

How to organise the event that no one would want to miss?



How can you get invitees to look forward to your event and to keep talking about it? More than 1600 Dutch event organisers exchanged their practical tips in a series of live masterclasses presented by Erik Peekel / [Aaaaha! the Actor Factory](#). How can you turn your standard meeting into the-event-no-one-would-want-to-miss?

Part 1: How to persuade invitees

An effective event starts with persuading the invitees. What are the most effective triggers? How can you make sure that the invitee does not only sign up, but also looks forward to your event?

Create a catchy trigger

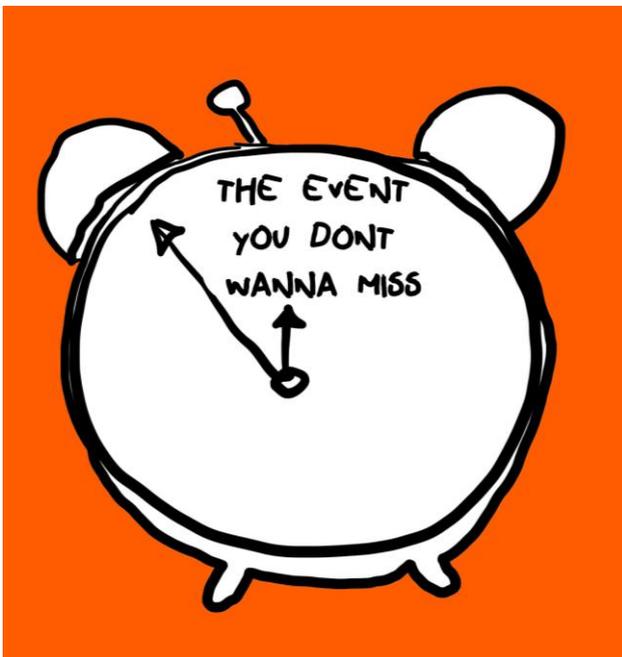
Before you send the invitation, think about why this event is relevant for your invitee. Create an event that really helps your participants get ahead.

Use a catchy title and image. You have to make clear what your event is about and why the invitees should sign up in one sentence. Use an image that catches attention and explains your title.

Make sure you catch the attention of the invitee by using a combination of reason and emotion. Start off by sketching a recognizable challenge. Set the right atmosphere in the invitation process (tone-of-voice and design).

Engage the speaker no one would want to miss. Can you think of a speaker that your invitees would love to see?

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Engage the invitees in putting together the programme. You can approach a few invitees to brainstorm about the programme. Scientific congresses often have a committee to organise the programme and this way of putting together a programme is also very useful for organising a term meeting or an event. When the guests sign up for the event you can ask them when they think their partaking has been a success. The answers enable you to fully grasp their expectations and make it easier to design an effective programme.

Engage in the interests of the target audience. When you know what your target audience likes to do you can link it to your programme. For example, you can link your meeting to a sailing match, a golf clinic, a skid course, a theatrical performance, or a Premier League match.

Make sure it is possible for the target audience to attend your event. Adapt the duration and date of the event to the invitees. For example, a Wednesday afternoon is not a good time for most mothers. Also, many meetings or events take longer than necessary.

Accreditation. Medical Doctors and accountants have to acquire a certain amount of accreditation points. It is then a very welcome bonus if their partaking in your event directly acquires them their accreditation points.

Choose the right location for the event. Adapt your choice of location to the purpose of your event, but also take the location of your guest into account and make sure the location is accessible and there are enough parking lots nearby.

A personal trigger might also help. You can individually communicate what is in it for the guests.

Make the first paragraph of your invitation personal. Do not only call the invitee by his name, but personalise the whole first paragraph. For large scale events it might be useful to divide the invitees in several groups for which the first paragraph might diverge.

Communicate what the guest will learn from the event. You can use bullet points to indicate that "after partaking in this event you can..." If the meeting is less substantial you can indicate with which feeling the invitee will leave the event.

Recommendation of others, such as ambassadors, might be useful to promote the event. Use quotes or recommendations of previous partakers or use a high grade of one of the evaluations of previous editions of the event in your invitation. You can also invite key figures of the branch and ask them to advertise your event by word of mouth.

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Make it special to be invited

The invitation needs to be very personal. It is important to make the invitees feel that they are not just invited because they are on a spreadsheet, but because they are special. Tell them individually that you would appreciate their presence at the event. Give your colleagues an active role in approaching the invitees, especially when you invite business relations. Relations like to receive their invitation from someone who they know personally, a handwritten recommendation or a post-it saying "this is definitely something for you!" works better than when they receive a general invitation. An invitation that was sent from an 'info@' email address is not very personal and a 'no-reply' email address is definitely not a good idea.

It is best to *call up the invitees personally* to invite them for the event.

Make the event exclusive. (Private) Bankers often organise small events to bond their clients and to do them a favour by taking a small group of clients to go golfing or sailing. The banker will personally call the clients to invite them and underscores the exclusive character of the event by saying something like "I can invite 10 entrepreneurs and I immediately thought of you. It is a nice group of people and it might benefit your business." The invitees will then feel special and appreciated.

Congratulate the invitee. A surprisingly simple way of getting the invitee in the right mood immediately.

Answer any questions or comments of the invitees because you can expect questions by email or phone after you have sent the invite. Make sure that everyone within your organisation can answer any questions directly and can take immediate action if necessary.

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Use smart email programmes. In case you suspect that account managers do not have the time or do not want to play an active role in the process of sending the invites you can easily solve the problem by using technology. Email programmes can easily personalise an email, you can also change the sender.

Organise something unique. It's great to receive an invitation to something which you otherwise would not have experienced. Dutch investment bank Robeco, for example, has organised a very successful series of summer concerts at Het Concertgebouw. Robeco's clients are invited to experience one of these concerts as a guest.

