
Need Addressed: The goal of this event was to provide value to the local area membership through ongoing learning, as well as an environment for networking with others in the learning industry. The total turnout of attendees was over 300 WLP professionals. This SOS provides information about organizing a highly successful annual conference.

Does this effort align with your chapter mission? Yes

Does this effort align with ASTD’s mission? Yes

Target Audience: Workplace Learning & Performance (WLP) professionals in central Ohio, and surrounding areas.

Costs/Resource Use: The goal was to provide this conference at cost. This was not meant as a revenue generator for Central Ohio ASTD, rather the conference was designed to take the money earned for the conference and put it right back into the event, thus providing true value to the attendees. Funding was obtained through vendors and sponsors as a result of board members and volunteers making phone calls. Three vendor levels were made available, each with its’ own benefit (details attached to this SOS). We ended up with about 35 vendor’s total. Additionally, we were able to obtain prizes to provide as giveaways; these prizes were mostly donated from vendors (e.g. Gasoline gift cards, industry related books, etc). Central Ohio ASTD also gave away certificates to two people to attend 2009 programs at our chapter for FREE! All the prizes were random drawings, and were drawn after all surveys were turned in from conference attendees. Winners were notified after the event.

How did you implement: Ann Karrick (our conference chairperson) developed bench strength through creating leads and committees for each of the areas responsible for implementing the conference. She developed a marketing group, vendor relations group, a venue/logistics group, and a participant experience group. Each month the team leads from these groups met and discussed status of their respective areas and shared ideas. Individual committees met as needed. Communication was the main key to making this event a success. The day of the conference, all conference volunteers and board members wore matching ASTD logo blue polo shirts, so that attendees could easily access someone to ask questions or talk with further about ASTD.

What were the Outcomes: Our membership base increased by approximately 50 new members as a result of the conference. Additionally, we only anticipated 200 attendees at the event and ended up with 312 people registered. The vendors were very happy about the number of people visiting the vendor expo area. Many of our vendors have even offered to deliver a future program (non-sales related) at an ASTD meeting, as a professional development learning opportunity for our members.

Lessons Learned: The venue contributed significantly to the success of the event. We chose COSI (the Center of Science and Industry) in downtown Columbus, Ohio and rented it out for the day. This venue offered a learning
based atmosphere with a fun and exciting twist. We incorporated the venue into the event and made it total learning experience. A few of the exhibits were open to the public, such as the ocean/water exhibit, and there was a traveling science cart with mini science experiments that took about 5-10 minutes of time to present. The price was very affordable, and in the current economy we heard feedback that this was a great value for the money. We created e-mail “blast” lists as a way to communicate to all members and non-members in an effort to market the conference. A series of e-mails were sent in the months leading up to the conference. Another tip for a successful conference is to form a partnership with your local university to complete the surveys. We worked with The Ohio State University (OSU) and had students assist in developing a survey and compiling the results for us.