

Assignment 4: HPAR7006 Archaeological Project Reporting

As part of DigVentures' public impact evaluation process, every event participant is asked to provide feedback at the end of their experience with us. The short feedback survey, conducted in-person wherever possible, consists of two questions;

1. What was the highlight of your experience?
2. Was there anything that could be improved?

I am in the useful position of having both given the company my own feedback as a dig participant before I was employed in 2019, and also later receiving it from participants as a member of staff. This has given me the unique opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the feedback process in delivering improved outcomes from two different perspectives.

When providing feedback myself, the questions were short and easy to understand, the process was conversational and made me feel comfortable and willing to give feedback. I recall giving numerous positive highlights but my initial reaction was to struggle slightly more with suggestions for improvement to avoid seeming ungrateful. I remember thinking that perhaps if the process was anonymised then I would be more open, but then realising that I would most likely not have bothered to complete an anonymised paper or digital survey. In fact, the conversational method of the survey actually meant the interviewer could reassure me that any suggestions for improvement were very welcome and encouraged me to be more open.

Consequently, I suggested creating opportunities for young students with limited financial resources, such as myself, to receive funding to attend future excavations. The next year, I was able to return because DigVentures had launched their 'Pay It Forward' scheme, where crowd-funders could support free places for those needing financial support to attend – a scheme that has benefited many others since. This made me feel like my feedback had been listened to, communicated well, and led to an improved outcome for myself and others after me.

As a member of staff receiving feedback from event participants, I find the majority of people react very similarly to how I did. Almost everyone will readily provide multiple positive highlights about their experience and struggle at first to provide suggestions for improvement. However, having been in their position, I can draw from that experience to put the participant at ease, developing an informal conversational approach to get the best out of the feedback provided, leading to improved outcomes. For example, a past participant at DigVentures' excavations on Lindisfarne gave feedback available in Appendix 1.

As a direct result of this feedback and numerous others suggesting the same, there is now a process in place on all sites to allow every participant the opportunity to go and visit the finds room if there is one, and to show them examples of finds from the site if there isn't. This has recently resulted in many people giving positive feedback relating to visiting the finds room, providing an improved outcome for all parties.

From my experience as both a respondent and an interviewer, I believe these improved outcomes were only possible because of the effort put into communicating in-person, informally and conversationally with participants wherever possible. Keeping the questions short and simple, making them feel at ease and that their opinions are valued often results in more responses that are actionable, creating improved outcomes.