Organise smallscale events. Before you organise the event think about whom you really want to participate. When you organise a top level event and only invite the relations who really matter, you create a different sort of event. At the event itself it is then subsequently easier to be the perfect host or hostess. You can also send a list of invitees in advance to say that "we bring together a select group of our best relations and we hope that can join us."

Set a limit to the number of people who will join the event. Tell the invitees that there are only a limited number of places available and send out a press release saying that the event was full within a week last year. Make sure to show the number of available places when the invitees sign up.



Bring the event to life beforehand. Think about how you can create a buzz. What can you do to make sure that everybody talks about the event that you organise? Use all the possible ways of communication to bring the event to life. Post a message on your website, at the bottom of an email, in the newsletter, and try to get some media attention from trade press. Name the event whenever you get the chance, for example, at personal meetings and telephone calls. If it is an internal event, you can visit your colleagues beforehand to invite them individually. You can also do this by sending an actor; for example, send Santa Clause to the different departments to invite everybody personally for a Christmas party.

Connect the invitees beforehand. You can use a LinkedIn or Facebook group or an App to create a dynamic guest list so that the invitees can contact each other before the event. It requires time and energy to boost this contact and it can backfire if there is only a small group of LinkedIn members within the group.

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Engage the participants before the event. You can ask them which cocktail they like to drink so that you can tell the invitee that you have already bought the ingredients for this cocktail when you send your confirmation. In this way you can also include the choices of the invitees regarding style of music that you will play or a theme for the lecturer. Researching the branches can also work out very well. The consultants at internet strategy bureau Entopic researched the successful application of Intranet in various companies. They then invited the respondents to the first Intranet Congress. The results of the research, among other things, were presented at this congress and the tickets to the congress and sponsorship market sold out.

Make the event exciting

Curiosity is a powerful incentive. You can send a save-the-date message without mentioning the sender and send the invitation a week later. At the Actor Factory we celebrated our 10 year anniversary with 30 top relations at the national theatre Carré. We sent a save-the-date message on Carrés' stationery, which only said "there is someone who likes to celebrate something with you at Carré on the 21st of September." A week later we sent the actual invitation.

Do not publish the whole programme at once, but reveal a part of the event every week leading up to the event, such as the lecturer or a part of the programme.

Use a three-stage email or mail. Send something special three times in a row. If you add a small 3D-object you create an envelope that will catch extra attention.

Deliberately withhold information to spike the curiosity.

Tell a friend

Allow guests to invite others. You can ask invitees to forward two invites for a sales event to increase the number of people at your event. You can do this in all sorts of ways, even in the form of a chain letter.

Let guests of the previous edition of the event invite others. Ask them who you can do a favour by sending them an invite.

Choose a medium

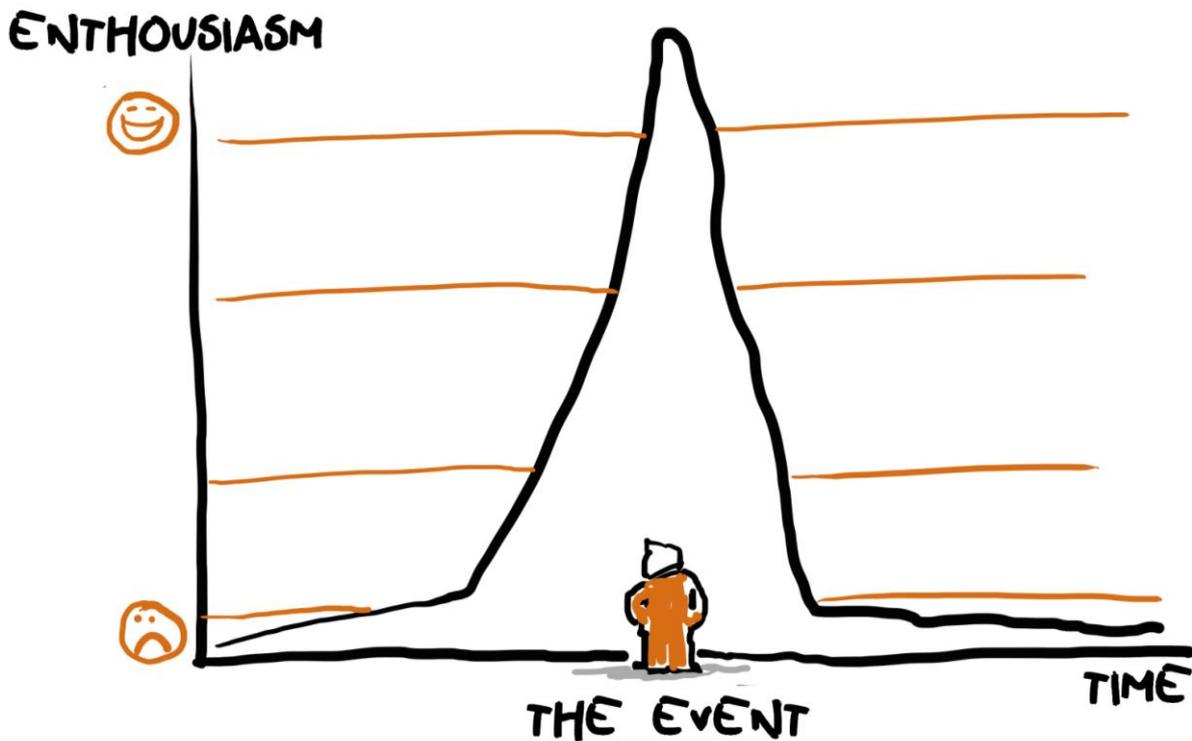
Choose a medium that the receiver will appreciate. You approach a traditional or conventional target audience by sending them a letter, while it makes sense to use a video clip when you invite office-workers. A big benefit of sending an email is that guest can immediately sign up for the event.

Wedding invitation. The feeling of exclusivity can be easily evoked by the right design. Invitations for a congress only too often look like a folder or brochure. If you choose to make the invitation look like a wedding invitation it appears to be more exclusive because it is printed on handmade paper and the name of the guest might be handwritten on a paper insert. Make sure that the invitation stands out: use special materials, a checkbox, a different size or an extraordinary design.

