



Evaluating Events

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand why events are evaluated.
- ✓ Discuss the objective setting and potential sources of information to evaluate events.
- ✓ Conduct a survey and produce report based on the results.

Evaluating Events

This involves critically assessing the outcome of events to determine whether or not the objectives have been achieved. Evaluation requires monitoring, observing, and measuring activities. The purpose of evaluation is to help the event managers measure the success of events, learning from previous event to help them improve future ones, and to enable them give adequate feedback to stakeholders.

Monitoring and evaluation help the event manager to understand the activities undertaken during the event and how best to perform these activities using the following feature as a measuring benchmark:

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Impact

Efficiency

Determining the efficiency of activities requires getting an expected output by supplying certain input parameters. The inputs may be time, money, workers, and equipment, etc.

Effectiveness

This measures the overall performance of the plan in attaining some pre-defined objectives.

Impact

This measures whether a set of activities you undertake is able to make a difference in solving a problem. It means having strategies that work to achieve an expected end product.

Why should Monitoring and Evaluation be done?

Monitoring and evaluation are done to ensure that you are meeting, at the very least, your main specifications in terms of your ability to make a difference or an impact. Monitoring helps you to review progress of work, flag out problems to tackle and provides understanding to guide you adjust key parameters to make a major difference.

Mistakes may occur during the execution of events and these are acceptable though undesirable. What is unacceptable is not leaning from your previous mistakes and repeating them.

Purpose of monitoring and evaluation:

- Enhance the identification of problem and the reasons for these
- Provide avenue for solving the problems

- They question assumptions and strategies adopted
- Make you consider your goals and methods of attaining them
- They provide information and insight
- Motivate you to use information obtained effectively
- Enhance the chances of contributing to making a difference

Monitoring involves:

- Setting standards or specifications for efficiency, effectiveness, and impact
- Establishing systems to gather information relating to the specifications
- Collecting and recording information
- Analysing information collected
- Making management decisions based on information collected

Evaluation involves:

- Setting goals for projects
- Identifying the kind of impact an organisation wants to make
- Determining whether the organisation was able to make the impact it had hoped for and identifying reasons why it could not achieve all of its objectives
- How effective and efficient are the methods or strategies being used by an organisation? Is there room for improvement and how can these be implemented?

How to evaluate an event

Evaluation is a continuous process undertaken throughout all phases of the event and requires time and resources for it to be effective.

The stages of evaluation are as follows:

- Defining the objectives of the event
- Choosing method(s) for evaluation of events
- Data gathering
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Summarizing the results of evaluation in the form of a report
- Sharing the final reports with all stakeholders and publishing in the media

The first step requires defining the objectives of the event, i.e. what you want to achieve and the process for achieving your goals. If your objective is to increase the number of guests who attend the event by a certain percentage more than the previous event of similar nature, then you may need to perform an

evaluation by counting the number of tickets purchased, the number of food purchase transactions, the number of parked vehicles, or use police estimates.

If the other objective is to increase profit by a specific percentage more than a previous session, then evaluation of this objective after the event can be done by analysing the bank balance sheets to get this information and the reasons for the increase, i.e., whether the increase was from high ticket prices or higher number of guests in attendance.

Surveys may also be used to evaluate people's satisfaction with an event. Alternatively, you may also measure their reaction to entertainment component or how much longer they stayed at the venue after the event.

Evaluation Methods

Methods used to evaluate events include the following:

- Employing direct observation by the event manager and/or staff
- Monitoring progress of event during staff meeting to discuss progress reports
- Analysing income reports or financial reports
- Analysing all reports on the event from the police, health and safety staff, and security personnel, etc.
- Undertaking debriefing of key staff to obtain feedback on the event
- Paying attention to the content of media report on the event
- Conducting survey on participants at the event including sponsors and stakeholders
- Finding out the economic impact of the event on the community

These methods should provide sufficient data for analysis and reporting on the outcome of the event to stakeholders.

Event Surveys

Surveys can generate valuable insight to aid your market efforts in the future because they are able to provide the following vital details of attendees:

- Age groups
- Level of income
- Place of residence
- Source of advert which published information about the event
- Means of transportation to the event
- Nature of groups which they belong to - i.e., couples, family, or company, etc.

- Their opinion on certain aspects of the event

Types of Survey

- Direct interview
- Written questionnaires
- Telephone surveys

There are several factors that determine the right type of method to use. These factors include the type of event, availability of resources and the kind of audience present. The effectiveness of each method will vary depending on the circumstances prevailing. Event managers who design evaluation tools need to consider the cultural context in order to choose the most effective and acceptable method of survey to use. Consideration should be given to the cultural background of the people attending the event. Some useful questions you need to ask when deciding on an appropriate culturally-sensitive evaluation tool include:

- Are data collection methods relevant and culturally sensitive to the population being evaluated?
- Have you considered how different methods may or may not work in various cultures
- Have you explored how different groups prefer to share information (e.g., orally, in writing, one-on-one, in groups, through the arts)?
- Do the instruments consider potential language barriers that may inhibit some people from understanding the evaluation questions?
- Do the instruments consider cultural context of the respondents?
- Are multiple methods being used, so that information can be analysed in a variety of ways

EVENT ATTENDEE SURVEY (Sample)

Event _____

Date _____

1. Age Group: _____

Under 15 (no more questions) 15-25 26-35 36-45 46+

Male Female

2. Was your visit here today motivated by the event? Yes No

If no, what was the purpose of your visit?

