

7 actions that will give your event more mileage

Having attended a couple of professional development events in the last few weeks, I noticed that the organizers did little to guarantee people would a) enjoy the event and b) talk about the event (and by extension, the organizing group).

Event planning is a skill, and it is not easy. Too many volunteers and committee members think all they need to do is choose a date, book the space, order food and drink, and publicize the event. But those are the basics. To get more mileage from an event both for the attendees and for the presenting organization, you need to do more.

Here are seven actions that will help you get more mileage from your next event.

1. Designate volunteers to be organizational ambassadors/greeters. You will need more than the person greeting attendees at the door. These volunteers, who should be good representatives of your organization, will welcome people to the event and make sure they know where everything is located (food, restrooms, seats, etc.). But more so, ambassadors should introduce attendees to each other.

Why this gives you more mileage: Your attendees will feel welcomed. They will meet at least one person (the ambassador). This makes your organization look welcoming and more enticing to non-members.

2. Prep your speaker(s) and/or presenter(s). Make sure everybody knows what to say so there is no pointless repetition. Divide up introductions appropriately. Make sure announcements and other information will be shared.

Why this gives you more mileage: Messaging is important and

gives attendees useful information. By prepping your speakers, you are ensuring your organization looks professional.

3. Use social media. Invite your attendees to tweet about the event (and give them a hashtag) or post summaries to their blogs and other social media.

Why this gives you more mileage: Social media amplifies. Enough said.

4. Have someone monitor social media during and after the event. Make sure to respond to any questions or comments (especially if there is a problem—maybe the AC is not working or the Wi-Fi is spotty). Retweet and publicize your attendees posts.

Why this gives you more mileage: Again, it amplifies, but it also shows your organization is responsive and embraces social media.

5. Be sure to incorporate time for Q&A, and make it organized. Q&A shouldn't be an afterthought, and it shouldn't be a free for all. Organizers should make sure to designate a time for questions. Whether you decide to have a microphone for the audience or take questions via social media, you should make it easy for people to interact with your presenters.

Why this gives you more mileage: Your audience will get more clarity on issues and, again, it makes your organization look responsive.

6. Create a recap of the event and post it to your blog/website and your social media networks. The recap of the event could include a summary of the presentation, contact information for the presenters, and photos of the event (and if you post photos on Facebook, people could tag themselves).

Why this gives you more mileage: Your recap is now shareable content for your website, blog and/or newsletter. Attendees

will have something to reference if they want to talk about the event.

7. Email all attendees a thank you and evaluation survey shortly after the event. You may also include a link to your recap (see above).

Why this gives you more mileage: You will have yet another opportunity to interact with your attendees while getting useful feedback. You could even have an offer for new members or discounts to future events.

What would you add? What has been your experience when attending professional development events?