Definitely use several kinds of media. Send an invitation by mail. Make sure that the event comes to the attention of trade press. Send a reminder by email. Use Social Media and call people. Repetition of your event in several kinds of media is powerful and is effective in communication. Approach the invitees through multiple channels.

You can also link the various kinds of media to each other by printing a QR-code on the invitation or advertisement. Whoever scans the QR-code with his smartphone can sign up directly. You can even apply Augmented Reality to the process of sending the invitations.

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Use video footage of previous editions to give a clear picture of the event. Before someone tries to free their agenda from other appointments they want to know what they can expect from the event. A short video clip of a previous occasion on the internet can be very persuasive. It is also possible to make a video clip in which you invite the people to come to your event. In this clip you can ask speakers to explain why it is worthwhile to go to the event or they can give useful information or tips. You can also ask other guests to tell the invitees why they will be at your event. Or you can use a more artistic interpretation to persuade your invitees to come to the event.

Here is an example of a video report of the master class: <https://youtu.be/3BNVz-nl5cc>

In the process of inviting people we have also used substantive teasers as, for example, in the following clip in which the organisers give tips regarding the process of inviting people:

http://youtu.be/RFIUG_y_de0

You can also arouse the curiosity of the invitees by using a more artistic invitation video:

<http://youtu.be/LA0SmElWJc0>

Make sure your guest list is accurate. You can never be too careful. Watch out that you do not write down 'Ms' if you know that his first name is 'Peter'.

Make sure that everything works as it should. Make it as easy as possible to sign up, do not use endless lists of questions, only ask for the information that is strictly necessary. Subscription often causes a hassle. Especially when you expect many guests it is advisable to choose the right system. Parthen Meetingservices (<http://www.parthen.nl>) offers a good registration system.

The right moment of sending the invitations. Make sure that your invitations are received on a Tuesday so that it does not get lost in the mail over the weekend and so that the invitee has enough workingdays to respond to the invitation.

Early booking discount. For paid congresses you can reward the guests with a discount when they subscribe before a certain date.

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Limiting no-show

By sending confirmations and reminders you limit the number of no-show (attendees that do not show up at the event). It is possible to send a text message or email the day before the event saying "we are all set for the even and are happy that you can join us. See you tomorrow!" If subscription is free, then no-show is unavoidable. Approximately 20% of the confirmed guests will drop out at the last moment, with or without notice. The more limited their bond with the organiser is, the higher the number of no-show will be. The details can often limit the number of no-show.

Invite two people per organisation so that the guest does not have to go to your event on his own.

A personal welcome. Let the account manager call up the most important relations. "What will be your estimated time of arrival? Then I can make sure to welcome you personally."

Send out the guest list before the event. When the guest sees himself on the list it will make their attendance definite. Furthermore, the guest will see who else is going, which will often include acquaintances or people that they wanted to meet.

Send a cake as a way of confirmation. In this way you connect some festivity to your event.

Send your guests something funny. Participants of the seminar 'MBA in one day' receive a hotel-like door hanger a week and a half before the seminar. On the door hanger it says "Just getting my MBA, will be back tomorrow." A joke like this will get everybody in the mood.

You can win a prize. Send a key with the confirmation and tell your guests that if they open the safe they can win an iPad or a weekend break. You can also simply announce that there will be a lottery or send a funny object along with the confirmation: "Bring a shoehorn!" Your guests' curiosity will be spiked, because they want to know what will happen.

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TIP: GIVE PRESENTS!

Make people pay if they do not show up. Communicate in your confirmation that the event is for free, but not without any obligation. In case the guest did confirm to the event but does not show up, they will receive an invoice to donate a contribution to a charity.

You can also call up the no shows to tell them that you missed them at your event or send them this video clip: <http://vimeo.com/rocme/dontspoiltheparty>

Set up 80% of the chairs and take into account the no shows. Empty chairs can ruin the atmosphere and it is easier to set up some extra chairs if necessary.

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Part 2: How to actively engage your guests

A good event connects the guests to each other. The guests bring in their insights and experience and it would be a waste if you do not put that to use. How can you actively engage your guests?

Terms and conditions for interaction

How do you get your guests to play an active role? Initially, no-one really wants to play an active role in the programme. However, when the first hurdle has been taken, the initial feeling of anxiety turns into enthusiasm. Structure is needed to get the party going. You have to be clear about what you expect, how it works, and what you will do with the guests' input.



Make sure it is relevant. Think about why it is beneficial for your guest to play an active role and adapt the assignments to that. It has to be clear at any given moment what they have to do and why it is beneficial to play along. Make sure that the propositions and assignments are unambiguous and well formulated.

It is best to work together towards a useful outcome and you can make a report out of the input of your guests.



Live mind mapper. When you use a live mind mapper, the guests can see that their input is directly processed into the final report. The mind map is projected on a screen and can be sent or presented to an official after the event.



Example: after brainstorming with the emergency services (the police, the fire department, and the paramedics) the director of the Ministry of Home Affairs received the mind map of the brainstorm. He took the ideas to his ministry.

Example: in the process of a merge between the audit units of our government, the employees created a blue print for the new business structure. The ideas of 5 regional sessions were bundled in one mind map and this report was used as input in forming the new organisation.

Name the goal of the interaction. "Most congresses bring together colleagues and everyone takes his own experience and insights with him, but it would be a waste not to use these experiences and insights." State that this is the situation and the guests will understand why you want to be involved in the programme.

Three questions to start with. At the beginning of the event you can bring guests into contact on the basis of these three questions:

1. How did you get here?
2. What is it that you expect to achieve from this event?
3. What will your input be?

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Work in small groups towards a concrete outcome. By working in small groups you can give everybody an active role. There are different ways in which you can divide these groups functionally; you can put together all the sales managers or you can mix the sales managers with people from the back office.

