



Do your training events suffer from attendance issues?

We publish results from our study that identify why some do, and others don't

We noticed that some organisations struggle with course attendance issues whilst others have very little difficulty. With this in mind we thought we would undertake some analysis and try and identify the common denominators that have an impact on attendance performance. The results of our study are summarised here along with some thoughts about how organisations could improve further.

Three main findings were evident.

1

The location of the event had no bearing upon attendance levels.

Before the study we were of the opinion that attendance performance was influenced by the course being onsite or offsite. So for us the most surprising finding was that the location had no bearing on attendance levels. Our expectation was that offsite attendance levels would be better, and the lack of office distractions during the event would result in less drop out during courses. The study indicated that neither of these assumptions were true. We categorised organisations as having good, acceptable or poor attendance performance and found that 80% of those organisations in the good and acceptable categories held courses predominantly onsite at their respective premises. There was no correlation between offsite courses and improved attendance behaviour.



2

The organisational culture made a significant impact upon attendance levels.

For this part of the study we characterised the organisations as being culturally 'traditional' or culturally 'new', and as having a fast or slow feel to them. The results identified that our sample of poor attendance organisations were predominantly new and fast (60% of the poor group), where the better performing organisations were predominantly traditional and slower organisations (70% of the acceptable and good groups).

3

Good attendance performance was influenced by tangible Management and HR involvement.

This may not be very surprising, but the study revealed a close relationship between attendance performance and Management / HR involvement. Tangible involvement was evident in 67% of the good group, 33% of the acceptable group, and 0% of the poor attendance group.

So how do we improve poor attendance issues at our training events? The obvious answer is to get HR and Management involved. Practically there are a number of things that you can do to achieve this, here are some to start the thought process:

Before the event:

Ring every delegate and discuss their attendance and expected learning outcomes. Stress the importance of attendance at the event. Establish an accountability to report back personal learning outcomes after the course. Communicate individuals learning outcomes with Managers prior to the event. Arrange for the delegates managers to confirm attendance and offer potential learning goals.

During the event:

Be there, at least at the beginning, make sure you welcome everyone personally (another good reason for holding it onsite). Chase any no-show delegates immediately. Communicate no-shows to delegates manager. Where possible have delegate managers attend either the beginning or the end of the event. Show an interest in and check that the training facilitator sets strong attendance ground rules at the commencement of the event.

Longer term initiatives:

Seek to create a culture that supports good attendance at HR and learning events. If you have a central learning & development budget think about implementing a policy in which no-show delegates have the course fees charged to their department operating budget. Add course attendance as a consideration in employee appraisal reporting mechanisms.

Most of all ensure that course content is always fun and engaging, don't keep delivering the same old product year after year, keep it fresh. Use your training providers to introduce creative new approaches, how about tailoring the same course to appeal to different target groups. Use the same agenda, but use different titles and headings, have the same learning outcomes but use themes for different audiences; have the same breakout outputs but use different themed breakouts. Example themes for an Assertiveness course could be; Water, animals, golf, food or shopping. How about a communications workshop with transport themes like; Car, bus, bike, horse or walking. The options are limitless, you could have a favorite colours theme for Presentation Skills; Red, yellow, green, and blue. The more enjoyable the event, the more the word will spread, helping attendance issues to become a thing of the past.



It really doesn't take too much effort to transform peoples interest in learning and development opportunities. We are convinced that HR and Management involvement is central when setting up a successful learning experience, then get your training provider to add in a little creative flair and it won't be long before training attendance issues will become a thing of the past.

