

FORWARD THINKING



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WRITING A CLEAR AND COMPELLING post-conference report is as important as the flawless execution of the event itself.

How many of us dread writing a final report on a conference we have been planning for months, and in some instances, years? Familiar phrases begin to emerge such as, "I don't have the time," or, "My boss isn't going to read the report anyway."

These excuses beg us to ask the following questions: "How will your boss learn about the conference's success? How will the organization appreciate your ability to pull all of the complexities of meeting planning into a spectacular conference?"

A post-conference report assists you in summarizing and showcasing every element of your work.

Reasons for Writing

Why write a post-conference report? To record history. How many of us can remember the details of a conference we planned a year ago? What were the successes? What were the highlights of the location? What was the return on investment for the organization and your department? Should the organization retain or eliminate the conference? What aspects of the event worked?

Writing post-conference reports assists meeting planners in managing and controlling their event management systems, summarizes information and facts—not emotions—persuades change, and moves others into action.

Writing a Post-Con Report

Developing a comprehensive "post-con" is your compass for success

A post-conference report is a summary of our meeting experiences that creates history, and showcases our talents and professionalism.

Getting Started

It is important to define the readers of your report. Will it be the CEO, senior management or board members? Perhaps you will be the only reader. Identifying your reader and knowing what they are interested in reading is the key to a successful report.

Your reader may not be interested in the extensive detail that could be part of a post-conference report. Once you know your reader(s), begin to develop an outline for the report.

Components of a Post-Con

From this extensive list, determine the components your reader is interested in:

➤ The presentation style must match the culture of your organization or your client. Does the reader prefer a one-page summary in a memorandum format, a long document with appendices and color charts and graphs, or simply a five-minute PowerPoint presentation. If your audience prefers a report covering all the areas below, be sure to create a cover page that has your name, date, the conference name, and the organization's brand on it.

➤ The executive summary is the first area an executive reads and sometimes the only section. An executive summary summarizes the most important elements of the whole report—not copying sections from the report. In an executive summary, the reader must know the conclusion right away. This area is the last to be written because it summarizes the report, the purpose of the conference and major goals achieved.

➤ Listing the staff names, roles and responsibilities the meeting planning staff is critical for showcasing your

department's talents and abilities. In this area it is wise to include detailed timelines.

➤ Many organizations utilize volunteers for their conferences. Listing the names, roles, and responsibilities of planning committee members highlights their contributions to the overall event.

➤ The conference agenda should be referred to in a short paragraph that summarizes the theme and the program plan. The detailed agenda is placed in the Appendix.

➤ Demographics may be of particular interest to your organization. Answer the following questions in your post-conference report: Did we have an increase or decrease in the number of attendees, and why? Where did the attendees come from? Are attendees members? If not, why not? Did we have minority participation or participation from any other group that may be of importance to the organization? How did our attendees hear about our conference?

Important Elements a Post-Con

Make sure to incorporate or consider the following elements when writing any post-conference report:

- Presentation style
- Executive summary
- List of meeting planning staff and their roles
- List of planning committee members and their roles
- Conference agenda
- Demographics
- Evaluation summaries
- Contractual and negotiation issues
- Risk and crises-management plans
- Summary of face-to-face post-conference meetings
- List of conference documentation
- Budget report

► There are numerous types of evaluations for every part of the conference. An overall conference evaluation communicates the attendees' impressions of the entire event in an evaluations summaries section. Specific evaluations for speakers, special workshops or receptions, the trade show, vendors, and meal functions can be designed and individually summarized in this section.

A summary of issues surrounding contracts and negotiating points is quite helpful when you are considering whether or not to return to a property or city in the future. Notes pertaining to vendors and third-party suppliers offer a plethora of information as well.

► Having these risk and crisis-management plans in place is a major accomplishment. Highlight these plans in your report. The actual plans should be referred to in the appendix.

► It is also important to include a summary of face-to-face post-conference meetings. There are two types of face-to-face meetings: formal and informal. It is human nature to be quite frank and

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direct when speaking with a meeting planner one-on-one. When the same person is in a group meeting, they evaluate who is in the room and are careful with their statements. Conducting post-conference meetings with the site representatives, exhibit company, board members, executives, meeting planning staff, and planning committee members are traditional.

► Conference documentation such as publicity materials, press clippings, press reports on DVDs, and lists of reporters in attendance is critical for your marketing strategy for next year.

► The budget report should begin with a summary of the overall budget strategies followed by a listing of procedures, activities, a savings chart, a spend management report, and the buying decisions of customers.

► A post-conference report reflects the conference strategy—the big picture ideas supported by the data.



Executives and senior management constantly think about “what” contributes to the bottom line. Does the conference help support the general business objectives of growth, profitability, and shareholder or investor value? Remember, the solutions you recommend in your post conference report must show an impact. Have you identified and communicated the “what?” *

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