

## How to Justify Attending a Conference\*

Many travel budgets and training budgets have been slashed, and companies are experiencing severe financial problems. If you feel that the training you receive at a conference is worth the cost, then you'll probably need to justify it. So here are some things you might want to consider:

- Create BIG action reports. I used to create a 100-page 'book' after a conference or course and I routed it to the world. I included new tools and techniques, warnings, new features, rumors, etc. When your managers see how much you've gotten out of the week, and how you shared it with others in your organization, they'll be more willing to fund it again next year.
- Form a team, distribute the information, act on it, and follow up. If more than one person from your organization can attend the meeting, assign specific educational session, networking events, vendors, etc. to different people, then meet back the following week to see which items have been, or should be, acted upon. Then follow-up with a note to management to describe what actions you've taken and what improvements you've made.
- Train others. After the meeting, give a presentation to your co-workers on what you have learned. By sharing the information, you reduce some of the jealousy felt because you were allowed to go instead of them, and the training experience for others is invaluable. I can't overstate how important this is. If you're uncomfortable in front of others, then just concentrate on providing a good report.
- Implement at least one performance change you've learned. Be sure to document the savings, and emphasize that this savings would not have been realized if you had not attended the conference or class. You could justify five years of a conference!
- Compute the cost of a high-priced consultant and show your management how much free hallway or electronic consulting you've received during the meeting. Almost all of the consultants/vendors are more than happy to chat with attendees.
- If you're trying to justify the cost of a conference, simply compare it to almost any education course. The AHVRP conferences are almost always the better bargain. The material comes from one of two terrific sources: Well-known and respected consultants and healthcare volunteer resource professionals in hospitals and health systems who have already been through what you're planning to go through. The experience and knowledge available are staggering.

Whenever you are in a meeting or having an informal discussion, if you have an idea or a point to make, preface it with "One of the speakers at AHVRP said..." I'm not saying you should throw this out just to be name-dropping, but if you really did get a relevant idea from one of those sources, then giving the proper credit will continue to reinforce the idea to management that such training continues to benefit your organization even months after you get the information.

\*Excerpted from Cheryl Watson's TUNING Letter, modified for AHVRP with permission.