

# Plan Your Next Lunch and Learn

Technology companies have something that not everybody has, technology know-how. We've got the scoop. We know our stuff. Why not use that knowledge to get people interested in your company. Start a Lunch and Learn! Lunch and Learns are a great opportunity to show the residential and business community that not only are you a technology company, but you can put your money where your mouth is. You can help others find their way through the scary technology forest full of man-eating operating systems, social media sorcery and Office goblins. Oh My!

## Step 1: Branding (3 months before)

Go ahead, call it a Lunch and Learn, that's a great name. The problem is, everyone else might call theirs a lunch and learn so you'll just blend into the crowd. If you brand it to your company, you'll stand out and be recognizable as a service. Come up with something catchy, something fun and all your own. We call ours Tech Bites....Technology, one byte at a time. Ties in the technology and it also hints at food!

## Step 2: Pricing (3 months before)

Do your research and see if there are other providers of similar services in your area. What do they charge? Do they offer lunch with their training or are attendees expected to brown bag it? How long is each training session? All of these will factor in to what you set your price point at. Or maybe you just decide to provide the training at no cost. It's entirely up to you. We charge \$25 for customers and \$10 for Managed Service Clients. Lunch included.

## Step 3: Timing (2 months before)

Timing is everything. Pick the dates and times you will have these classes. Does it work with your office? Is it during a holiday? Do you have instructors available? These can make or break your plans for a successful lunch and learn if you schedule classes when people are just not available, whether it's attendees or staff.

If you know you are going to have these once a month or once a week, sit down with all involved and verify people are not on vacation, training rooms are available, instructors are available, and it doesn't conflict with another event.

These are called lunch and learns for a reason, it's during lunchtime. We schedule ours from 11:30am – 1:00pm. We encourage people to eat between 11:30am – 12:00pm and start the training shortly after. We have also started having an optional extended question & answer period from 1:00pm – 2:00pm. So if attendees felt they need more time and had the time to spare, they could stay.

#### **Step 4: Topics (2 months before)**

The goal is for these lunch and learns to be something our clients find useful. So, we try to come up with topics that we believe our clients/customers will be most interested in. Talk to your techs. Do you have a front counter area where people come in to ask questions? Do you have dispatchers or a call center that answers customer calls? Talk to all of these people and find out what the customers are having trouble with. What do they have the most questions about? Base your class topics around those. Going to the source is the best option. If you have customers constantly calling in about the new Office 2013 layout, teach a class on the new features. Come up with your session titles/topics and make sure you have very qualified people teaching the classes. You want to be prepared and educated. Nothing worse than having a question come up on something you are teaching because you are a 'technology expert' and not being able to answer it. Do your research.

#### **Step 5: Swag**

It's entirely up to you, but swag is a great way to get the name of your lunch and learn out there and it also adds a fun touch for the attendees. We ordered branded mouse pads that we have sitting at every workstation in our training room. After each session, we tell each attendee that they are more than welcome to take the mouse pads home with them or back to work with them. The collective "Ohhh" says it all. People love goodies.

#### **Step 6: Communications (1 month before)**

Time to get the word out. If you have a database of clients, prospects and customers, use them! All of these offices has staff that need training on certain things. Create emails detailing your new program and all of the aspects of it. Why it's here and who can benefit from it. A hearty lunch is included. How to register. Where to go. Where to pay.

Set up links to the Lunch and Learn on your website along with a way for people to register. List a running 3 month topic/agenda calendar for the upcoming classes.

Create a press release announcing your new product and send it out to your media lists inviting them to come and participate as well.

Put together a print ad and find the best day to run technology ads. Or if you want to target the senior crowd, what is the best time to run an ad? What is the best section, ask for specific placement.

Try to get a radio package that gives you a handful of mentions throughout the day. Doesn't have to go into great detail, but short tidbits just to get the word out and people curious.

We have found that sending out 3 announcements works best for us. We typically send out the first email regarding the upcoming class about 3 weeks in advance. A second blast goes out the following week and the 'Last Chance' goes out the Friday prior to the event. Last Chance emails seem to have a great deal of responses because people finally feel a sense of urgency.

As attendees register we send a registration confirmation email, then we send them a reminder the day before the event. Just because they've registered doesn't mean they'll show up so reminders are a great idea.

### **Step 7: Lunch!! (1 week prior)**

Time to decide on what you are going to serve your attendees for lunch. If you have the budget and the space, catered, buffet style hot lunches are always great. We've found that a sandwich bar is a great option. Put out some sandwich platters, salads, chips, cookies and drinks and voila, lunch! It seems to be an easy and fairly neat choice as well. Make sure you find out if any of your attendees have diet restrictions as well and accommodate those. Nothing worse than signing up for a lunch and learn and not being able to eat because you are allergic to bread!

Check with your catering company to find out when the last day is to place the order and set your registration cutoff for the day before that. Then you are most likely to get an accurate headcount for the meal. Set yourself a reminder to submit your lunch order.

### **Step 8: Game Day!**

The attendees have registered. The courses have been laid out and the food has been ordered. Now make sure your training room is ready. Make sure all of the computers are on and functioning properly. If you are training on specific programs, make sure it's been installed on all computers. Have a technician on standby in case there are any hiccups. Nothing worse than being a technology company, providing technology training sessions only to have technical difficulties. Oops. Make sure you are all in order. Can't stress that enough.

Make name tags for all of the attendees, it makes them feel special and important. Set up a registration table to greet people as they arrive. If you are collecting payment as people arrive, please make sure you have an efficient system to collect payment and enough staff to handle any rushes of people. Somehow people don't seem to wander in, they all come at once! Make sure you're ready for the stampede. Also, be prepared for there to be a few early bloomers. There never fails to be one person that decides they need to beat the crowd and get there 1 hour early.

Have someone on hand to escort people to the training room as well. Once people start checking in, you don't really want them all standing around the lobby or reception area. Training begins!

### **Step 9: Follow-Up**

As the training is finishing up, pass out surveys. Time to find out what they thought. Include places to comment on the topic, the speaker/trainer, what they'd like to see in the future. Again, going to the source is the best place to get information. We've come up with some of our best classes based entirely on feedback.

As you pass out the surveys, pass out information on the next Lunch and Learn taking place. We've had several people register for the next class before the day was out based on information we sent them home with.

Lastly, take your list of attendees and send them an email thanking them, information regarding the next Lunch and Learn and a quick link to register. We love repeat offenders! Happy learning!

## Lunch and Learn Budget Checklist

Make sure you budget for the following items. Prices, particularly for advertising, will vary drastically based on your area.

Item	Type	Price per Unit
Food	Hot Buffet	\$11-13 per head
	Sandwich buffet	\$10 per head using a caterer \$5 per head using your local grocery store
	Drinks	<\$1 per head
	Chips	\$7 for snack packs for 50
	Cookies	\$10 per platter
Advertisements	Print	\$300 for ¼ pg local tabloid paper (mid-week, full color)
	Radio	\$400 per month (segment sponsor)
Swag	Mousepads	\$2.95 per mousepad (quantity 200)
	Branded Chocolate Bars	\$1.90 per bar (quantity 250)

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