Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies

Ryan Auster, Museum of Science, Boston
COVES is designed to unite science centers in systematically collecting audience-level data, with a focus on institutional and field-wide improvement.
Improving the visitor experience...

Makes visitors more likely to:

1. return to the Museum on a more frequent basis,
2. recommend the Museum to others,
3. consider membership and/or donations, and
4. feel comfortable/welcomed at the Museum, leading to a more positive learning environment.
To do this...

We must first understand:

1. **Who visits** the Museum
2. **Why they come** (motivations)
3. **What they do** when they visit
4. **How they feel** about their experience(s)
The Beginning

2007
- Comment Card Analysis

2008
- Cross Divisional Team

2009
- Public VXM

2010
- School VXM

Exhibit Planning
Amenities
Advocacy
Sales
How do we compare to peer institutions?

[Map showing various science museums across the USA with the text 'exploratorium', 'Science Museum of Minnesota', 'Museum of Science', '2012']
Siloed audience studies
Creating a unifying system
The value of comparison
Why offer the system to others?

- Provide “the field” with better data
- Leverage capacity where it exists
- Enable smaller institutions to begin understanding their visitors
COVES provides:

- a common instrument & shared measures
- institutional flexibility
- analytical assistance
- evaluation capacity building resources
- dynamic reporting
- systematic comparison
19 (+4) participating institutions
Onsite Trainings
Contextually Relevant Data

Membership: 4781 Responses

- 29.16% Members
- 70.84% Non-members

Number of adults in groups: 4767 Responses

- 30% 1
- 51% 2
- 9% 3
- 10% 4+

Number of children in groups: 4721 Responses

- 27% 0
- 26% 1
- 29% 2
- 10% 3
- 8% 4+
Community of Practice

Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES)

LATEST DISCUSSION POSTS

NEED DATA COLLECTION GUIDANCE? CHECK OUT THE COVES...
By: Michelle M. Kenner, 15 days ago
New documents are up in the resource library! Check out Data Collection Key Points, which is a great document to train new data collectors who were not able to attend the onsite training. The 2016 Report Pecent Walk-through explains each section...

VISITOR CONFUSION WITH EXPERIENCE RATING QUESTIONS
By: Alexander Lusenhop, 22 days ago
Hi all, I received a couple of questions from data collectors recently about visitor confusion with the museum experience rating on the COVES system and thought I would post here to get a response.

Welcome to the COVES CoP! Here you can:
- Connect with members of the COVES team and staff at other participating institutions
- Access members-only resources, such as aggregate reports, training webinars, and capacity building documents
- Keep up-to-date with the latest COVES news and events
Challenges to Implementation

• Scaling up & communication

• Sustainability & fee-based service

• Supporting data *use* & creating a culture of change