Simple Tips For Effective Handouts

based on the work of Marjorie Brody,
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When the presentation or training session ends, does the learning also have to end? Absolutely not. Yet often, that can and does happen – even when we know that the most powerful professional learning inspires continued learning.

It is critical that presenters use materials that spur participants to take them home AND to continue the learning. The right materials not only help participants remember the speaker and his or her message, but more importantly, they aid the participants in continuing their learning. Studies show that people typically remember only 10% of what they hear during the average presentation. An effective handout can significantly increase this.

PROFESSIONAL
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WHAT TYPES OF MATERIALS SHOULD BE USED?

A. HANDOUTS (OR WORKBOOKS)

Using handouts that allow the audience members to take notes during the presentation is a great way for them to capture key ideas. When participants take notes in their own words, the notes are more meaningful. Handouts need to be visually interesting, but also have lots of white space for note taking.

There are five steps to follow for improving your handouts:

1. The handout should reflect the goal -- customize handouts to reflect what you are trying to accomplish.

2. Avoid an information glut -- avoid the temptation to overload audience members with information simply because it is possible. As with the presentation itself, the handout should not include any "data dumps." Delete any material that does not directly support the message.

3. Use graphics whenever possible -- any time you can put a graphic in a handout versus text, do it. People will study a chart or diagram to learn information but may skip a detailed explanation of the same data.

4. Don't be afraid of white space -- wide margins and lots of room for taking notes is advisable. A good guideline to follow is to fill no more than 2/3 of the page with words or graphics.

5. Make sure the handout looks good -- the appearance of your handout is vital. When people pick up the paper, the handout should feel good (paper quality) and look good (printing or copying quality). A handout cannot salvage a horrible presentation, but a well- designed and well-planned handout can make the difference between a good presentation and a great one.

B. LAMINATED BOOK MARKS OR WALLET CARDS (ALSO FOR USE IN DAY TIMERS)

Book marks or cards can have key ideas from the program and will serve as a “gentle” and handy reminder for participants. Be sure to include your name, phone number and other contact information on the card.

C. SMALL GIFTS OR TRINKETS THAT ARE SOMEHOW A REMINDER OF THE TOPIC.

Giving away a ruler, for example, can remind one of personal growth. A packet of seeds can be used to convey the thought of seeds for success. A small candle can remind participants of their own star power so they will let their light shine. Be careful, however, you don't want to go overboard with this sort of reminder. Any small gifts that you distribute should have your contact information listed -- name, phone numbers, address, email, etc.

Books, booklets, audio and videotapes, and software packages are excellent learning tools. Learning tools can be a reminder of the information shared during the presentation -- especially if you authored them!

E. NEWSLETTERS, REMINDER LETTERS AND MORE TIP SHEETS.

Consider preparing and distributing immediately following the presentation or later via mail or email, a newsletter, reminder memo, or a tip sheet. You may ask participants to create their own tip sheets and reminder memos to take home with them – or, better still, mail them to participants three to four weeks following the presentation!