Holiday

- Visit friends/relatives
- Business
- Other _____ specify

3. Where are you from?

List postcode

Overseas - list country _____

4. How many nights are you staying? _____

5. Where are you staying? (suburb) _____

6. What type of accommodation are you using?

- Hotel/motel/resort
- Guest house/bed and breakfast
- Self catering cottage/apartment
- Caravan park/camping ground
- With family/friends
- Other _____ specify

7. How did you travel to the event?

- Car
- Public transport
- Friends
- Air

8. Other than the event, what activities/attractions did you or do you intend to engage in

during your visit? _____

Please estimate how much you have spent or intend to spend per person during your visit including transport, food, accommodation, souvenirs and entertainment

- £0-£50
- £51-£100
- £101-£150
- £151-250
- £251+

9. How did you find out about the event?

- Brochures/posters
- Newspaper
- Radio
- TV
- Internet
- Word of mouth
- Tourist Information Centre
- Other _____ specify

10. Have you attended this event in previous years?

If yes, then which year did you last attend? _____

Why did you attend this year? _____

11. Do you intend to attend the event next year? Yes No

12. How would you rate the following aspects of the event? (optional question)

- | | Poor | satisfactory | good | excellent |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| a) Venue | | | | |
| b) Parking | | | | |
| c) Value for money | | | | |
| d) Quality of food | | | | |
| e) Variety of food | | | | |
| f)Entertainment for adults | | | | |
| g) Entertainment for children | | | | |
| h) Seating | | | | |
| i)Toilets | | | | |
| j)Shade | | | | |
| k) Overall presentation of event | | | | |
| l)Crowd management | | | | |
| m) Signage/information | | | | |
| n) Overall site presentation/layout | | | | |

Sample survey report

Attendees:

Male:	43%
Female:	57%
<15:	11%
15-24:	38%
25-44:	37%
45-64:	12%
65>:	2%
Children:	28%
Adults:	72%

Marketing:

Word of mouth	32%
Radio	9%
TV	18%
Newspaper	28%
Posters	6%
Other	15%

Motivation to Attend: (in order)

- Fun
- Kids
- Socialise

- Music
- Food
- Involvement in festival
- Support Lismore

Any Improvements:

- Better weather (11% answers)
- More rides/activities/freebies/stalls - bigger is better
- More for toddlers/kids/teenagers
- Have competitions/activities with prizes
- Improve parking (especially peak time before street parade)
- Put survey in Echo and ask for new ideas
- More country music
- Area could be more concentrated
- Youth Concert re-located (too loud for shops)
- Many comments said 'congratulations'

Questionnaires

These are designed to provide simple, cheap, and effective modes of data collection from large number of guests at an event. Questionnaires are used to evaluate either community-building process or the outcome (results) of the process.

Utility of Questionnaires

Following from the above description of questionnaires, it could be said that when using questionnaires for evaluating a process of work, you would want to ask questions relating to how activities were performed by workers and when using it to evaluate the outcome of a process, you may ask 'in what ways can the process be enhanced?'

Types of Questions

The open-ended or forced-choice type may be used. Forced-choice questionnaires require people taking part in the survey to choose from a limited number of responses to questions by checking a box or circling a letter or number. Compared to the open-ended type, the forced-choice questionnaire makes for easy analyses because the open-ended produces a wide range of responses to questions asked.

Example of Forced-Choice Question

An example of a forced-choice questionnaire may contain questions and answers as depicted below: "Which of the following best describes the degree to which young people were involved in making decisions about the project?"

- No involvement
- Little involvement
- Moderate involvement
- Extensive involvement

Hints for Constructing Questionnaires

An understanding of evaluation questions is required before deciding whether or not questionnaires are your best tool for obtaining the data you need. You also need to determine the category of people who will be required to fill the questionnaires. The questions should be grouped according to topics with force-choice questions appearing first before making request for personal data such as age, gender etc. The layout should allow for large margins and spaces between questions to make it easy to digest the questions.

Administering Questionnaires

There are several ways to administer questionnaires and each has its own weakness. You may use the internet, mail, face-to-face, interviews, groups or telephone to gather information from people. The web-based approach requires that you gain access to the internet and it is very efficient at compiling results quickly and automatically. The mailing approach generally generates fewer responses but can reach a large number of people. Face-to-face interviews are ideal for obtaining complete information but consume time. The responses from groups are quick but the information collected may be insufficient.

Interviewing

When conducting interviews for the purpose of collecting information to assist in organising an event, you need to approach it in a conversational manner while assuring the interviewee that the information will be used for the purpose of the event only. Detailed notes must be taken when probing and asking follow-up questions while you maintain a neutral stance throughout.

You need to assure the interviewee that their anonymity will be preserved but this may become difficult to do if he/she is the only source of the information you received.

Data Analysis

Common themes and divergent views are determined from the interviews during the meeting of all interviewers to discuss their findings.

Focus Groups

Information may be obtained from this 'small gathering' of people who have been purposely invited to take part in the survey by filling questionnaires.

Classifying Expectations

You need to clearly understand the purpose for wanting to interview a focus group. Interviewing focus groups require you asking important questions, bordering on your expectations from the group interview, the type of evaluation you are looking to undertake, and the exact information you need.

Observation

This involves watching and listening to people and taking notes of all activities that they are engaged in, the duration for undertaking these activities and the manner in which the activities were performed to help you evaluate the process or outcome of an event. Results may differ if more than one observer is involved. Besides, the behaviour of the people being observed may be affected by the presence of the observer.

What to Observe:

- The setting, i.e., the environment and its influence on a particular set of behaviours
- The participants: the kind of people present and their purpose and role
- What are the people doing and is there a pattern?
- Activities and interactions: how do people perform activities and interact with each other?
- Frequency and duration: how often an activity is performed, noting the beginning and the end and establishing whether it is a regular occurrence

Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Complete Guide to Successful Event Planning By Shannon Kilkenny*
- ✓ *Event Management: A Professional and Developmental Approach By Greg Damster and Dimitri Tassiopoulos*