

Post-Event Evaluation Tool Best Practices

The big day has come and gone. You've paid your vendors, sent thank you notes to your attendees and speakers. It can be tempting to get through your post-event checklist and move on to the next event.

However, your checklist is not complete without post-event evaluation. After your event is finished – whether a smashing success or a bit disappointing – it's important to dedicate time to conduct a proper analysis.

So how do you approach a post-event evaluation? This guide will cover the entire process – from setting goals leading up to your event, collecting feedback and data, to ultimately sharing your analysis with stakeholders.

1. Why is post-event evaluation important?

Event evaluation is a critical component of organizing an event. Through evaluation, you can fully understand the impact your event has, and without it, you are left guessing yourself into a hole. Evaluations provide concrete examples of success and challenges your event may have faced.

Additionally, evaluation is important to continuously improve. It ensures the tactics you are using are effective and reflect larger organizational goals. If, through your evaluation, you understand that the tactics are not working, evaluation also helps to provide justification for a pivot.

Data from these evaluations can illustrate the role of events in your organization, which is especially important if your event is revenue-driving or fundraising. It can also serve as a justification for future changes and growth. Also, when looking for additional funds for events, perhaps from vendors or sponsors, facts and figures from previous events can provide justification for support and give your potential sponsors an idea of what attendees will experience at your event!

Now that we've covered why it's important to conduct post-event analysis, let's jump into best practices for pulling out the right data from your events and turning it into insights.

2. Establish your goals and success metrics

When organizing your event venue, speakers, and marketing; you should also plan how you intend to measure and evaluate your event. These goals should align with larger organizational goals and reflect the importance of your event.

The SMART goal-setting methodology is a great way to ensure you're creating strong objectives for your event. Tying your event goals into organizational goals is one aspect of a SMART goal, but it's also important to create strong, measurable objectives. Let's take a look at how to create SMART goals:

S – Specific. What outcome, by when. For example, recruiting 1 new member at each booth/tabling event.

M – Measurable. How much – the hard numbers we can measure, such as increase our social media following over the fall semester.

A – Achievable. Not only is the objective achievable, but we're also relatively likely to accomplish it. This isn't a stretch incentive on Kickstarter, after all. This is an objective we're confident we can achieve.

R – Relevant. Ask yourself, does this relate to our organization's overarching mission and goals?

T – Time-bound. Timebound means we can create a timeline that defines the beginning and the end of the period in which we are measuring. There's a start and stop point, and we can measure the change between the two.

Smart objectives that relate back to your organization's goals will stick with you throughout your entire event planning process. Once you have buy-in with all members involved in the event planning, these event goals and objectives will guide your entire process from venue selection through your post-event survey questions.

With a set of SMART goals in place, you'll enter your event with a clear vision of what success looks like.

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3. Create opportunities for feedback

With goals in place, you have a foundation for creating questions to evaluate your event. It's important to keep your goals in mind when planning your feedback opportunities. It is also important to keep in mind what you are able or willing to change about your event. For example, if future events will always be hosted at the same location, there may not be a need to ask for people's feedback about the location.

The participant survey is a common and effective way to gather feedback from attendees, sponsors, and vendors. Thanks to a new feature on NvolveU, you can now easily attach a post-event evaluation to your event that will automatically send to anyone who checked-in to your event! Below are a few examples of evaluation questions.

Qualitative attendee satisfaction survey questions

1. Please share your thoughts on the event as a whole
2. What was your favorite speaking session/performer/workshop?
3. Did this year's event meet your expectations? Why or why not?
4. What was the highlight of this event? (What did you like about it the most?)
5. Are there any suggestions you have for next year's event?
6. Were there any parts of the event that you found especially useful?
7. What was your least favorite part of this event?
8. Are you likely to participate in one of our events in the future?
9. If you would like to provide a quote for promotional use, please include here with your name.

Quantifying your surveys

In addition to open-ended questions, it's beneficial to provide your attendees with Likert scale questions. These help you to turn qualitative questions into data sets. For example; How likely would you recommend this event to a friend? With a scale ranging from "extremely likely" to "not at all likely" enables you to get a consensus on, what would otherwise, be hard to put into numbers.

Here are a few examples to get you going:

1. How would you rate the knowledge of each speaker? (You could put this into a chart, or matrix, for guests to individually rate each speaker's knowledge.)
2. How likely are you to recommend this event to a friend or coworker?
3. How likely are you to attend this event again next year?
4. How would you rate the value of this event?
5. How satisfied were you with the event?

