



EVALUATING YOUR EVENT

After months of planning, weeks of anticipation, and days of running around, you've finally wrapped up your event. Everyone seemed to have a great time and you created lasting connections with your guests.

Now it's time to take a deep breath, thank everybody involved, and head over to the post-event celebration party.

But before you wrap everything up and go back to a normal schedule, you should evaluate the success of your event objectively. This will help you understand what went right and what didn't. The more data you have, the easier it is to identify mistakes and fine-tune for future events.

These five tips will help you get started:

1. Set event goals and expectations

You can't measure success when you don't have any benchmarks to measure it against. This is why it is important to define your goals and expectations from the outset.

These goals will vary from industry to industry and event to event. It is important to align the goals with your event's ultimate aim (i.e. the chief reason for hosting the event) as well as what your guests expect to get from the event. It is also important to keep these goals as objective as possible.

For example, an event that uses social media to promote itself might have the following goals:

- get 500 Facebook hits mentions
- have 20 percent or higher sponsor response rate
- collect 100 emails from guests and online channels
- sell 200 tickets/places
- 25 percent survey response rate
- make a profit of \$5000.

Objective goals ("get 100 email addresses") are easier to quantify than subjective goals ("everyone should have a great time"), and can help you evaluate event success better.

2. Conduct surveys immediately after the event

A survey or feedback form is a good way of measuring the success of an event. The best time to hand out this survey is immediately after the event, when guests feel favourably towards you and are more likely to respond to a survey request.

Designing surveys is an art, but if you want to have a go at it yourself, here are a few things to bear in mind:

- **Relevancy:** keep the survey questions directly relevant to the event
- **Length:** shorter surveys get a higher response rate than longer ones

- **Ease of Responding:** respondents are more likely to drop out of a survey if responding to questions requires too much time or effort. Design surveys in a way that respondents can give answers as easily as possible. This means keeping subjective responses to a minimum and using multiple-choice questions instead
- **Language:** using clear, precise language with well-defined answer labels will earn you a higher response rate. If respondents have to think hard about the question, they will likely abandon the survey.

You can either hand out surveys on paper, or email respondents with an online survey made with Survey Monkey or similar tools.

3. Use a Net Promoter Score question

Net Promoter Score (NPS) involves asking customers or event guests, a simple question: “How likely are you to recommend this event to someone else, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 stands for least likely, and 10 for extremely likely?”

Scores are categorised as follows:

- **Scores of 9-10:** these are your **promoters** - super fans and loyal customers who actively spread the good word about your event. You want as many of these as possible.
- **Scores of 7-8:** these are **passives**. They feel ambivalent towards your event and are not likely to actively recommend it to their friends.
- **Scores of 0-6:** these are the **detractors**. They are liable to criticise your event in public and make for bad word of mouth.

To get your NPS, you subtract the number of detractors from the number of promoters. Ignore all passives.

Thus, if you have 100 respondents, 80 of which are promoters, 10 detractors and 10 passives, your Net Promoter Score is: $80 - 10 = 70$ percent

Higher Net Promoter Scores have been directly tied to better word of mouth and high referral rates. Some of the best companies in the world have Net Promoter Scores in the 70-80 percent range.

4. Evaluate your finances

Hosting an event can be an expensive affair. It isn't uncommon for event organisers to overspend and find themselves in the hole even with a 'successful' event. Therefore, taking stock of your finances should be a key part of the evaluation exercise.

It is a good idea to consult an accountant before undertaking a fiscal evaluation, but for starters, here are a few key metrics you should focus on:

- **Expected costs vs. actual costs:** hopefully, you already had a thorough breakdown of the expected costs of the event. Comparing this against the actual cost will tell if you overshot your budget, and give you a measure of your resource utilisation efficiency
- **Expected revenues vs. actual revenues:** the difference between the actual revenues and expected revenues is a strong measure of the event's success

- **Unexpected costs:** it's inevitable – things will break, plans will fail and mishaps will happen when dealing with an event. Figuring out the unexpected costs will help you manage your finances better at the next event you host.

