



By Cheryl Watson

We often receive questions about how to justify the need for training. My comments apply not only to conferences such as IDUG, but also to any education course, software tools, or information sources such as our "Cheryl Watson's TUNING Letter."

Many travel budgets and training budgets have been slashed, and companies are experiencing severe financial problems. If you feel that the training you receive at a conference is worth the cost, then you'll probably need to justify it. Conferences are especially difficult because too many management conferences are really perks, and not the hard-working weeks that you experience at conferences like IDUG. Your manager may feel that your attendance at a conference is similar to the management trip he took last month to Hilton Head and the golf course. You need to prove it isn't. I know that I am whipped at the end of a ten-hour day of attending sessions and networking. So here are some things you might want to consider:

Create BIG action reports. I used to create a 100-page 'book' after a conference or course and I routed it to the world. I'd separate the topics so that the CICS people could look at just one section and DBAs could look at another section. I included APARs, warnings, new features, rumors, etc. Actually, my conference trip reports were simply early versions of the TUNING Letter. When your managers see how much you've gotten out of the week or the publication, and how you shared it with others in your installation, they'll be more willing to fund it again next year.

- Form a team, distribute the information, act on it and follow up. Several of our subscribers, for example, assign sections of the TUNING Letter to different people, then meet back the following week to see which items have been, or should be, acted on. They follow this up with a note to management to describe what actions they've taken and what improvements they've made. For a conference, you can use a similar technique.
- Train others. Whenever I went to a conference or class, or was responsible for reviewing a publication, I would give a presentation to my co-workers on what I had learned. By sharing the information, you reduce some of the jealousy felt because you were allowed to go instead of them, and the training experience for others is invaluable. I can't overstate how important this is. If you're uncomfortable in front of others, then just concentrate on providing a good report.
- Implement at least one performance change you've learned. Be sure to document the savings, and emphasize that this savings would not have been realized if you had not attended the conference or class. I once made a block size change that saved the company hundreds of thousands of dollars. You could justify five years of a conference or a hundred years of the TUNING Letter (although we might need to introduce another writer by then)!
- Don't forget to estimate the savings if you can install an APAR to fix a problem that could have caused a system outage, but won't now that you've already installed the fix. How much does an unscheduled IPL cost your company? For some companies, you are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars. Again, that much money would pay for many conferences or TUNING Letters.
- Compute the cost of a high-priced consultant and show your management how much free hallway or electronic consulting you've received. Almost all of the consultants and

developers are more than happy to chat with real users. At \$400-\$500 an hour for a consultant, that can add up.

- If you're trying to justify the cost of a conference or the TUNING Letter, simply compare it to almost any education course. The conferences (and especially the TUNING Letter) are almost always the better bargain. The material comes from one of three terrific sources: IBM developers themselves, well-known and respected consultants, or users who have already been through what you're planning to go through. The experience and knowledge available are staggering.

Whenever you are in a meeting or having a technical discussion, if you have an idea or a point to make, preface it with "One of the speakers at IDUG said..." or "I was reading in the latest TUNING Letter that..." I'm not saying you should throw this out just to be name-dropping, but if you really did get a relevant idea from one of those sources, then giving the proper credit will continue to reinforce the idea to management that such training continues to benefit your organization even months after you get the information.