Start out with a survey. When you have divided the guests into small groups it is useful to start out with a survey. Once everybody has expressed their ideas it is easier for people to join in the conversation.

Adapt the programme to the interests and level of your guests. Make the challenges as concrete as possible and try to formulate your questions in such a way that the guests can draw from their experiences. You can, for example, start off by saying "in terms of...this goes very well with us" or "it is one of my biggest frustrations that..."

Ensure the right atmosphere. Guests are often afraid that their answers or input is not intelligent enough. The discussion leader has to be conscious of these feelings and has to embrace every idea with enthusiasm. Naturally, it is not wrong to explain that not every idea is useful, but it is important that every guest feels like his or her opinion and input is appreciated.

Give the guests an assignment. You can make your guests think about something or let them do an assignment when you send them your confirmation. Give them the possibility to send in a question for one of the speakers and forward these questions to the speakers beforehand.

Let the guests bring a prop. For example, the organisers of an internal event about the identity of their management asked every team to bring an object. The members of each team have to think about which object they want to bring. You can bring people together by making them talk about the object that they chose and brought to the event.

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Make it fun to join in. You can reward the winner of the quiz or the guest with the best idea with a prize (competition element). You can also let your guests answer by making them hold up a green card if it is correct and a red card if the proposition is not true, or substitute the cards for green and red balloons which they have to blow up first. Another fun element to get people going is by letting them write their questions on a paper plane that they have to throw towards the stage.

Do not announce that there is going to be interaction at your event. People often become anxious when they know they have to play an active role in the programme. Thus, make sure that you do not make this explicit in your invitation or programme, because this can be a reason for some guests not to show up. Vague descriptions, such as “you will learn the best tips of colleagues” work excellently.

Interactive speakers. Fit speakers into the programme of whom you know that they will make the guests think. Many professional speakers pose questions with which they will make the audience think or they adapt their story to the public. Ask your speakers not to use a PowerPoint presentation, but let them interact with the audience instead.

For example, former Dutch prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende often starts his speeches with a few anecdotes followed by asking the audience to shout some bullet points to get the speech going. He then covers all input, thus adapting his story to the specific interest of the participants.

Let the public be the jury. You can let the public be the jury by using pitch programmes, such as ‘Dragon’s Den’, in which colleagues present their innovation and the public chooses the best idea. You can also let the guests choose the winning session from a selection of choices, the workshop leader of the session will then receive the prize.

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Interactive technology. You can use voice systems to make the interaction easier. Sendsteps offers a plug-in for a PowerPoint presentation, allowing the guests to use their mobile phones to vote (via text message, Twitter and the internet). The Sendsteps system also offers the possibility to send in questions or ideas.

Using technology is only one way to facilitate interaction. Use your time and energy to think of stimulating propositions; it is all about the contents.

Text message questions to a screen. Ask your guests to anonymously send questions with their mobile phone. The speakers will see the questions appear on the screen and can immediately give answers. Startup company Sli.do even created an app that will display questions on google glass, worn by the speaker.

Example: AS Watson's board of directors were on stage, while their suppliers sat in the theatre and could send anonymous questions, which then appeared on a big screen. The questions were answered in a talk show setting.

Activities. Organise active workshops: drum together in the same rhythm, sing a song together, a workshop in laughing, painting, cooking, shouting exercises, Zumba, fencing, (urban) golf, power-kiting, Freudian walk, hiking through the forest.

In choosing your programme, also choose an active form: manage your own beach club/hotel/restaurant, horse whisperer, team builder: work in another branch for a day, do some voluntary work, search for relevant trends in a strange city or shopping district.

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Formats of interaction

There are many formats of interaction for events. This is how you can make your guest interact with each other in the programme:

A discussion. Place the guests on stands opposite each other. The discussion leader introduces the topic of the debate. One of the stands is in favour of the proposition and the other stand is against the proposition. If the propositions are well formulated and will divide the guests into two groups, you can let them cross to the other side to let them show their opinion.

Adjusting scenes. Actors will play out familiar situations and the guests can stop the scene at any time to give suggestions to the actors.

War game/simulation/serious gaming. Expand the challenge. Produce a simulation of the reality beforehand and dare the guests to think of solutions for certain complex situations.



Introduction. This is an easy icebreaker at the start of any meeting. Just start by giving everybody some time to meet one person they don't know yet.

Handshake. Give your guests a moment to connect their daily situations to what they heard from the speakers. The chairman of the day will ask the participants to stand up. Everybody will look around to search for someone they have not spoken to yet. When they talk individually they will ask each other what they have learned from the speeches. Give the guests 5 minutes to do this to get them thinking. If you do this just before a (lunch) break, you will notice them still talking about it over the break.

Q&A. Reserve some time in the programme to let the speakers answer questions. A good chairman will stimulate his guests to use this opportunity and gives the guests time to formulate questions by asking one or two stimulating questions first.

Body voting. By choosing a certain place in the room, the guests answer questions. The facilitator will, for example, ask to represent a percentage where 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.

Power dotting. Collect all the input on yellow paper. Everybody writes down his or her best ideas and tips and glues their paper to a larger paper on the wall. The notes will be clustered by the facilitator and the guests stick dots on the notes to select the best tips and ideas.

Game show. Every quiz or game show is applicable to your event: a quiz, hat on-hat off, jargon bingo, musical bingo, To Tell the Truth, Pictionary, Hints, etc. You interact with the guests in a fun way. Who knows his colleagues best? Who is best informed about the developments within his branch?

Networking parade: at the start of the event you can get people acquainted and let them talk to some other guests. Again, the uneven rows will turn around and form groups of two. Everybody has two minutes to quickly get themselves acquainted. Then everybody will meet another partner by moving up two places. You can show some opening lines on the screen to get them started. At the right end of the row some people have to join the row opposite to enable everyone to move up two places.

