

6 Important Learning Event Scheduling Considerations

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In today's hectic world, choosing the best month, day, date and time to deliver your training can help make your learning events more successful. Since many factors will affect your learner's receptiveness and ability to focus on session concepts, you should consider a number of factors when scheduling your learning events. The following are some tips helping ensure maximum participation and transfer of training.

1. Consider Circadian Rhythms. Every person has a naturally occurring 24-hour biological pattern called a Circadian Rhythm. This internal "clock" often establishes the periods throughout the day when people are at peak performance and learn best. Some learners are at their best early in the day (morning people) while others peak later in the day (evening people). Morning people typically wake early, work feverishly through the morning into early afternoon and then start to slow down mentally and physically. By early evening, they are often ready for sleep. Evening people struggle to get going in the morning, but are at a peak in early afternoon and ready to stay active late into the evening or early morning. Planning heavy brainstorming or thinking activities between 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. allows you to capitalize on peak learning periods for both groups. Additionally, using a variety of activities to get learners up and moving throughout the session can stimulate both groups of learners.

2. Select the best month for your event. Some times of the year are more conducive to better attendance than others. Consider the following when planning your training in the United States. If you are in other countries, refer to your national calendar to check possible conflicting events.

Avoid scheduling during major religious or national holidays, if possible. January through May is typically a good timeframe for holding training, except for the first couple of weeks of January. This is because January follows the holiday season and many people are getting ready for the New Year and getting back into a routine after being out of the office for extended periods.

June through August might clash with vacation schedules while children are out of school. September through early November are often good months for workshops since travel is not unduly impacted by weather and there are not many major holidays during the period. Early December works well in non-Christian and Jewish countries. After the middle of the month you should avoid scheduling a session because of conflicts with the major religious holiday seasons.

3. Choose the right day. The best day of the week for attending a learning event for many learners will be dependent on their job, industry, responsibilities, and a variety of other issues. Some days seem to work better for most attendees. The following are some general guidelines: Avoid Monday since people typically return to work from a weekend, trip, or vacation and it tends to be a busy, stressful day. Some people also take extended weekends. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are typically safe days for most workers since they have usually caught up.

Fridays are often good days since many people have gotten most of their work completed during the week in preparation for being gone on Friday. A drawback is that some people take extended weekends and take off from work on Friday, especially if the following Monday is a holiday. Saturdays work well for self-development workshops or business retreats followed by a social gathering. One drawback is that some religions hold services on that day. Sundays are sometimes good for personal development workshops, but Saturdays tend to work better for most people since many people reserve Sunday for religious events and family time.

4. Pick the best date. As with choosing a month and day, consider the date(s) that you choose for training since many people have commitments that can distract from their ability to focus on learning. Earlier in the month works well for many people because many attendees have end of the month commitments that distract them or prevent training attendance. For example, sales people often have end of month reports that require time to create, accountants have end of month billing statements to prepare and managers have end of month productivity reports due.

5. Decide on an appropriate timeframe. Do not forget factors such as traffic patterns (rush hours), your audience (professionals who normally start work at 8:00 to 9:00 a.m., shift workers, or work at home people who have flexible schedules), and organizational commitments (planned events like picnics, celebrations, large sales meetings, or annual conferences) that would require attendance by potential attendees.

Half-day workshops are normally between 8 a.m. and 12:00 or 12:30 p.m. or 12:30 and 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. Full-day sessions are typically between 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. with lunch and breaks.

Consider when to start and end multi-day workshops, especially if attendees will be traveling to the meeting. Starting a bit later on the first day and ending early on the last day is helpful for people who commute from a distance or have to travel from distant locations. Additionally, if attendees will be arriving from international destinations, consider starting on a Monday or Tuesday to allow them to travel over a weekend and get acclimatized to the new time zone before class.

Anticipate rush hour traffic delays when conducting an evening session. Unless you are providing food, people will need to eat on their way or to bring food to the session. Evening sessions typically start between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. and end between 9:30 and 10:00 p.m. Noontime “lunch and learn” events between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. are good for quick refresher content, short presentations on a given topic, team building activities, or to introduce concepts, policies, products, procedures, or regulatory information.

6. Plan your training location well. By scheduling learning where people work, you avoid taking employees away from their office as long and can save travel expenses. The down side is that they are prone to going back to their office during breaks and returning late. Other people often drop by to speak to attendees as well. If you are holding training off the worksite you can avoid these drawbacks, but you should consider the time of year. If you are in a colder climate in the winter, learners may encounter ice and snow that can delay arrival in class. Warmer locations

tend to ease access and travel unless you are in an area at a time when hurricanes, storms, or other natural conditions can create challenges.

Bob Lucas B.S., M.A., M.A, CPLP is principal in Robert W. Lucas Enterprises, Inc and an internationally-known author and learning and performance professional. He has written and contributed to thirty-one books and compilations. He regularly conducts creative training, train-the-trainer, customer service, interpersonal communication and management and supervisory skills workshops. Learn more about Bob and his organization at www.robertwlucas.com and follow his blog at www.robertwlucas.com/wordpress.