debrief and Review

As an integral part of the conference or meeting planning process is the need to find out what elements were successful and what areas need improvement. The people to ask are your conference presenters and of course the delegates. Remember, rarely will you be able to please all your delegates, all of the time and the feedback you receive will help you for next time.

You have a choice of when to get the answers you need:

- at the event;
- after the event, by mail;
- after the event, by telephone;
- by group discussion or individual interview

How you go about getting feedback varies, some favour a pre-printed questionnaire, which delegates complete as the event is in progress. If you are researching speaker style and content this is ok. You do need to be aware that an overall view of the event will be impossible to gauge until the event is completed.

Distributing questionnaires to delegates as they leave the conference is another option. Using this method, the replies received may be more considered - the delegates will have had time to think about the event in its entirety and be able to make better overall judgements. The number of returned questionnaires is likely to be quite low and so the results may not be representative.

A better method is to follow up a statistically relevant sample by telephone within a couple of days of the conference. Say 25% of groups up to 100 and on a sliding scale about 10% of groups over 500 or more. If anonymity is guaranteed you will get a more honest view.

Remember the prime conference objective in assessing the success or otherwise of your conference and keep the smaller itchy issues in perspective.

The main outcome of conducting relevant and focused feedback is to discover opportunities that will assist in improving future events.