Session formats: how to add live interaction to your content?

Make use of the wisdom of your participants

Participants bring their knowledge and experience with them to your event. It would be a waste not to put that to use. Most people can only listen for 20 – 30 minutes. Add some interaction to your events to activate and engage the participants.

Here are some effective session formats that will get everyone involved.

8 Great session formats

1. **World Café**
   > In three rounds you will work with small groups on some challenges
   > You explore the chances together.
   > The ideas have to be written down on a tablecloth and after each round the participants have to move up one table.
   > The facilitators will remain in place so that they can summarize the ideas from the previous round to the new guests and enable them to delve into the discussion.

2. **Fishbowl**
   > This is a dynamic talk show in which every guest is invited to participate.
   > There are four seats in the centre and three guests discuss a subject, the fourth seat stays empty.
   > When someone from the audience wants to join the discussion he can take the fourth seat, one of the others then has to stand up and create an empty seat for another participant who will want to join later.

3. **Open Space**
   > The facilitator will ask the participants to put forward some topics; "What would you like to talk about today?"
   > The topics that are brought up will appear on the screen and the facilitator will follow up by asking the participants to choose one topic.
   > The group is divided in sub-groups based on personal choice.
   > After small group discussions, the groups will come together to present their outcome.

4. **Body Voting**
   > The participants answer questions by choosing a certain place in the room.
   > One side of the room is a 100 percent and the opposite side is 0 percent.
   > Once the guests take their place, the facilitator can ask a few of them a question.

5. **Debating competition**
   > Divide the audience in two sides.
   > The two sides react on some prepared statements.
   > In the debate each side gets to pitch some arguments (con and pro).

6. **Pitch competition**
   > Participants work on a challenge or future vision in small groups.
   > They then pitch their ideas for all participants (with or without visuals).

7. **Campfire**
   > Create small settings in which the participants can meet the experts.
   > Ask your speakers to stay for the break following their keynote or workshop.

8. **Superbrainstorm**
   > This speed networking talk show links the participants and their ideas to each other.
   > The uneven rows turn around to face the persons behind them to form duos.
   > They exchange thoughts 1-to-1 on a challenge like "What can we do differently that would make our clients really happy?"
   > The facilitator asks some participants to share their ideas.
   > explanation video in Dutch

Get your speakers to add interaction
> Just ask them to add interaction, don't be afraid to challenge your speakers.
> In a room setup in cabaret style it is easy to form groups and give them an assignment.
> You can provide technology to let participants send their ideas to the screen (for example Sendsteps, which turns each mobile phone into an interaction machine).

Recommendations
> Never put the interaction on the program, it will scare some participants away
> Work with an experienced and enthousiastic facilitator
> Know your audience: make the interaction relevant to them
> Add different session formats to your event: keep people moving and entertained
> Capture the content (Click here for our whitepaper about capturing conference content)

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Aaaaha! the Actor Factory offers facilitators and session design for live interaction. Based in the Netherlands but eager to travel ;-> http://www.actorfactory.com / http://youtu.be/SKcNj-zsbsA

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Each January the Institute organizes a conference about Meeting Design, held in Copenhagen: http://www.thefreshconference.com/