

The value of consumer feedback

By Sayrian Connell

The events industry is an increasingly competitive and evolving marketplace. As a result, event organisers are having to strive harder than ever to attract and retain the right delegates, sponsors and exhibitors.

But how do you know if you are meeting the expectations of your target audience? In short, how do you know if your event is really working?

The role of research

Conducting research amongst delegates is an undeniably useful measure, as it identifies your strengths and weaknesses as an event organiser and delivers actionable consumer feedback, which can be translated into improved event performance.

The research may either be conducted during the event, using face-to-face interviews or the latest in self-completion methods, or after the event, using web-based or telephone surveys.

Event organisers may choose to employ in-house resources to undertake the research, but are better-advised to recruit an external agency as this will ensure

objectivity, accuracy and expert processing and analysis of the data.

Identifying your target demographic

If you are to position your event correctly and target the right demographic, you need to fully understand the general profile of your delegates. Consumer feedback will help you gain insight into the behaviours and characteristics of those attending your event, in terms of socio-economic group, spending power, lifestyle preferences and media usage and consumption.

Are you satisfying your visitors?

When delegates have chosen to visit an event they are likely to have a clear set of objectives, and you will need to understand the extent to which these objectives have been met if you are to consistently maximise satisfaction levels.

Having the right features, facilities and content at an event is paramount to its success. Feedback will enable you to understand the degree to which delegates utilised and enjoyed the facilities, be it the actual venue, type of exhibitors, seminar programmes or catering.

Measuring ROI

Many event organisers rely on sponsorship for much-needed revenue! But how often are you able to deliver information to sponsors pertaining to their return on investment (ROI)? Delegate feedback will enable you to answer the critical questions:

- What was the level of sponsor awareness and recall?
- Have perceptions of a sponsor changed as a result of its brand presence at your event?
- Are people more likely to buy a sponsor's products and services following the event?
- What was the scope of media coverage generated for sponsors?

This feedback can equip you with



substantial leverage for attracting and retaining sponsors for future events.

The publicity machine

Effective marketing is key to generating sufficient awareness of your event, but are you using the right communication channels? Consumer feedback will allow you to identify those elements of your marketing strategy which were most successful, as well as those which achieved minimum impact. This knowledge will permit you to develop more targeted and efficient campaigns.

Acting on the feedback

Action planning is the final and most important stage of a research programme, but unfortunately it is quite often neglected! Event organisers should be aware that consumer feedback is rendered redundant if it is not fully incorporated into the decision-making process for future events.

The intelligence gathered should always be used to inform improvement strategies, which will hopefully lead to an enhanced visitor experience, improved marketing effort and increased ROI for sponsors and exhibitors.

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