

## **Chapter 7**

# **HOW TO PLAN AND DELIVER EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

***This chapter addresses the following topics:***

- Overview
- Creating Content Value
- Types of Programs and Their Relative Advantages
- How to Develop Educational Programs
- The Importance of Program Affordability
- Marketing for Greater Participation
- Offering Continuing Education Units

## OVERVIEW

One of ASHE's major goals is to provide its members with opportunities for professional growth. A chapter continuing education program provides a vehicle for members to gain the knowledge, understanding, and skills they need. At the same time, the program encourages members to participate in the chapter's activities, and enhances ASHE's image as the organization of choice for individuals working in all aspects of health care engineering.

An effective and coherent chapter educational program is based on an understanding of how adults learn, which is significantly different than the approaches used when we were all in school as children. Adults tend to be pragmatically oriented, wanting nuts and bolts information and materials that apply directly to them and their work setting. In addition, they like to be actively engaged in the learning process and often prefer to learn by doing rather than simply by observing or listening.

To measure the success of your educational program, keep three different aspects of the experience in mind throughout the planning process.

**Program Objectives**—What do you hope to accomplish? How many members do you want to reach? How extensive an educational program can you implement?

**Financial Objectives**—How much money can the chapter spend on educational programming? Do you expect to make money on the programs?

**Qualitative Objectives**—How well will you be able to meet your members' needs and interests?

## CREATING CONTENT VALUE

The first and most important element in an educational program is the needs of your members. You need to determine the subject matter—the specific information and skills your members want to acquire—before you can select the appropriate program format or speakers.

### Why content is critical

There is a direct correlation between attendance at an educational program and the relevance of the subject matter. By focusing your programs on current and future problems or issues facing health care engineering and facility management, you can have a direct impact on how your members face these issues. It is critical, therefore, that you systematically assess your members' needs and interests.

Sometimes, however, members are not aware of particular issues that will affect their lives—new technology or techniques that would help them perform their jobs; impending regulations; social, economic, or political developments; or general industry issues. As a chapter and professional leader, you may see a particular issue as having an impact when many of your members may not. Under those circumstances, educational programming can create awareness about those particular issues that do not surface in a member needs assessment.

### How to Determine Members' Needs and Wants

An educational programming committee is vital to ensuring broad member involvement in chapter activities. But this relatively small group may not be totally representative of the membership and may not have sufficient information to plan the types of programs that will appeal to a broad cross-section of your members. A systematic process for extracting member input to identify educational needs and desires will enable the committee to plan based on concrete information.

To be sure you have accurate data, use at least two methods to collect data on members' needs and desires. While you probably have heard a great deal about techniques such as focus groups, these require more time and expertise than chapter leaders generally have. The following methods are among those most useful and easiest to implement:

Discussions with key individuals, leaders, and experts in the field can provide information about and insight into problems or issues they face or anticipate facing.

Questionnaires and surveys are useful ways to elicit information or confirm problems and issues that have already been identified.

Written evaluations of previous programs, particularly when a place for comments and suggestions is included, provide valuable insight into members' reactions to both content and format.

Articles that appear in ASHE publications or in professional journals also are excellent sources of problems or trends that face the industry.

In the process of collecting this data, it is important to differentiate between groups of your members. Professional position, degree of experience, and academic background are all factors that affect the type of educational offering they will want.

## **TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND THEIR RELATIVE ADVANTAGES**

The subject matter of a program will provide you with a framework for deciding the program format. You will also want to consider the difficulty of the subject matter and the appropriate size of the audience.

### **One-Day Seminars and Workshops**

The seminar or workshop is an ideal way to teach new skills or engage members in an in-depth learning experience. Because of their intense nature, these programs are most effective with small groups ranging in size from 10 to 50, depending on the subject matter or format. Their small size enables all the attendees to actively participate in the discussion process.

Seminars are specialized study sessions led by an authority on the subject who can assist and guide the learners and who provides them with detailed materials and texts. They tend to be more academic in nature, often focusing on theory. The format usually consists of a short lecture or presentation followed by discussion in small groups that then report their results back to the larger group. Workshops are generally a more hands-on learning experience and are especially useful when the desired outcome is enhancement of a skill. Both create an atmosphere of great involvement and team spirit.

### **Monthly Meetings**

A less intense but equally effective approach to education can occur at monthly chapter meetings. Because these programs are generally fairly short, this format does not lend itself to an in-depth approach to a topic. However, regular educational programs for chapter members can be scheduled into these meetings to convey general information about a specific topic, or when the desired outcome is to change attitudes about a particular issue.