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Superbrainstorm: this speed networking talk show links the guests and their ideas to each other. The uneven rows turn around to face the persons behind them. In this way they form duos. The guests talk one on one about their challenges like "What can we do differently that would make our clients really happy?" Everybody has 5 minutes per round and the facilitator will look for a few inspiring ideas afterwards. The facilitator will ask who heard an idea that they would like to carry out. These ideas will directly take up a space in the mind map, which will be shown on a screen. Then, all guests will get a different partner and a new discussion question will be introduced.

Cabaret setup divide the guests into groups and set them around a table. The speakers are asked to fully use the setup. They are requested to introduce an assignment for the small groups around the tables. This can be a case, an assignment, a quiz or a puzzle, depending on the topic.

Fishbowl: 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 public wants to join in 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.

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. Afterwards, the groups will come together to present their outcome.

Mood board workshop: create an idea and turn it into a pitch in small groups. For example, you can use the question "How can we make our clients happier?" to create a mood board, collecting pictures and texts from folders and magazines. Every group has to present its mood board in the end.

Lip dub workshop: you can make a music video in one take with a large group in no time. Also, this enables direct results.



Worldcafé: 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 guests have to move up one table. The failitators 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.

Pub quiz: different teams will compete against each other in different rounds. Every team will answer the questions on a form. There are also musical questions for which they have to provide the title of a song and the artist. This will raise the teamspirit within each group.

Poster sessions/best practices: offers a stage to projects and initiatives. They will present themselves and will follow up by talking to the guests.

Copy write workshop: invent humorous captions for the selected pictures.

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Part 3: How to facilitate networking

Your guests are not only interested in the speakers and workshops; they also want to meet each other. When people come together there is a chance to meet inspiring people and as the organiser you can help make this happen.

Make sure there are no boundaries

Make sure the atmosphere is good from the start. Guests are often shy and introvert when they come in. A merry and welcome arrival directly changes the mood.

Invite the right target audience. Can these guests benefit from each other's knowledge and experience? Do they benefit from meeting each other?

Employ hosts/hostesses. When you organise a party for relations you have to communicate that all the account managers will be the host/hostess. At an internal event this is the task of the management or the project team. They play a key role in making the guests feel welcome. They will meet their guests upon arrival and introduce them to other guests. Take some time to give these colleagues clear instructions.

Distribute badges with big letters for every guest so that people can see with whom they want to talk from a distance.

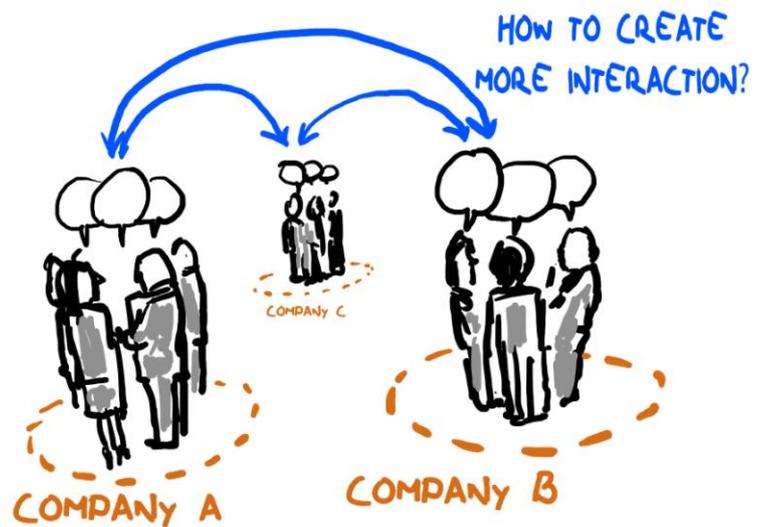
Put the badges on the guest's back so that others can see the badge before they go talk to someone.

Distribute a guest list beforehand. This will underscore that it is worthwhile to join the event to broaden your network. Besides, this is how the guests can determine in advance who they want to meet at the event.

The quality of the guests. It is better to invite 50 relevant guests than 150 guests that are less relevant. In the latter case it will hinder the interaction.

At a small event it is easier to get into a conversation. At large-scale events it is therefore useful to organise activities for smaller groups. Let all the guests choose an activity which they will like, such as a tasting. Often guests show up with a colleague. Put them in different groups.

Create queues. Peter van Lindonk organised the PINC inspiration congress. He did not hire people to pour the coffee, but let the guests pour the coffee themselves from coffee containers. Waiting in line to pour your coffee makes it easier for people to start a conversation. The queues should not be long, but just long enough to start the conversation.



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Make it easy to get into contact with the right guests. When you combine different target audiences or levels it is useful to use a clear indication on the badge. Also, make sure that this indication is clear for all guests. This makes it easier for people to approach the relevant guests.

Match your guests on certain themes or specialisation. You can get bar tables with each a different theme so that guests can meet each other if they have the same interests. For example: at a symposium you combine education with business. The goal is to integrate the wishes of the employers into the education system. Make sure that the badges show who the business people are and who the people from the education system are. Create bar tables that focus on certain fields of study; science, administrative, creative, etc.

Wall of fame. Take a picture of the guests at arrival. While taking their picture, ask them what they want to get out of the event and what they can bring to the event. Make a presentation out of these pictures and quotes and show this presentation on screen in one of the breaks, or cover a wall with the Polaroid pictures and answers.

Time to network. Do not plan too many things, give the guests time to talk to each other. Make sure that you do not plan too many things at the expense of the time to network.

Alcohol. It is easier to talk to strangers while having drinks.

Online matching/speed dating. You can let the guests plan appointments during the event beforehand. The guests can choose who they want to meet or the organiser can match them with other guests. At the event, the guests will receive a personal programme with the time and table number of the appointments.



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LinkedIn/Facebook. Create a LinkedIn group or an event on Facebook. Let the guests sign up for these groups themselves. By introducing discussion questions and polls you can involve them in the event beforehand and the guests can already contact each other.

