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Research and White Papers

Study: A/V Improves Attendee Learning

By Matt Alderton

February 26, 2013

A/V isn't just flashy. It's also functional. So argues meetings A/V supplier PSAV, which this month published a new white paper in which it demonstrates that sensory-rich A/V enhances attendee learning by improving attendee retention.

"Audiovisual technology has come a long way from its early days of overhead projectors to today's current usage of PowerPoint or Keynote slides, video, lighting and music," says Meg Fasy, PSAV's vice president of industry relations. "More aptly called event technologies, A/V plays a very important part in what an audience experiences and how they learn and retain the meeting's message. While attendees look forward to the entertainment value that A/V brings to an event, neuroscience is actually proving that these event technologies are enhancing learning and improving the entire meeting experience."

Called "Audiovisual Technologies and Adult Learning in Meetings," PSAV's white paper was produced in partnership with BrainStrength Systems, a learning and performance organization that collaborated with PSAV on a study of adult learning during meetings. When information is presented orally by a presenter, the study found, individuals remember about 10 percent of what is said when they're tested three days later. By contrast, when visuals are included — a picture versus text — individuals remember 65 percent of what is said.

"Everything we experience occurs through our senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch," Fasy says. "Our brain registers and responds to everything in our environment and, with modern brain imaging technologies, neuroscientists are now able to pinpoint what's happening in our brains as we undergo experiences. This allows us to identify how our brains interpret and respond to our world, and to use this information to design meeting environments and contexts that maximize learning and produce memorable attendee experiences. Only then are we achieving meeting objectives."

PSAV also studied the power of peripheral messages and found that:

- Placing posters or screens above eye level stimulates the visual mode of recall, optimal for maximum retention of your main message;
- Placing posters or screens at eye level stimulates learners to talk about the content and engage in a discussion; and
- Placing posters or screens below eye level evokes an emotional response to the content.

“Our purpose in compiling and reporting on this research is to provide meeting planners and facility managers with an understanding of the vital role audiovisual technology plays in the meeting experiences that attendees have,” Fasy says. “Often, AV is just an item on a checklist — simply a logistic that must be handled. If, instead, it is used intentionally to work with the brain’s capacities, audiovisual technologies can produce specific and targeted effects that maximize learning and memory, convey your message in memorable ways, and produce the meeting outcomes you desire.”

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