

Maximize Your Co-op's Investment in Employee Education

A Guide to Getting the Most Out of Your Training Dollars

How can you ensure that you and your co-op are maximizing the return on investment (ROI) when you and/or your staff attend a conference, meeting or training program?

NRECA created this guide to help your co-op get its money's worth on any educational program investment—not just ours. In it you will find a template for setting expectations, taking notes and following up afterwards.

cooperative.com/learning



Make the Case to Attend

1.

Set Your Goals: Meet with your manager to explain why you want to attend and your goals and expectations for what you will learn. Below are questions to guide the conversation.

a. What is the event? What is its purpose?

Is it a conference, meeting or training program? What topics will the event cover?

EVENT NAME: _____

b. What is the cost?

Registration, hotel, travel, etc.

c. Who is going to be there?

Co-op staff in similar job roles, vendors, industry and subject matter experts? Are there networking opportunities that can be beneficial for the co-op?

d. How does our co-op benefit from my attending this event?

Does the agenda cover current projects your co-op is involved in or exploring? Challenges or priorities your co-op is addressing? List the ways your attendance relates to your work.

e. How will I benefit from attending this event?

Is this a professional development opportunity for you to improve your skills and understanding of certain subjects? Is it an opportunity to help build your network? Does the event relate to your professional development goals?

Get the Most Out of Your Training Experience... Before the Event

2. **Make a Plan:** Now that you've made the case, you need to make a plan for how you will get the most out of your, and your co-op's investment. Below are prompts to guide this planning.

a. What learning am I personally seeking? What problems or challenges am I trying to solve and how will attending this program help me do that?

b. Here are three specific learning objectives/goals I have for attending.
Think about the problems, challenges and learning you listed above.

1.

2.

3.

c. Here are three questions I will seek answers to during the event:

1.

2.

3.

d. I will capture what I learn by:

Adults will forget what they've learned within 30 days if they don't record the information, ideas, etc. they are exposed to. It can be as simple as bringing (and using!) a notebook. What works best for you?

Get the Most Out of Your Training Experience... During the Event

3. Take Responsibility for Your Own Learning: Learning doesn't automatically happen just because you're physically at a conference, meeting or training program. To get the most out of the program, you need to actively participate. Below are questions to guide this process.

a. How am I doing compared to the goals I set for attending?
How can you apply the learning to your job? Each day, write down the top things you learned and how they align with the goals you created before the event. Send yourself an email with these observations at the end of each day.

b. How am I actively participating in the learning activities and networking opportunities?
Are you listening during sessions, participating in group exercises, connecting the topic to your work at the co-op? Are you asking questions of speakers and/or fellow participants?

Get the Most Out of Your Training Experience... After the Event

4. Follow Up With Your Direct Manager and Colleagues: When you return to the co-op after the event, make time to sit down with your manager to talk about your experience. Here are a few prompts to prepare you for that conversation:

- a. Based on all that I learned and the people I met, here are the top three takeaways from this event and how they align with the learning objectives and goals that I set for myself before the event:

These could be connections you've made, ideas you've discovered, resources you plan to use after the event, etc.

1.

2.

3.

- b. These are the tangible things that I am bringing back from this event:

Notes, participant manuals, handouts from sessions, etc.

- c. Three contacts I made at the event and how I can follow-up with them:

1.

2.

3.

- d. Here are two actions I intend to take as a result of having participated in this event:

What are you going to do differently or more of since attending the event? Is there a conversation you want to have?

- e. This is the one big thing I learned that I want to share with my colleagues here at the co-op:

This can be anything: people you met, exhibits you saw, speakers you heard, etc.

If We Don't Use It, We Lose It!

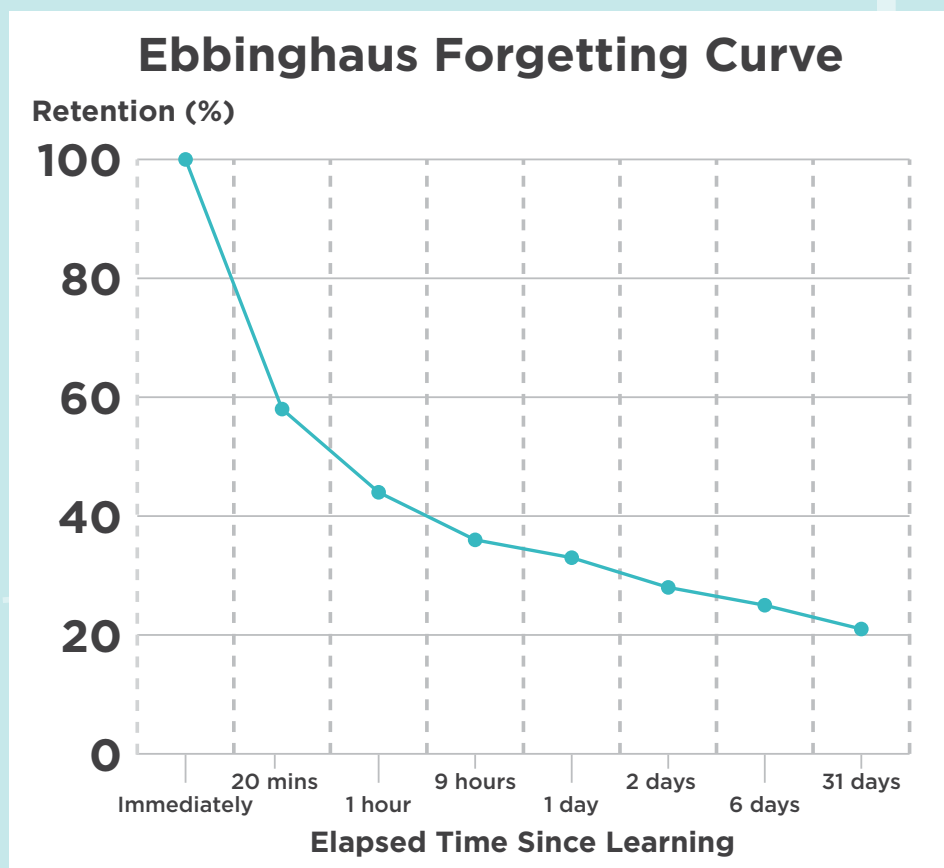
Hermann Ebbinghaus, a notable German psychologist, was the first to demonstrate that learning retention declines over time if there is no attempt to retain it.

According to Ebbinghaus' "forgetting curve," our retention of information can decline very rapidly, depending on a couple of things, including:

- The strength of your memory
- The amount of time that has passed since learning

By 30 days after an initial learning event, if no attempt is made to retain the learning, we remember only about 21% of what was originally learned. That's why it's important to set learning goals, make notes of what you learned and share it.

Use it so we don't lose it!



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