It may also be beneficial to include quantitative type questions utilizing a multiple choice method. Here are few examples of questions that could offer a variety of answers depending on your event:

1. How did you hear about the event?
 - a. Social Media
 - b. Flyers
 - c. Etc.
2. Did you meet anyone new while you were at the event?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. How long did you stay at the event?
 - a. Less than an hour
 - b. 1-2 hours
 - c. Etc.

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4. Collect post-event feedback

How are you planning to distribute and collect surveys from your participants?

The best time to collect feedback is when it is fresh in your attendees' minds. The great thing about utilizing the Post Event Evaluation tool in NvolveU is that the survey will automatically send once the event has concluded.

How are your attendees going to provide feedback about your event? Technology has replaced the older method of pen and paper to give event-goers a convenient means for sharing their thoughts.

Utilizing the same form builder features, you can build your post event evaluation at the time of submitting your event request, or at a later time through the event management page on NvolveU. Similarly to Google Forms or Survey Monkey, you can build a variety of different types of questions to find the right type of data and answers for your questions.

Social media engagement can also be a helpful assessment tool. Traditional polls and feedback options are available on these platforms, but you can also get a good insight of your attendee's experiences through their posts and photos. Try utilizing a specific hashtag or account tagging for quick access to your event attendee's photos of their experience at your event.

To incentivize or not to incentivize?

Many surveys are incentivized, meaning people who take them get something, or the chance to win something. Some people are willing to give feedback but struggle because of a lengthy to-do list. The chance to win a gift card might just push them over the edge for giving you five minutes of their time.

5. Generate your post event evaluation report & data

To access your data from the NvolveU Post Event Evaluation:

- a. Head to the manage view of your event.
- b. In the "Post Event Feedback" section, there are 2 buttons:
 - a. "Send Notification"- this will send a message or notification to all of your event attendees to submit feedback. If you did not set your evaluation to send out automatically, then you can use this tool to send out the evaluation.
 - b. "Export Feedback"- this will export an excel document containing the results and data from your evaluation. It will live in your account's "downloads" section.

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6. Evaluate event results

With your event survey feedback and data in hand, it's time to evaluate the event! Depending on the scope of your event, you may be able to handle the analysis yourself, or it may take a team of people to turn the raw data and comments into insights. A few things you might look at to evaluate your event:

Registration numbers. Did you meet your baseline registration goals? Or, did you exceed your goal by 10%.

Revenue/Fundraising. How much did you bring in from sponsors, from fundraising, etc. Whatever your source of funding, it's important to understand the financials, especially if these funds are what will be your budget for the next year.

Budget. Similarly, did you exceed your budget? Were you right on target, or maybe even under?

Social media. Do you measure your social media presence before during and following events?

Post Event Evaluation Results

Quantitative

- A majority of attendees rated the event as a "Extremely likely to attend another event"
- 90% of attendees picked "Enjoyed the sequence of events"
- 50% of attendees reported hearing about the event on social media

Qualitative

- What were the themes that came out from your qualitative/open ended questions?
- As you review surveys, you may also want to pull out and save memorable quotes from your respondents.

7. Communicating your results

Your members might also want to know how the event went - here's where a post-event report comes in. Your post-event report should be a succinct document that illustrates the highlights of your event. Here is an example of pieces you can include to give a full picture of your event:

Executive Summary. A quick glance at the event, overall.

Goals and Objectives. This is where you should list the specific and measurable goals you first made before the event.

Event Effectiveness. In this section, you can evaluate the event itself and include feedback details regarding location, product displays, traffic flow, etc. Don't forget to include high-quality event photos.

Budget. Compare your estimated budget to the final investment. Include charges that affected the budget and indicate if the budget was met or you went over the planned cost.

Areas of Strength. What went well? Where did you receive high marks from your event attendees?

Areas for Improvement. What would you do differently at the next event? Here, clearly outline opportunities for improvement.

Conclusion. End the post-event evaluation report by stating out how you see the latest event compared to the past same events. Was it better or worse? Moreover, don't hesitate to mention any problems you had. Include your recommendations to improve your events in the future.

Need assistance putting together your next event's evaluation? Feel free to reach out to the Student Involvement team at involved@unl.edu or at 402-472-2454.