



Inspiring Leadership Conference 2018

14 - 15 June 2018, ICC, Birmingham

Delegate evaluation feedback report

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Dear Colleague,

Firstly, **a big thank you** to all of you who took the time to respond to the post conference evaluation survey.

We received over **400** completed questionnaires providing us with a rich source of data on which to continue building the Inspiring Leadership conference experience.

Inevitably the change in format from the traditional 3 day Wednesday lunchtime to Friday lunchtime to a 2 day Thursday/ Friday model generated some comment. Of those delegates that commented **31** said they preferred the previous model and **6** said they welcomed the shift to two days.

The rationale for the change was prompted by a combination of reducing delegates numbers since 2015 and feedback from the host partners that the 3 day model was unsustainable in the face of funding and resourcing challenges facing the sector.

We were therefore delighted to see **207** additional delegates attend the 2018 conference than attended the 2017 conference with **41%** of the audience being first time attendees.

A good number of you also told us that the Friday finish time was a challenge particularly for those delegates travelling a distance home from Birmingham and we'll take a look to see what we could do here.





In addition to the quantitative data on speakers, workshops and conference facilities you provide us with qualitative feedback that tells us how you felt about the conference. It is this verbatim commentary that we find the rich insights into what works well, what needs improvement and ideas for future conferences.

The verbatim feedback this year stretched to **85** pages of A4! That's nearly **30,000** words, the equivalent of a good-sized dissertation and an awful lot of rich data to absorb.

In breaking with tradition, we thought this year we'd share some of the feedback headlines with our delegates, feel free to share with others.

Let's start with a few positives and negatives.

“Utterly inspirational, powerful, mind blowing conference. I feel my view of leadership has been transformed through this conference. It re-energises me every year, I would be a poorer Headteacher without it”

“This is a conference for your soul as well as your mind. You can expect to be challenged as well as inspired and be ready to adapt and change. If you engage with it - it will change you.”

“I would have preferred a wide choice of workshops and master classes. Some of the breaks were very long.”

“Gap between speakers on Thursday afternoon”

“Inspirational! You can't afford NOT to attend”

“Where speaker/workshop did not make a clear link to transferable skills/strategies to apply in an educational leadership context.”



Masterclass and Workshops

Clearly based on the above small selection of comments for some it is a must attend conference and for others we just didn't quite tick all the right boxes.

Overall 6 of the 7 keynote speakers and 4 of the 6 masterclass speakers were rated **90%+** excellent or good. And **90%** of delegates said that Inspiring Leadership either met or exceeded their expectations and **82%** of respondents said they would attend the conference again.

Workshops, as always, were a bit more hit and miss. 8 of the 20 sessions offered at this year's conference scored above **10%** poor. Conversely 8 of the 20 sessions scored between **70%** and **91%** excellent or good. We continue to work hard on this area of the conference content and will be looking closely again at how we develop this part of the conference programme.

Question 8 we asked if there were specific speakers you'd like to see at future conferences and question 11 asked what topics and themes you'd like to see in future years.

In response to these questions we received a wide range of suggestions which will form the basis of the 2019 Organising group kick off meeting scheduled for mid-September.



A conference headlines infographic is available to view on the conference website at: www.inspiringleadership.org/#evaluation



Keynote and Masterclass speakers were rated an average of 85% 'EXCELLENT' or 'GOOD'.



Exhibition

The exhibition environment is always a challenging test of our organisation and management capabilities. Without the sponsors and exhibitors Inspiring Leadership would be a very different conference. We carry out a detailed evaluation exercise with the sponsors and exhibiting organisations and occasionally the views of these stakeholders are diametrically opposed to those of delegates. For example, sponsors and exhibitors want as much face time as possible with delegates some of whom want much shorter break times.

Curiously though for some delegates the breaks are not long enough and longer is sought as time for reflection or so that the conference feels 'less rushed'.

“it felt very rushed with less reflection time”

The objectives of many of the sponsors and exhibitors is simply to build awareness of their brand and service or product offer. Sure, some are there simply to secure sales but these tend to be few and most are just looking for good quality conversations with senior leaders to secure potential leads with the potential for future business in the year ahead.