Twitter. During an event you can ask the guests to share their reactions on Twitter. The other guests can follow each other's tweets if they use the assigned hashtag (#). Like-minded people can then easily find each other.

A Twitter fountain or Twitter wall (for free on the internet) can make the tweets visible for everybody. You can place some screens on which the messages will be projected. A Twitter reporter can help fire up a discussion. The reporter can do a live report on the event (including what happened previous to the event and what happened afterwards) on Twitter.

Topics

Conversation. It is easier for guests to start a conversation when topics are handed to them, for example by a surprising act. For example, joining a group that watches a magician will be often followed by a conversation with the person next to you starting with: "How does he do that?"

Place pillars, some for ideas and some for complaints. This will be a great meeting point; you can leave ideas and talk about the ideas with others. Our 'wall-report' is one of the best forms to do this. Three artists express the guest's ideas and turn it into text and images. A man-sized work of art will be created during the event. Guests will start a conversation while looking at this work of art and afterwards this report can be placed in the company restaurant. In this way you create a lasting impact.

Write down a fun fact on every badge. Fun facts can form a starting point for a conversation. This fun fact can also be something personal. For example, you can ask every confirmed subscription which celebrity they would like to be and you print these names on the badge too. You can also ask the guests to write down a "question of the day" on their badges, which makes it easier for others to help them.



Place some cards with topics on each table. The topics will match the goal of the event. If the event is about the new ways of working, you can place cards on the table saying "What will your workplace look like in the future?" or "Do you believe in working at home?"

Use humour. Humorous topics work best to start a conversation. You can use questions such as "What would you do with a million dollars?"

Structure

Short introductions: At a small dinner you can ask your guests to stand up one by one to introduce themselves. This will create some starting points for later meetings.

Change tables: You can let the guests change tables (and discussion partners) at a dinner.

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Matchmaking: Ask the guests before the event about which topic you can ask them anything or about which topic they would like to know more. Match the guests on the basis of their answers and print the match on their badge.

Blind date: Plan a blind date for every guest that wants to participate.

Place napkins and coasters on the tables. On these napkins and coasters you can write down the function or organisation of the other guests supported by the text "Did you know...is here too?"

Theme tables. Create tables with a certain theme. Interested people can easily meet at these tables and start a conversation.

Game formats and technology

You can use game formats and technology to make it easier for guests to approach each other.

Coloured dots. If you want to break up existing groups this might be the easiest solution. Give every guest a badge with a dot in different colours. When you distribute the badge you have to name the colour of the dot explicitly: "You have a blue dot. Enjoy!" When everybody has arrived you can ask the hosts to casually and individually ask the guests if they have talked to someone with the same coloured dot. At your word of welcome you can dare the guests to meet someone of every colour. You can also give every table a different colour.



Perfect Match! The actors of Perfect Match! make sure that everybody gets a warm welcome upon arrival. They watch the body language of the guests and give them some extra attention when needed. They bring guests together and get them to start a conversation. The actors of Perfect Match! are also a living guest list. They collect business cards on their dresses and can make everybody talk to each other.

Speed date café. Create a cosy lounge with a clear sign that says "Speed date café." You can place cards on the table with certain topics, such as "What are you proud of?" and "What do you love about your job?" Two actors will organise the activity and will invite the guests to actively meet each other at one of the tables. They explain that you can use the topics on the tables, but that you do not have to use them.

Innovation tours. In a short guided tour the guests will visit a sponsor market. The tour visits 7 stands and every sponsor gets one minute to give a presentation. In the programme you can see when the tours start.

Network bingo. You distribute bingo cards with different sorts of checkboxes; a row with city names, a row with names of different functions, a row with occupations, etc. For every meeting you can check one of the boxes and after 5 meetings you will have bingo and a chance of winning a prize.

Unlock the treasure. The guests will be divided into two groups; the one group gets a lock while the other group gets a key. There are only a few combinations that work. The guests who open the lock get a small gift.

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Bell butlers. Two butlers link the guests to each other. Suddenly a butler will approach you with an old fashioned telephone. The phone will ring and the butler will tell you it is for you. If you answer the phone you will be connected to another guest. The butler will help you to start the conversation and with the horn in your hand you will walk with the butler to meet the caller. When you meet the caller the butlers will immediately leave to connect two other guests to each other.



Badge to match. When the guests subscribe for the event they will answer a few questions. On the basis of these answers the guests are matched to another guest. An electronic device with different colours of LED-lights is incorporated into the badge and whenever a relevant discussion partner gets near both badges will light up.

Embraceled. Every guest gets a LED-bracelet and when a relevant discussion partner shows up both bracelets will light up. The guests can also vote with these bracelets or join in one of the games. For large-scale events, these bracelets can be used to create a giant LED-screen.

Swingbo Connect. Swingbo offers smart technology, which enables an advanced network game. When the guests subscribe they have to choose a picture from a set of pictures (for example: "What did you want to be when you were younger?" and "What kind of holiday would you enjoy most?"). The computer will match the guests on the basis of their answers. At the event all guests will receive a big badge with four pictures of other guests, with whom you have to most in common according to your answers. Below each picture you will find a percentage that resembles how much you and the other guest have in common. Curiosity will stimulate the guests to look for each other and start a conversation. On the basis of the system you can also play certain network games and do assignments with touchscreens.

Badges at random. Distribute random badges to the guests upon arrival and ask the guests to get the badge to the right person.

QR codes on the badges. The QR codes enable the guests to scan each other's badges, which will then show each other's LinkedIn profile. This will give the guests something to talk about.

Table soccer. Place a soccer table in the room so that enthusiasts can meet at the soccer table.

Network quartet. Use cards with pictures and the names of guests on them and divide them in quartets beforehand. The guests will get a set of cards and have to complete the quartet themselves.

Network auction. When you bring together supply and demand (for example, at a party for entrepreneurs) you can enable relevant meetings with a network auction. You give every guest a card and ask them to write down something they can offer and a question. You will collect the cards and select the best auction items. Then you can bring together supply and demand in a short auction. For example, an entrepreneur is looking for someone to discuss the possibilities of LinkedIn. In the mean time somebody else is offering his services as a social media expert. With the auction you will match two or more guests.

