

Designing a Feedback Questionnaire

Feedback or Evaluation?

People sometimes confuse feedback and evaluation. Many providers of training workshops use 'evaluation questionnaires' at the end of a workshop, but it can be argued that in fact these are feedback questionnaires, and only part of a wider evaluation context. Evaluation, in its true sense (in the context of training workshops) cannot just be achieved through a questionnaire immediately, but needs to be done during the longer timescale of putting into practice what has been gained from a training event. Some argue firmly that "evaluation takes several years", and needs to embrace a variety of elements, such as:

- ▶ how well the learning gained at a training event has been able to be put into practice in day-to-day work contexts;
- ▶ how well a variety of feedback processes filled in the bigger picture of the success of the event, these feedback elements including at least three or four from the following:
 - ▶ structured feedback questionnaire elements
 - ▶ open-ended feedback questions;
 - ▶ face-to-face one-to-one interviews

or discussions about the event, at the end of the event and later;

- ▶ face-to-face group interviews or discussions about the event;
- ▶ testimony from third parties (employers, line managers, and so on) in a position to quantify the added-value arising from the participant's attendance at the workshop;
- ▶ personal reflections of the participant, relating to the event itself, and the implementation of achievement gained from the event.

Participants themselves often comment at the end of a successful workshop that they do not yet know how useful it will turn out to be, as this unsurprisingly depends on the actual relevance to their developing work in a wider context. Indeed, if the workshop is training them for new or developing work responsibilities, they cannot yet assess its impact or relevance.

It is not surprising that feedback questionnaires issued towards the end of a workshop have earned the nickname 'happiness sheets' in many training contexts, as the feedback

participants give relates substantially to how they feel at the end of the event, rather than on how much the event will turn out to have influenced their practice. Admittedly, happiness and value are connected, and participants are more likely to have gained a great deal from a workshop if they feel inspired and enthused at the end of the event.

Collecting and analysing participants' feedback at workshops takes time and energy, not least for the participants themselves who provide the feedback. Therefore, it is important that feedback is not simply planned 'for its own sake' or 'because it is always done in this way'. The checklist which follows should help you to decide why you are seeking and analysing feedback, and this in turn will help you to fine-tune what feedback you seek, and how you seek it from participants.



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Purposeful Feedback Checklist

For each of the following feedback purposes, decide the relative importance in the context of your particular workshop. A photocopyable version of this checklist can be found at Appendix 4.

Feedback purpose	Very important	Quite important	Not really important
To gain participants' feedback on the particular workshop			
To fine-tune further workshops in a series of related workshops			
To find out more about generic workshop skills and processes to use in future workshops			
To determine participants' further training needs			
To satisfy organisational requirements to monitor the quality and relevance of training provision			
To find out more about particular problem areas, so that they can be addressed in future training provision			
To find out more about particular training strengths, so that they can be used to greater effect in future provision			
To find out more about a particular cohort of participants, so that future training for them can be fine-tuned			
To determine the effect of new or exploratory workshop techniques, so that their future usage can be justified or critiqued			
To provide data to be used in the appraisal or monitoring of workshop facilitators			
To form the basis of an evaluation report to be written in due course about the particular workshop or training programme			

	Very important	Quite important	Not really important
To provide evidence for quality assurance requirements of the organisation			



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