The frequency of monthly educational programs enables you to vary the topic, thereby appealing to a wider audience. The formats can range from lecture presentations to panel discussions. Finally, in these settings audience participation can be actively encouraged. The added advantage of a monthly meeting is regularity of contact—a predetermined time when members can gather for networking and discussion. The networking that occurs is often as valuable as the formal educational offering.

### **Are Business Meetings Necessary?**

Business meetings that are purposeful and well run and accomplish the necessary business in a reasonable time are an important component of the smooth operation of a chapter. All too often, however, the only people who attend such meetings are the chapter officers. One way to increase attendance is to schedule an educational program in conjunction with the chapter business meeting and invite the membership. In addition to benefiting

from the program, members will have greater exposure to the issues the chapter faces, and, of course, their participation in chapter activities may increase.

Many organizations find that combining business with meeting member needs to be so effective that they routinely schedule programs along with chapter business meetings. The caveat is that the business meeting needs to be efficient and effective or people will attend only the program, or not at all.

## **Conferences**

The term “conference” often signifies a large meeting of several days’ duration. In fact, conferences can range in size from 25 to more than 2,000 attendees, and can be as brief as a half day, or as long as 3 to 4 days. The term conference is usually reserved for an [educational program](#) that includes multiple elements, from technical papers and presentations to lectures and speeches, many of which occur simultaneously. A conference can accommodate larger audiences, and both the program content and format of presentations can be varied, thereby appealing to the widest possible audience. Insert ASHE website link showing ASHE Education programs.

## **Do Vendors and Education Mix?**

One particularly effective teaching technique for adults is to create an experience where they are physically engaged in the learning process. Involving vendors in an educational program presents an excellent opportunity for such direct learning. In such settings participants can experience first-hand demonstrations of particular equipment or a new product or have an opportunity to actually use a skill.

## **HOW TO DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Once you have determined the content and format of the educational experience, it is time to begin planning the program.

### **Sources for Program Ideas**

The educational program committee has the task of developing specific programs that will address member needs and attract an audience. A creative brainstorming session is an excellent way to begin. ASHE is a good source of program ideas, as are other chapters that have carried out successful programs. Programs that worked before can be recycled, particularly if there is continued interest in the content.

### **Creating a Balance Between Social and Educational Programs**

In addition to professional development and keeping up with trends and information in health care engineering and facility management, ASHE members, like members of most associations, want to interact with people who have similar interests and concerns. Networking with other professionals is an educational experience in itself, where people share problems they face and solutions they have found. Therefore, it is critical to include opportunities for socializing in every educational experience. For many people, this is the primary reason they attend.

### **Where to Find Good Speakers**

Finding a good speaker is often a challenge, but it doesn’t need to be, especially if it becomes a part of your ongoing chapter planning efforts. When you attend ASHE conferences and meetings, ask yourself whether your members would like to hear the speaker you just heard, or to learn more about that particular topic. ASHE maintains a faculty database that can be shared with chapters. Keep a running list of potential speakers and regularly ask colleagues for suggestions. And don’t forget about local professionals. Your own membership may have a great deal of expertise that can be tapped.

If a chapter member receives an award or other recognition for innovative ideas, ask them to share that at a meeting.

While the content and socializing are important to an educational program, the speaker determines the quality of the experience. Among the criteria used in selecting speakers are their mastery of the subject, how effective they are in engaging their audience, the quality of their materials, and how well they present their ideas. Try to select speakers you or others have heard so that you can be sure their presentation style is appropriate for your members.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF PROGRAM AFFORDABILITY**

Know your potential audience for a particular program and assess the whether a particular fee is fair and tolerable. Affordability is often an important consideration in the decision to attend a particular program, and you can often determine this as part of the needs assessment process. If you are positioning the offering for senior executives, a higher cost may be warranted than if it is geared toward general staff. You will probably want to charge a lower fee if participants will be paying for the program themselves.

### **Don't View Education as the Major Revenue Source**

Most chapters do not consider their educational program as a major revenue source. Local educational programs are often considered a benefit of membership that is included in chapter dues, and charging more than a nominal fee may have a negative effect on the chapter's ability to engage member interest. Of course, you must balance this with the funds available in the treasury.

### **Ways to Supplement with Other Revenue**

There are a number of ways to supplement the costs of a particular program to keep the fee low. If you include a meal function, you can often charge enough to cover basic program costs. An excellent way to attract potential members, as well as add to the balance sheet, is to invite non-members and charge them a higher fee. Finally, you can seek underwriters who may have a particular interest in the content of the program.

