

Out of sight, out of mind



By [Tiffany Markman](#)

7 Sep 2017

So you've been to a session of training, a presentation or a conference. Someone wowed you with his or her insights or approach, and you're inspired to change. For six hours. Then your working world shifts into default mode, because that's how working worlds work, and you snap back into old habits.



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You're on an 'insights high', says Skyler Moss, director of digital marketing, HCSS, "...until you slam into the wall that is your day-to-day. What you thought would change your company last week becomes a secondary thought on Monday." Insights gone. Approach forgotten. Potential overlooked.

Are there ways to break through content overload? Are there techniques for chunking what you've seen/heard into manageable, usable pieces? *Oh yes.*

Before

1. Block off post-event slots of time.

Look at your calendar for the period immediately after the training or conference, when you're back in the office. Block off one hour per day during the subsequent week to think strategically, starting with a review of whatever notes you took or were given (as well as any extra, value-adding material or multimedia content). To start with, reflect on the quick wins that will have the greatest influence on your life, performance, productivity, career, etc.

2. Create a template for 'action items'.

Before the event, create a simple document in which there's space to write down actions and to commit to following through on them within a certain time frame. The things you write down should be one-item tasks (I call these 'light bulbs'), not projects with multiple phases or abstract ideas. Then, when you're in the sessions themselves, you have an appropriate template where you can quickly list the various things you might like to act on later.

During

3. Take notes to keep you focused.

On the day, take a ton of notes, even if you're provided with comprehensive written materials. One useful technique is to

write 'takeaways' to share with your team, using two categories: "Things we don't do but might want to do" and "Things we're already doing that the speakers encouraged".

Why take notes at all? Because, when you're reading or listening, especially for extended periods of time, note taking helps you to concentrate in the moment. It's good for remembering what's been presented. In addition, to write something sensible, you must first understand what's being said.

4. Make strategic content choices.

Don't feel like you have to go to every single session of a conference or seminar. If you find yourself with an open slot, take that hour to write down some thoughts on how to apply what you've learned to a project you're working on or how to present the same content to your colleagues.

After

5. Review the 'action items' list.

When you're back in the office, go through your action items list and decide which action to complete that day, the next day, next week, or next month. Input those actions to your schedule, making them part of your other 'work'.

6. Re-write and teach the content.

Document everything you learned within a few days of the event, and distill it into a one-hour presentation for your team. If you don't have an office, find or create a small group to present to. Teaching creates a pressure that forces us to delve deeper into a topic and to truly internalise the insights.

7. Re-establish (email) contact.

Decide which people gave presentations that really resonated with you, so you can follow them on social media and regularly encounter their content. Within five working days, email any new people you met – to tell them it was nice to meet them and to thank them for their contribution. (This is a good way to keep energy and resources flowing long after an event.)

8. Wait – and review again.

A month or two after the training or conference, re-examine your notes and action items list and ask, "How much of this do we want to commit to doing, and *how* do we do it over the next 6-12 months?" This way, compelling and innovative ideas that you've gathered don't sit forgotten in a file somewhere. But you're also able to let go of stuff that just doesn't work for you.

A 2015 survey by 24X7 Learning shows that only 12% of people undergoing workplace training say they apply the skills from that training to their job. Yikes! If you're going to invest time and money in gaining wisdom, you'd better make sure that you're part of the 12%. Otherwise, just stay at the office.

ABOUT TIFFANY MARKMAN

I spend 10 hours a day writing - and teaching others to write. I was South Africa's Freelance Copywriter of the Year in 2020 and one of the world's 'Top 50 Female Content Marketers' in 2021.

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