

2009 SOS Submission: ASTD-RTA Munch & Mingles (No-Cost Networking)



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Chapter Name: ASTD-RTA
Chapter ID: 4-53
Chapter Location: Research Triangle Area, NC
Chapter Membership Size: Medium (101-300)

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Description of Effort: Munch and Mingles are easy to coordinate events which are free to members and your only cost is name tags. Since you don't have to reserve a meeting space you don't have to be concerned about registration, venue/meal costs or other logistics.

Need Addressed: Many needs are addressed by these events such as recruiting of new members – Many new members have been introduced to the Chapter through Munch and Mingles. We invite members and non-members to attend. Many non-members join after participating in the event as it's a great way to learn more about our Chapter. ☐ Increasing Engagement – Many members have become involved in committees as a result of participating in these events and learning more about the chapter. ☐ Connections - Based on our membership survey, members wanted more opportunities to network. Members want opportunities to connect with other workplace learning professionals in the area. We delivered. ☐ Minimize expense - By not having costs associated with the venue or meals we eliminate the cost to the chapter. Participants have the option to buy lunch if they choose or to just mingle if they prefer. ☐ Deeper Dialog – The smaller, informal environment allows for people to have more meaningful dialog than they can at larger formal events. ☐ Sharing of ideas, best practices, and contacts. – As a result of the sharing, many tips and techniques are shared. (You'll often hear people sharing web addresses, titles of books, leads on job opportunities, and innovative approaches.) ☐ Outreach – The Munch and Mingles provide an outreach to recently unemployed professionals to help them connect with others in their field. ☐ Learn more about Workplace Learning – These provide people who are interested in making a career change an opportunity to learn more about the field.

Does this effort align with your chapter mission? Yes

Does this effort align with ASTD's mission? Yes

Target Audience: Workplace learning and performance professionals in the Research Triangle Area

Costs/Resource Use: Free, time to put the event on the calendar (only cost is for name tags)

How did you implement? It's quite simple-we picked dates, locations and publicized them. We select locations which are central to the membership base and times which appeal to different members. • We also announced the upcoming Munch and Mingles at all Chapter Meetings and Events. • There is a point person for each event who brings the "Munch and Mingle" kit and set up the tables and put out the name tags. (This is generally a Membership Vice President, Board Member or a Membership Team volunteer.) The Munch & Mingle kit is a zip lock bag with a magic marker for the name tags, blank name tags, table tents, member applications, list of upcoming events and an attendance sheet. The kit is given to the point person for the event.

What were the Outcomes? Increase membership – our membership is up approximately 45% from December 2007. Increase the number of networking opportunities. (Offered 12 in 2008 and planning 24 in 2009). Identify future board members and other volunteers. Increase member involvement. Provide an outreach to members “in transition” (who are unemployed). Have Fun. Build meaningful connections. Share of tips and best practices. Deliver on our 3 main goals – Value, Engagement & Connectivity • Participation varies from approximately 4 to 20 per Munch and Mingle.

Lessons Learned: Munch and Mingles are easy to coordinate events which are free to members and your only cost is name tags. Since you don't have to reserve a meeting space you don't have to be concerned about registration, venue/meal costs or other logistics. • Members love the flexibility of the Munch and Mingles. We ask that members e-mail the membership VPs at a central e-mail address, membership@astd-rta.org to give us an idea of how many people will be attending. Members can register or cancel at the last-minute without any fees or costs to the organization. This has been great for members who travel regularly or have unpredictable schedules. Since there is no set agenda or speaker, members can attend late or leave early with no interruption, if they have scheduling issues. • Members appreciate this opportunity to connect. • Pick location where tables can easily be joined and you can have separate checks. (Some of our locations include a food court at a local mall, Panera Bread, coffee house, or sports bar.) • Pick locations where meals are reasonably priced for those who may choose to eat. (Most people eat while some may just join the group for coffee.) • Pick a “regular” location and “regular time. In 2008, we varied locations from month-to-month. Based on member feedback, in 2009 we planned a Munch and Mingle on the second Friday of each month at the same location and time. Each month we add a second Munch and Mingle at different times and locations throughout the Research Triangle Area. We have had breakfast, lunch and dinner Munch and Mingles. We even planned a “Netwalking” event at the Duke Gardens to increase our networking opportunities and provide another venue. • When possible, have at least one board member at the event to represent the organization, goals, and respond to membership questions. • Try anything once! That could be different days, locations, times. Keep trying things until you find what works. • Ask members what locations and times work for them. • Involve members setting up the tables, “table-tents” and name tags. • Take attendance to add new contacts to your distribution list for events and to track involvement.