5. Gather feedback from event stakeholders

Gathering feedback from event stakeholders, such as organisers, planners, speakers and sponsors, should be a cornerstone of your event evaluation strategy.

Unlike guest surveys, feedback from event stakeholders can be more subjective, largely because you have more time to work with them on various issues. A few ways you can do this are:

- **hold a debrief meeting** with staff and volunteers to discuss what went right, what didn't and what can be improved in the future
- **speak with sponsors** to understand their concerns. Ask what you can do to ensure a smoother sponsor experience in the future. Sponsors are more likely to work with you if they know that you're willing to accommodate their needs
- **gather feedback from performers** and speakers about the event and whether all their needs were met. This is also a good time to say 'thanks' and make sure that they have nice things to say about your event (especially since top performers and speakers have very large social media microphones)
- **hold meetings with local authorities**, security, venue managers and emergency services to understand their concerns and offer your thanks for their services. These people are critical for the success of your event. Planting seeds of gratitude and goodwill will reap rich dividends later.

Here is an example of an event evaluation form you could use:

EVENT EVALUATION TEMPLATE

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Name of event: | Family Fun Day at the Park | Result |
| Date/time/location: | 10 April | 10 April – weather was perfect |
| Type of event: | Family fun day at the park | Photos on website show happy families having fun. |
| Purpose of event: | Celebrate the area or community / raise funds for ? | Had a positive feel. |
| Collect evaluation data | Surveys were carried out by high school students as people were beginning to leave. | |
| Number of attendees | 2000 | 2250 people attended |
| VIPs | Mayor, MP, Local hero | Mayor, Local hero attended MP was called back for emergency Parliament. Not critical. |
| Performers | Local youth band, young singer, clowns, Muppets | Survey: Generally good feedback. Favourite artist was the Muppets. |
| Speakers | None | |
| Master of Ceremonies | John Doe | Not a good choice. Started well, but lost the plot and went home early. |
| Other key people | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sponsors | \$5000 | \$1000 from \$2 shop \$1000 from real estate agent \$1000 from agricultural agent In kind sponsorship from Newspaper, Council, Printer, Hire centre |
| Expense estimate (attach proposed budget): | \$7,000 | \$7200 A bit over budget |
| Income estimate: Number of registrations __ ticket price = __\$7500__ | \$7500 - family pass - \$15, Adults \$10, Kids, seniors \$5 | \$ 8000 --Ticket sales |
| Other income - from stall holders and sales of T shirts. | | |
| Estimated net cost: | \$7000 | |
| Additional funds: Auctions, raffle | \$2500 | \$3000 |
| Objectives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To raise the profile of the community, 2. To cover all costs and raise funds to give back to St Johns Ambulance, 3. To gather a pool of people who will volunteer to help and then be available in future. 4. To create an opportunity for people to enjoy creativity with their children in a family friendly setting. | <p>Clippings in BOP Times, NZ Herald</p> <p>Positive feedback from a developer in the area.</p> <p>Made a small profit - donated \$2000 to St Johns</p> <p>25 volunteers. Future commitment from 10.</p> <p>Photos on website. Event went longer than predicted. Families stayed on to enjoy the great weather.</p> |
| Strategic fit: | Fits the look and feel of the local community. Creating awareness and community cohesiveness. | |
| Target audience: | Community members and their families. | Met. |
| Audience benefits: | People will enjoy the family friendly event within their own community. Some people will meet their neighbours for the first time. | <p>80% of people surveyed said they would come again next year.</p> <p>10% wouldn't come</p> <p>10% didn't know</p> <p>NPS = 70</p> |
| Stakeholder recognition (gifts, special remarks, etc.): | | |
| Fundraising goal: | \$5000 | \$2000 |
| Post event follow up: | Personal thank you letters to all sponsors and supporters. A thank-you afternoon tea for the whole event crew and any volunteers 3 weeks after where the results will be announced. Follow up editorial in the local paper. | Complete |