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Puzzle/game. Give all the guests half of a saying or a joke with the assignment to look for the missing part. You can give one guest two glasses and another guest a bottle or you can give everybody one piece of a big puzzle. The puzzle will be completed at a central place in the room. Or you can give everybody four different pencils with the assignment to exchange three pencils for different ones, whoever hands in four different pencils at the end of the event will get a gift. Let every guest draw a card with the name of another guest and dare every guest to find the person on his card so that everybody meets at least two strangers.



Key chain. Get guests to talk to each other by using their key chain. Mutually discuss the key chains.

Segmentation. Upon arrival you can ask guests to choose a corner a few times. Every guest will walk from one corner to the other to express their answer to the questions. Questions such as “Why did you come to this event?” or “What do you think of today’s theme?” etc. Soon the guests will learn that they walk to the same corner because their answer is the same as that of another guest and they will start talking.

Another variant of this game is *body voting*, with which you will give your answer by taking a place somewhere in the room. The facilitator will, for example, ask “How long have you been working in this sector?” The ones who have just started working in this particular sector will stand on one side of the room, while the people who have been working in the sector for 30 years or more will stand on the other side of the room; the people who work in the sector for approximately 15 years will stand in the middle of the room. In this way the guests can form an idea of the other guests. When everybody has taken his or her place, you can ask them to form groups of 5.

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Part 4: How to make your impact last

How can you keep your participants connected and involved? What can you do to broaden the reach of your event? How can you measure the effect of your event? How can you evaluate in order to improve your next event? In this report we will bundle tips for the process after the event. What should you do after the last guest has left?

Evaluation – What are the benefits of your event?

Beforehand, think of your event's goal. Would you like to strengthen some relationships of your organisation? Would you like to interest prospects? Would you like colleagues to share knowledge with each other? Would you like to introduce a project? When your goal is clear to you, it is much easier to put together a good and relevant program. Besides, you can demonstrate what the benefits of your event were much more easily after the event.

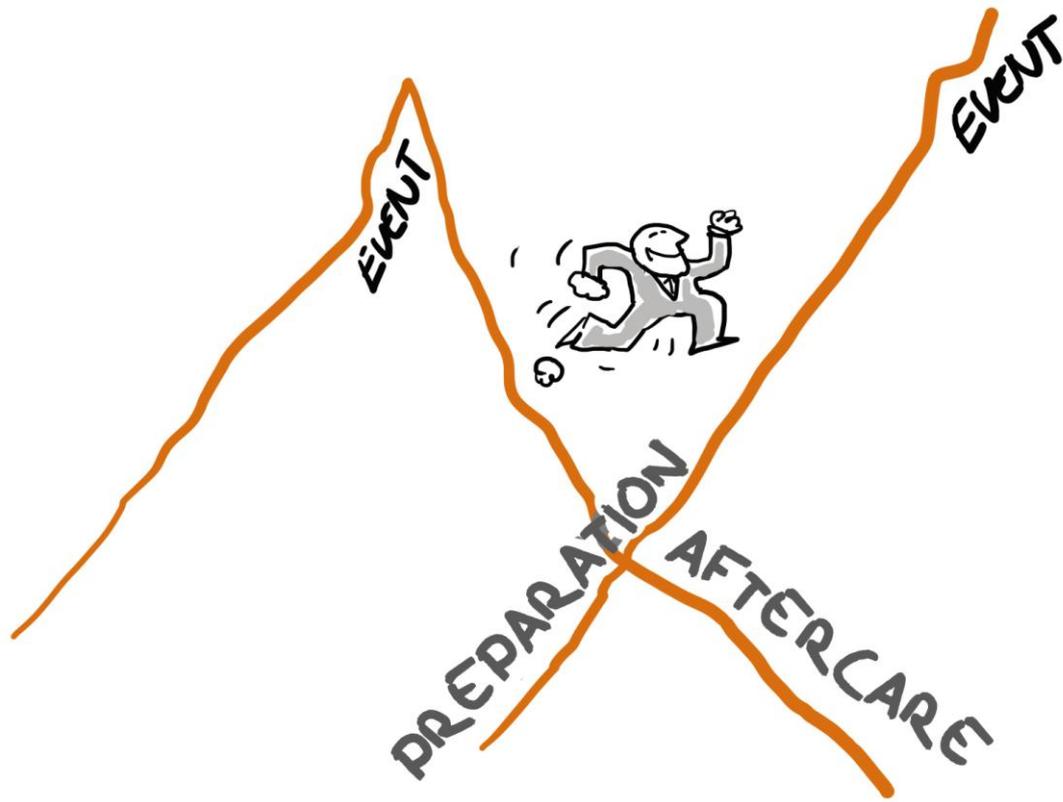
The world of advertising expresses its success through numbers, in which Gross Rating Points are used to indicate its reach. An advertiser can subsequently see what a campaign has brought him. Training agencies measure in what way the behaviour is influenced after training. Do the trainees actually act more customer oriented? When organising an event aimed at results, you can also think of

performance indicators. Do not simply ask your guests to grade every individual part of the meeting, but instead take it one step further. Half a year after an event, investigate whether or not the guests boosted your business and look at whether or not colleagues work together more effectively after a day-out with the team. Has the event influenced the guest's behaviour? It is relatively easier to acquire a budget for a possible upcoming meeting when you are able to give insight into the output of the meeting.

The Norwegian Elling Hamso's Event ROI Institute offers models to measure what an event can deliver. The Dutch Meetingmonitor.net can help you evaluate your event and give insight to its effect.



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Evaluation – What can we do better next time?

At the end of some events the guests receive long questionnaires. In most cases this results in constructive feedback, for example when the organiser of the event asks a simple question such as “In what ways can we do better next time?” Limit evaluations to the core and do not ask more questions than necessary.