We are always challenged to freshen up the exhibition by securing new organisations that returning delegates may not be aware of and ensuring that sponsors and exhibitors feel that they have had ample opportunity to meet their objectives.

We are continually seeking to balance the needs of sponsors, exhibitors and delegates.

We asked our sponsors and exhibitors what their objectives are for attending the conference and here's what some of them said:

“To network and form contacts with school leaders around the country”

“To promote well being in schools and to develop relationships with new clients”

“Raise our profile. Speak to key decision makers”

Wellbeing zone

Having trialled the Wellbeing zone in 2016 and developed the offer in 2017 and 2018 we still have much to learn and improve in this area. But it was encouraging to see a significant increase in the number of references to wellbeing and the promotion of more positive wellbeing practices in the evaluation responses.



Insights

Perhaps the question that offers us the greatest insight into the impact of the conference and the benefits it offers to school leaders, their teams and ultimately their students is ***'Do you intend to do anything differently as a result of what you have heard and learnt at the conference?'***

With 13 pages of comment in response to this question to add to the 10 pages of comment provided in response to the question ***'What was the most valuable element of the conference?'*** we derive a huge sense of satisfaction that so much positive action is inspired by the content of the conference.

For a good number of you it was about discovering, outing and taming your inner chimp! For others **Charles Hazlewood** ignited the importance of placing music and the arts higher in the curriculum priority. **Lucy Adams** provoked a new take on performance management and **Spencer West** gave you permission and a compelling logic not to be afraid to ask for help as a leader and Team GB Olympic gold hockey medallists **Kate** and **Helen Richardson-Walsh** set out the importance on "putting fires out early" for the creation of highly effective teams.

A small selection of comments is shown below:

"Really consider the role of performance management in the school. Try to better manage my inner chimp. Consider how to ensure more open communication within my SLT. Consider how as a cluster we may be able to impact on national policy."

"What kind of people are we?' was a powerful thought provoking session so will be using some of this. The Steve Peters session and understanding our inner Chimp was very helpful, it may become the new buzzword in education."

"Many changes and impact on our ongoing work in school. Changes/additions to performance management processes, stronger practices in supporting positive emotional health of pupils and colleagues, greater clarity in advocating and promoting research-based changes in learning opportunities for pupils, small but important changes in ensuring adults in school live and model what we teach about growth mindsets. In addition, the chance to watch such accomplished and varied speakers has made me reflect on my own presentation skills and style in different settings/contexts."

"Put more professional trust in my team and allow them to drive the school improvement from the middle."

"Regarding parental leadership, trust and precision. Reinvigorate vision, values and beliefs."

"It reinvigorated me and reminded me why I do what I do."



Do we receive negative comments? Yes of course.

In asking '*What was the least valuable element of the conference?*' and '*What would we need to do to exceed your expectations next year?*' we invite critical comment on the conference experience.

It is of course always rewarding to receive the positive stuff but it is these critical comments where we can learn the most and make compensating adjustments in the following year. However, there are some areas where we just cannot meet these requests. For example, running workshops on both conference days would require us to hire workshops room from the ICC on both conference days increasing the costs to the conference and the duration of the lunch and refreshment breaks are necessary to ensure exhibitors have sufficient face time with delegates.

We don't pretend to get it all right for everyone and we know that the Inspiring Leadership experience isn't right for everyone.

But for those leaders that derive great value from the conference and return year after year we will continue to listen to the feedback, learn and improve to deliver the highest quality speakers and conference content.



90% of delegates said that the conference either 'MET' or 'EXCEEDED' their expectations.

Below is a tweet that was posted in the evening after the conference ended which for us captures exactly why we strive each year to put on the very best conference if this is what can be achieved.

"#ilconf18 has opened my eyes. Global leadership from all walks of life has reshaped my thinking in only two days! I am grateful that the experience felt an investment in me which is in turn my school and ultimately the children that attend it."



SAVE THE DATE!

We are pleased to announce that the sixth Inspiring Leadership Conference will take place on 6 – 7 June 2019 at the ICC, Birmingham.

We look forward to seeing you there!



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