

# **Short Course Evaluations: Is our documentation and supporting systems for short course evaluation measuring what they report to measure in terms of learning outcomes and attendee satisfaction?**

In 2016 Discover Your Best Consulting and its accredited training centre provisions agreed to be part of research to look at the effectiveness of evaluating short course outcomes.

Interviews were carried out with 'Principal Trainers' from a number of organisations of varying sizes alongside holding focus group with those that had attended programmes and desk top reviews (documentation analysis) of our documentation including our website and supporting course brochure. The process was completed over a series of weeks with results delivered to us at the end of 2016 and we are delighted with the results!

There were a number of themes that were separated by heading:

## 1 Short Course Training Offering

What are the short courses we have on offer by title, topic and subject area?

## 2 Methods Used

- What methods were used to evaluate the courses?
- Standardisation across courses
- Actual evaluation questions used in the process
- Timing of evaluation
- Effectiveness of the evaluation forms used
- Value in informal evaluation (discussion and observation)

## 3 Reasons for Evaluating

As an organisation, what were we trying to achieve by using the existing systems and documentation.

## 4 Identifying and Measuring Outcomes

- How do we go about identifying and then measuring the attendee?
- What were the unplanned learning outcomes, if any?

## 5 Ideal evaluation scenario

## 6 Problems getting meaningful feedback

- Reticence to complete
- Positivity verses honesty and trust

## 7 Organisational factors influencing behaviour change

- Systemic gaps in supporting engagement/transfer
- Need for organisational cultural shift

Whilst as expected, there are things that we need to do to get our processes to be the best that they can be, the feedback from those attending our programmes has been extremely positive. Their constructive feedback will help to inform the changes we make to our systems in 2017.

As a team, we are pleased with the comments that were made about the learning outcomes from those that attended our programmes and took part in the focus group meetings. In particular, we were pleased to read some of the **unplanned learning outcomes** that included comments such as:

"Awareness of destination"

"I've more confidence"

"your past life affects who you are, and the realisation that it doesn't have to be like that – understanding links to between past life and future prospects (*researcher comment* 'general agreement in the group about this') and a positive *Researcher comment* about the

'self-efficacy and enabling experiences shared by all participants.'

In terms of **engagement in training**/choice; responsibility for development comments from attendees included:

"we've all gone looking for answers, we've all had that need if you like to know that we've got to the point where we know we need to change and that's the difference, there's people that don't change they don't quite reach that point where they realise that they can change and then find a way of doing that..it was a forced change rather than a choice but I realised I'd got to start somewhere...."

### **Problems with collecting good quality feedback**

"Open text box comments generally quite positive – depends on how fuzzy headed I am/how long people have to process thoughts; take 5 minutes to think about how you can put this as a summary fit in that box, sometimes you've only got that little bit [of space to write] but there's so much up there (in your head) it's how do you fit it in?"

Thank you once again to all those who took part and we will be sure to keep you posted on how we are moving forward with the recommendations. If you have been on one of our programmes and have any further comments on how we can make our systems and processes more effective, please get in touch!

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