



Increasing the Usefulness of Conference Questions

As a new agent, I inherited an evaluation for our annual multi-county conference on public policy. How can it be improved?

Old Evaluation: *Directions: Please rate the effectiveness of the conference.*

Keynote address

NOT EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	DID NOT ATTEND
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Panel discussion

NOT EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	DID NOT ATTEND
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Concurrent Session A

NOT EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	DID NOT ATTEND
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You can improve the validity of data and make the evaluation interesting. Look at the evaluation items. As written, each participant brings his/her own criteria in judging each session. For instance, one person could respond to the ideas in the key address while another could respond to its length; one person could respond to the array of perspectives in the discussion while another could respond to participants' homogeneity. To prevent ambiguity and increase validity, focus participants' thinking in each item by linking the session to a specific message or objective you want the session to achieve. For instance:

New Evaluation: *Directions: Please rate the effectiveness of the conference.*

*To what extent was the **keynote address** effective in challenging participants to share perspectives on milk quality with other groups in the dairy industry?*

NOT EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	DID NOT ATTEND
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*To what extent was the **panel presentation** effective in demonstrating that different groups in the community have different points of view about the definition of safe milk?*

NOT EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	DID NOT ATTEND
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*To what extent was **Concurrent Session A** effective in increasing your awareness of the risk associated in milk from antibiotic residues?*

NOT EFFECTIVE	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE	VERY EFFECTIVE	DID NOT ATTEND
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Nailing down a message or objective for the evaluation of each session may require you to consult with the speaker, but at the same time, your discussion is likely to help the speaker to better focus on what they are planning to say or, what you want them to say. Defining your evaluation criteria in more specific terms for each session can indirectly improve the program, even before it begins.

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