

Post Event Evaluation – What and Why

Evaluating your event is the final, most important step to your next event's success.

(Summarized and expanded from an excellent article by Patricia Meyers)

Debriefing: Reviewing an event or activity to determine what went well and what needs work; what to remember and what to never forget. It's the step you must get in the habit of taking after every single event you sponsor. Not just the biggies—every single one.

1. First, evaluate on your own.

Make notes about the event – major and minor, all aspects. Be thorough.

2. Invite a few key leaders to a debriefing meeting.

Debriefing is for the purpose of event improvement. Keep focused on the event, not the people involved.

3. Begin on a positive note.

Note what went well, admit no event is perfect, but we do strive for excellence and to improve every time.

4. Evaluate every aspect of the event.

Begin where the event started and follow the event to the end. Topics *may* include subjects like:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial brainstorming• Planning• Publicity• Parking & car traffic (before and after)• Greeting/introductions• Foot traffic (in and out)• Room layout, chairs, tables, etc• Handouts• Refreshments• A/V systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nursery/Childcare• Opener/Introductions• Presentation/Lessons• Closing/completion• Follow-up with participants• Budget (over, under, unexpected costs, unexpected savings)• Timing (on time, over, under, etc...)• Internal communications and planning
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Through the debriefing process, you may discover you spent a lot of time, effort, and money on something that no one really enjoyed or even noticed. You may find out what you thought was going to be a highlight wasn't. And you may find out something you thought was a little thing ended up carrying a huge punch.

Follow these guidelines for the most effective information-gathering possible.

1. Review If you had trouble staying in budget, figure out why. Be brutally honest with yourself about everything. Where did you get off track? Did you let things slip up? Were you afraid to say no to someone? If you had trouble staying in your timeframe, why?

2. Reflect—Think about each segment almost independently of the rest. How did people react to each element and overall? Were they impacted? Why or why not? What would you change?

3. Revisit—Before you plan your next event, read your notes from the last one or two events to see if there's anything that applies. Every few events, review the notes from those events all at one time to see if there's a pattern of issues to address.

4. File your "Post Event Evaluation" for future use

Type your notes if at all possible. Put your notes in the file for that event.

5. Revisit and review prior to the next similar event or activity.

Take advantage of that "oh yeah, we wanted to remember that... change this... and avoid those..."

Debriefing is a great use of time, doesn't have to be done often, and leads to easier planning in the future.

You'll see how much you and your ministry have grown, how much more efficient your team has become, and perhaps some things you overlooked when in the throes of planning.