

# Leveraging Surveys For a Successful Event

## Surveys Are Indispensable Event Planning Tools

When used correctly, surveys can help **ensure your event is a success** by enabling you to gauge expectations, understand participant reaction during the event, and measure the effectiveness of your message after the event is over. Online survey tools enable you to gather and analyze information before, during, and after an event – in a fast, effective, and affordable manner.

### A survey tool will:



## Rule #1

### Ask Your Audience What They Want Before The Event

When planning an event, it's important to consider what the event participants expect in order to **provide the content that most appeals** to their needs. Far too often, event planners focus on what they want to say rather than what the audience wants to know. This assumption often results in an event that can be best characterized as a "near miss" rather than a "direct hit." When an event that fails to meet attendees' expectations, they generally never come back. In order to **maximize return attendance**, planners must **ask what attendees want – then deliver it**.

**The best way to discover what event attendees want** is to simply ask them in a pre-event survey. When planning an event, you should always research your audience to determine their needs and what is important to them. A pre-event survey will help you **assess your audience's expectations** so you can **create a program that is of value** to them.

#### Ask pre-event questions such as:

- Do you prefer a morning, afternoon, or evening event?
- Would you like to receive a confirmed attendee list before the event?
- How far are you willing to travel to an event?
- Which of these topics interests you most?
- Please list suggested speakers you would like to hear speak at the next event.

## Encourage Suggestions For Event Content And Speakers

Ask your audience what interests them before planning your event calendar and scheduling speakers. Occasionally respondents may even provide you with a speaker's contact information, or offer their assistance as a volunteer, which can be a real bonus. Don't be afraid to ask your audience, as **people are usually willing to offer their input**, especially if it is designed to benefit them in the end.

## Monetize The No

It is very important to discover why an invitee has decided not to attend your event. Ask about logistics, e.g. venue choices, travel issues, event date and time, etc. Although you cannot accommodate everyone's preferences, it is helpful to **determine what the majority prefers**, then coordinate your event to meet those needs. If there are certain logistics preventing people from attending, make sure to **maximize potential ROI** by continuing to engage your invitee even after selecting "no" as their invitation response. We call this tactic, "monetizing the no." Planners need to understand the reasons affecting event attendance. Following up with the RSVPs can impact future event strategy and prevent future revenue generators from slipping through the cracks.

## Measure Your Marketing Efforts

Ask how attendees heard about your event, whether it was through an invitation, media, word of mouth, etc. Use this information when creating future advertisement and promotion strategies. For example, you can budget more ad dollars toward event topics that are showing the highest traction.

## Rule #2

Keep Your Attendees

Engaged **During** The Event

### Create Excitement And Interest Among The Attendees

Other than handing out expensive giveaways or turning your presentation into a game show, it is often hard to keep attendees engaged once an event is underway and they are bombarded with information. One way to **encourage participation and keep attendees involved and interested** during the event is to have them complete a survey and then share the results with them before the end of the event.

Conduct a short survey or quick poll during your event. Create a survey and use a kiosk or computer stations in the event area to have participants complete during the day. Many event organizers have a network of workstations available for participants to check email or surf the web; these environments are often set up with a designated home page that is ideal for conducting a survey during the event. Use the survey to **ask attendees about issues** pertaining to the event topic, industry, or their interests.

Event surveys are a good way to **foster dialogue between individuals**, especially if your survey results were surprising or controversial. Share the results before the next keynote presentation. When attendees hear the results, they will be **further engaged** in the event because they have contributed to its quality and content.

### Share Results Of A Previously Conducted Survey At Your Event

**Create buzz for an upcoming event** by surveying your attendees beforehand, making them aware that the results will be given at the upcoming event. As the event nears, their **anticipation will grow** as they look forward to hearing the survey results.

### Create Marketing ROI Through Lead Generation And Qualification

Raffles and sweepstakes are great incentives for guests to stop by your booth (or main information desk) for **engagement opportunities**. Invite them to submit their information to register; the possibility of winning a prize is a strong incentive for driving responses. Online surveys offer an easy way to run a sweepstakes at your booth. Set up a kiosk or computer station that invites attendees to fill out a quick "sweepstakes" registration, the form for which is really an online survey. Ask a few **demographic** questions in addition to one or two **psychographic** or purchasing questions to help you accurately **qualify real prospects**. The sweepstakes is an efficient means of **generating booth/kiosk traffic and converting visitors** into leads.

If you have sponsors for your event, make sure to add a question asking if they would be interested in receiving information about that sponsor's product or service. **Most corporate event sponsors will pay you (or increase sponsorship) for qualified leads and/or aggregate event data.**

## Rule #3

### Ask Attendees For Feedback After The Event

Receiving feedback from attendees is a critical step for an accurate assessment of your event's strengths and weaknesses. Conduct a post-event survey and ask your audience what they thought about the overall event, the content, the speakers, the facilities, etc. Such information is an instrumental component of a customer-centric event planning strategy. Ask attendees post-event questions such as

- How did you hear about this event?
- How do you rate the event location?
- How do you rate the content that was presented?
- Please rate the quality of the speaker's performance.
- Would you be interested in volunteering at our next event?
- Please list any other comments or suggestions about the event.



### Determine Logistical Successes Or Failures

Find out if the attendees liked or disliked any aspect of the event venue including location, parking, commuting issues, etc. If you plan to have another event at the same venue in the future, arrangements can be made to address such issues accordingly.



## Poll Your Audience About Presentation Quality (Speakers, Content, Etc.)

Give your respondents an opportunity to rate various aspects of your presentation, booth, or speakers. Ask respondents to **rate the value of the information presented** and whether or not it was presented effectively.

- Did you get something valuable out of the event?
- Was your attendance worthwhile?

Responses to questions about event content and quality are essential **in determining the success of an event**. Other analytics, such as **cross-tabulation** reports, can provide details beyond the aggregate scope. For example, you may determine levels of association between industry segment (vertical) and perceived event value and adjust future event marketing strategies accordingly.

## Offer An Opportunity To Give Personal Feedback

Provide a free response comment box in your survey, where your attendees may voice their opinions and give suggestions to **improve future events**. Here you will **gain insight about your attendees' experience and** whether it was good or bad. Consider asking your respondent to provide contact information such as their name, email address, or telephone number so that you can follow-up with them directly.

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## Conclusion

Keep the communication lines open with your event audience by finding out what they need, encouraging their participation, and gathering their feedback. This gives you the tools you need to survey your event attendees and get the results quickly so you can take appropriate action. With survey tools, such as Cvent's solution, you can survey event participants easily during each phase of the event process, **determine the strong and weak points of your event planning and execution**, and gather the data you need to **make improvements that will ensure the success of your event programs**.

## About Cvent

Cvent delivers the commercial-grade survey software solutions and services organizations need to cost-efficiently implement an event marketing and feedback program. Established in 1999, Cvent is the largest strategic meetings management and site selection company in the U.S., with over 400 employees worldwide. More than 10,000 professionals use Cvent per year to create over 100,000 surveys, events, and marketing campaigns. Cvent's users have sent over 175 million invitations and have processed over 5 million registrations and survey responses. Over \$20 million in research and development has been invested into Cvent's proven technology solution and services.

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