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# Special Briefing

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## Leverage your Learning: Post Conference Debriefs By Mark Sanborn, CSP, CPAE

How can you get a better return on investment from the conferences you attend?

Consider what happened after the last conference you attended. Did you have interesting conversations, get new ideas from the speakers and session presenters and pick up on important trends? If so, what did you do with all the information?

In the future, why not share what you learned with your team?

After 30+ years attending meetings (24 of those years as a professional speaker), I can speak with a high level of authority: lots of benefits are lost when the conference ends because participants don't take what they learned back to their teams. When they get back to the office they get busy catching up and seldom share what they learned.

The solution is to hold a **post conference debrief**.

It is easy to do and, if done well, time efficient. Here's how to do it:

First, *review your notes*. Highlight or checkmark the important insights including these things:

- Big ideas
- Trends
- Potential Pitfalls
- New opportunities
- Actions that need to be taken

Next, *organize you ideas into a summary document*. I suggest these headings:

- Meeting themes: the consistent big ideas
- Trends: based on data and compelling evidence
- Most profitable ideas: to save money and/or make money
- Better practices: things you could be doing better
- Imperatives: things we must start doing or do differently

Then, give a report.

Invite the appropriate team members to the debrief. Present what you learned. Include a hard copy of your summary, but don't just read it. Explain and amplify what you've written.



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Now, *invite discussion.*

Ask some open-ended questions:

“What do you think?”

“Do you agree or disagree? Why?”

“What questions do you have?”

Finally, *end with a simple call to action.*

In 3-5 minutes make the ideas you picked up at the conference actionable. Move from what your people have heard to what they need to do.

This post-conference debrief could be done as a stand-alone meeting or integrated into a regular staff meeting. The time you devote to sharing what you learned will leverage your conference attendance, get your team on the same page and create convert more ideas into action.

**Mark Sanborn**, CSP, CPAE is president of Sanborn & Associates, Inc., an idea studio for leadership development. He is an award-winning speaker and the author of the bestselling books, The Fred Factor: How Passion In Your Work and Life Can Turn the Ordinary Into the Extraordinary, You Don't Need a Title to be a Leader: How Anyone Anywhere Can Make a Positive Difference and The Encore Effect: How to Achieve Remarkable Performance in Anything You Do. His book Up, Down or Sideways: How to Succeed When Times are Good, Bad or In

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