

YOUR TURN ANDY RICHARDSON

Lunch-and-learn presentations bring excitement to workplace



Requests from companies planning lunch and learns for employees are trending much higher, according to FreeSpeakers.org, a pro bono speakers bureau. In the 2000s, lunch and learns seemed to decline, but in the past six months, the speakers bureau has noticed an increase in the number of requests for speakers for businesses.

Local groups and organizations such as Rotary Clubs, libraries and Chambers of Commerce are still the primary users of free speakers from our bureau, but the increase in companies making requests is significant and on the rise.

Lunch programs are usually 30–60 minutes and are held in a meeting room, conference space or auditorium. The sessions can be a nice perk for employees to learn about something new from an expert presenter. It could be a health and fitness topic, something historical or simply a motivational presentation.

The lunch-and-learn concept isn't about training employees on business processes and procedures. In fact, that's a big no-no. What employee wants to spend his or her lunch break learning mandatory company rules? Rather, the lunch and learn provides value and education about things outside the work sphere.

Some companies supply lunch; others invite attendees to bring a sack lunch. The food is a nice perk, but employees/attendees must find the program relevant, entertaining or enlightening. Companies are challenged to keep employees excited about these get-togethers.

The best lunch and learns have ample time allotted for conversation and discussion. When participants are actively

Continued on Page 21

involved in a discussion, there's a greater payoff for both the speaker and the audience.

It's a good idea to have an emcee whether the program is a single event or one of a series. The emcee introduces the speaker and topic and acts as host or

hostess for the event. If the lunch and learns are a series, the same person, if possible, should fill this role for the sake of continuity.

Promote the program. Broadcast it multiple times through traditional and electronic media to your potential participants. Include details such as time, date, place and plans for food. Communicate the benefits of attending. Maybe invite a local journalist.

Make certain the speaker will present evocative, comprehensible advice or information. Go over the time restrictions and remind the speaker to create a one-page leave-behind with his or her contact information.

Lunch-and-learn programs create conduits for information flow. Whether the info is targeted toward professional or personal development, the sessions can result in greater camaraderie and a



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boost in employee motivation.

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