## **MARKETING FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION**

Marketing programs is not a complex process. Thinking about marketing at the beginning of the planning stage will help you position your programs for success. You already began the process when you assessed your members' needs, a market analysis technique that gives you information about the educational offerings different segments of your membership want and how much they will pay for a program.

Develop a systematic plan for marketing the programs by determining the target audiences, the type of materials each audience will receive, and the timing of these efforts. Present your educational program as a coherent series of offerings that members will want to attend either individually or as a whole.

### **Who Should Know?**

If you limit your public relations efforts about chapter educational programming to chapter members, you will miss the opportunity to promote ASHE in the larger hospital engineering, facility management, and health care communities, as well as the general community. Publicity about ASHE programs also increases the visibility of ASHE and enhances the value of membership in the organization. So ask yourself whom you want to influence and target your promotions accordingly.

### **Who Should Be Invited?**

Be realistic about the potential audience of a particular program. However, don't narrow your mailing too much or you will limit the scope of potential attendees.

## **When Should They Know?**

The best conceived, designed, and executed program can fail dismally if you don't allow sufficient lead time in the promotion stage. It doesn't help to learn today that the perfect program to meet your most pressing need was offered yesterday. For attendance programs that require committing more than lunch or breakfast time, allow at least twice the lead time as you would for a regular chapter meeting. Four to six weeks minimum between receipt of the announcement and the event is not unrealistic. "Receipt" here is the operative word, however, because you cannot rely on the post office to deliver bulk mail in a timely and expedient fashion (allow at least 14 business days for delivery). Don't undermine your efforts by failing to allow enough time for the promotion to reach the potential audience.

## **How to Attract Interest**

The likelihood of generating interest in educational programs is significantly increased if your materials demonstrate how participants will benefit from attending the program. Promotional materials should be attractive, with a catchy program title and a description that clearly explains what will be covered. In addition to publicizing programs in the chapter newsletter, send out invitations and press releases. Take out an ad if you have funds and it is an important program. Find a co-sponsor who will also publicize the program. Taken together, all of these efforts will pay off with increased attendance.

## **Importance of Selling Administrators on Value**

It is especially important to target administrators as a special audience to receive promotional material about your programs. Even if they are unlikely to attend themselves, they have the authority to approve professional development opportunities for their staff, and they need to be convinced that the program will ultimately benefit the hospital or health care facility. Therefore, it is critical to include information explaining "What's in it for them?" in your marketing materials.

## **OFFERING CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS**

Continuing education units (CEUs) help your members document their professional development and lifelong learning activities. As defined by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET), one CEU is equal to 10 contact hours of instruction in a continuing education activity. Any activity shorter than one hour in duration is not eligible for CEUs.

CEUs are based on 60-minute hours. For example, .10 CEU is granted for every 60 minutes of instruction, not including breaks, registration times, introductory periods, and evaluation times.

### **Events Eligible for CEUs**

Events that are eligible for CEUs include workshops, seminars, conferences, and audio programs one or more hours in duration.

### **How to Apply for CEUs**

ASHE is an official provider of CEUs. If you wish to have your chapter program [approved for CEU credit](#), the following information must be provided:

- Faculty biographies that indicate that the instructor is qualified to present the material and meet the learning objectives.

- Learning objectives for each session for which you are requesting CEU approval.

- A timed agenda for the program.

Your request should then be sent via mail, fax or e-mail to:

Avis Gordon  
Senior Specialist, Chapter Relations  
ASHE  
155 N. Wacker Dr, Ste 400  
Chicago, IL 60606  
Fax: (312) 278-0485  
E-mail: agordon@aha.org

Please allow five business days for approval of your request. Your chapter is responsible for keeping records of attendees and the number of CEUs provided for each program.

### **Promoting CEUs**

Offering CEUs encourages people to attend your programs to maintain a certification, such as the Certified Healthcare Facility Manager (CHFM) and Certified Healthcare Constructor (CHC) designations offered by the American Hospital Association (AHA) Certification Center, as well as the Senior ASHE (SASHE) and the Fellow ASHE (FASHE) designations. CEU approval also adds credibility to your program and helps advance the fields of health care engineering and facility management.

Once ASHE has given your program CEU approval, you should state on your marketing brochure that:  
“Attendees will earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) approved by the American Society for Healthcare Engineering of the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the AHA Certification Center. A maximum of (# of CEUs) CEUs can be earned by attending (chapter program’s name).”

If you have any additional questions, contact ASHE at (312) 422-3800 or via e-mail at ashe@aha.org.