Make sure to send the evaluations as quickly as possible after the event and in case you work with a voting computer or voting by text, you can ask the guests a couple of evaluation questions towards the end of the meeting. As a result, you are in immediate possession of answers.

One-to-one conversations. You can also evaluate through one-to-one conversations by calling up a number of participants and personally ask them how they have experienced the event.

Collect ideas. In case you have plans for a new event, you can ask guests to directly co-decide. Example: At the end of the congress for dentistry the participants had the right to vote on their next conference’s main topic. The eventorganiser listed a number of topics of which the guests were able to express their preference.

Programme committee. Scientific congresses often choose to involve a number of guests in putting together the programme for the next event, since they are aware of what goes on within the profession and are able to make their colleagues enthusiastic in the preliminary phase of the event. This method is also applicable in other situations.

Recommendations. Ask guests to write a short recommendation, so that you can use these texts for the invitations or website for the next event, which can be very persuasive.

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KEEP THEM INVOLVED

COULD YOU LIKE ME?

I CAN GET YOU AN APP..



PLEASE DONT LEAVE

Keep your participants involved – Publish the presentations.

Make the presentations available to the guests after the event. You can possibly place a link to the presentations at the end of the evaluation. First, participants are to answer a few short questions and shortly after they receive direct access to the presentations. Make sure to ask the speakers at your event for permission beforehand, so that you can publish the presentations directly after the event.

Keep your participants involved – Following up.

Think beforehand of how to increase your event's efficiency with a good sequence to your event. You can give or send documentation or a gift, or distribute goodie bags at the end of an event or an apple with a wrapper on which one can find a tip or saying. Furthermore, you can offer a discount with limited validity. How about sustainable presents with a nice story?

Make it as personal as possible. In case you decide to send something after the event, try to be as personal as possible. Leave the follow-up to the person managing the relation. A personal message – for example on a post-it – always works.

Take a picture of the guests at the event. After the event, you can send the documentation in the form of a magazine with the guest on the cover – something which you do not just throw away.

Ambassadors. When you launch a project, make a couple of ambassadors that are concerned with the follow-up play an active role, for example through one-on-one conversations or by putting the project on the team meeting's agenda.

Mini-documentary. Do you have actions or projects arisen out of a kick-off or brainstorm? Produce a short clip (mini-documentary) about it and send this to the guests to show them that inspiration from the event has now been turned into action.

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A card to yourself.

During the event, you can make the guests write a card to themselves on which they, for example, write an insight which they would like to apply. Subsequently, you collect these cards and post them two weeks after the event.

Expand your reach – reporting

Send your report also to the guests who could not join the event and to all your contacts whom you would like to join your event on the next occasion. Use the internet or intranet to publish your report and publish the web link to your report on Twitter and other Social Media. Make sure that your report is exciting and relevant and share the results of the event. The tips from the workshop, talkshow or brainstorm will arouse the interest of the colleagues who could not make the event. Pictures and video clips often strengthen the memories. You can easily make a report on the basis of the tweets sent by the guests using Storify (www.storify.com).

Use a surprising format: text, video material, pictures, cartoons, storify, mind map or magazine. Invite the guests to blog about the event and to share their experiences on Social Media.

Video report. A video clip is a very appropriate way to represent the atmosphere of the event. A good video report can be used to promote the next event and a link to this report can be included in the invitation to the next event. Invitees can form an idea of what to expect of the event. Example of a video report: <http://youtu.be/D0xjAgv4vqU>

You do not have to send the whole report at once; you can also choose to send a part of the report every week for three weeks. After a coaching day the guests received a recipe book, "Recipes to success," with a few empty folders. Every two months the guests received a recipe with on the other side of the page a coaching tip by mail.



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Expand your reach – Create headlines

Most events will not be interesting enough for the national press, but it is not difficult to reach the trade press. Make sure that the tone of your article is journalistic, because some kind of advertisement story is not interesting enough to publish. Build up a good relationship with the trade press journalists. Make sure that they can reach you when you have sent the press release. Include your mobile phone number, because journalists will often call you up in the evening.

You can also call the journalists up yourself.

Choose a news-trigger: journalists love media friendly images or videos, lists of concrete tips, research results, record attempts, surprising insights and extraordinary people.

Give one journalist the scoop and invite trade press journalists to attend the event.

Make sure to send in a few good pictures with the press release.

While designing the event you already have to think about the relevance of the event for the press. If you can make it newsworthy it will probably be more interesting to attend for you invitees too.

Expand your reach – Social Media

Use Twitter, Yammer or Facebook to keep the outside world informed. Short messages, supported by some pictures, will arouse the interest of others. Besides, it allows guests to give their opinion. Choose a hashtag (#) that is not in use for other causes. Tweeters can effortlessly select messages about the event and you can hire a Twitter editor to give advice on how to promote the event on Twitter. During the event, the Twitter editor can engage other Twitter-users and deliver a live report from the event. A Twitter editor can give insight in the overall reach of the event on Twitter.

You can make a live broadcast from the event by using a streaming video so that everybody can watch the event on the internet. A live webcast of your event needs a lot of promotion.

IN TE RESTING

SO THE EVENT STARTED WITH COFFEE FOLLOWED BY THE OPENING BY THE CEO
FOLLOWED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DAY AFTER THAT COFFEE AGAIN
FOLLOWED BY SOME WORKSHOPS ABOUT SOMETHINGS I FORGOT AND
AFTER THAT LUNCH, WHICH WAS GOOD



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From ad-hoc to platform

Events often stand on their own. During an event the impact will be high, but the memories will fade afterwards. The yearly exhibition Intertraffic created an online news portal that provides market data during the whole year. Besides, smallscale workshops and meetings are offered yearround. The event has developed into a platform. This approach can also be applied to small events. You can bring the guests together in a LinkedIn group or an online knowledge platform after the event. However, to keep a platform alive you need a good moderator who can make guests feel involved in the platform.

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