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THE VOICE OF CANADIAN MEETINGS

WINTER 2015

UNPRODUCTIVE?

**If your meetings
are a joke,
it's time to change
the punchline**

What's the Hook?

Creating events that
speakers and participants
clamour for

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Dare to be Different



In a short time, my CAPS presidency will come to an end and I will hand over the leadership of this amazing association to the accomplished and dedicated Deri Latimer, CSP.

Realizing that this was my last opportunity to share some thoughts with you in this president's message column, I asked myself, "If I could leave you with one message about the future of the meeting industry, what would it be?" And the answer was simple.

Better isn't good enough anymore. We have to dare to be different.

As the meeting marketplace continues to change and evolve, the solutions to such challenges as maximizing delegate experience, managing short lead times, or mastering multi-channel meeting technology, will be not be found by asking ourselves how we can be better but rather by challenging ourselves to dare to be different.

Not different just for the sake of being different. Strategically different.

Different in the ways that you create, demonstrate and deliver more value to more delegates more often so that you can achieve more of the results that you want.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that getting better at how we run meetings isn't important. I am saying, however, that it is not enough. Think about it. What does "better" actually mean? It means that we look at something that already exists and assume that the basic premise of that something is sound. And, if something is fundamentally sound, then all we really need to do is tweak it, right?

Truth be told, small tweaks, big tweaks, single tweaks or tweaks galore – a tweak is still just a tweak. The world is innovating around us and we are still looking at the status quo and asking ourselves, "How can we make this better?" instead of imagining what could be and asking ourselves "How can we make this happen?"

Better is about rearranging the pieces of a pre-existing puzzle. Different is about redefining the puzzle completely.

Better is about incremental improvement. Different is about transformational change.

Better is about doing what is expected. Different is about doing the unexpected.

So ask yourself: "Are you better or are you different or are you both?"

Because, if all that you are is one or the other, then it's time to get working on being one *and* the other. When push comes to shove, no-one knows better than you that the only real question is what are you going to do today, right now, to take your meetings from where they are to where you have always believed they could be?

What if the only thing standing between where you are today and where you have always believed you could be is the courage to let go of where you have already been? Because We Believe.

Toni Newman, HoF
2015 CAPS National President

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UNPRODUCTIVE?



If your meetings are a joke, it's time to change the punchline

By Adriana Girdler

Jokes like the one above can be hurtful to the meeting and event planners who make putting on events their life's work. The planners I know go to great lengths to ensure their meetings are productive, valuable experiences that result in creative outcomes and lead to action with impact.

In fact, for many, meetings are a great collaboration tool that when structured and facilitated effectively, bring people together to resolve issues, enable brainstorming, develop new ideas and support the achievement of business goals and objectives.

A Verizon-commissioned study *Meetings in America V*, found 92 per cent of meeting attendees value meetings as providing an opportunity to contribute, suggesting that successful meetings may be a contributing factor to employee job satisfaction.

So, why are meetings so often the punchline of jokes?

Large, out-of-the-office meeting events rarely fall into this category. Rather, these type of problematic meetings surface during the in-house meetings people attend within the context of their jobs.

These day-to-day office meetings are often frustrating simply because, despite all of their intended virtues, it is not uncommon for people to spend whole days attending back-to-back, unproductive meetings that prevent them from getting to their actual work.

In fact, a survey conducted in 2011 by CornerStone Dynamics (CSD) found that 42 per cent of Canadian respondents felt that the meetings they attended were unproductive. That's a pretty large group of unproductive people! In 2005, the U.S. Bureau of Labor conducted a study and determined that unproductive meetings cost U.S. businesses approximately 37 billion dollars per year!

We probably can't relate to big numbers like this, so let's take a second to evaluate what unproductive meetings might cost a company. Let's assume that, on average, a busy employee has two meetings a day or roughly 40 meetings a month. Out of these 40 meetings, let's say 17 (as found by CSD) are not productive, the meeting length is one hour, and each employee is paid \$75/hour.

If we assume that an average of six employees attend each meeting, we get a cost of \$450/meeting. Multiply this by 17 and we have a total cost of \$7,650/month or \$91,800 per year.

Despite the downside, office meetings are not going away, and, quite honestly, they shouldn't. What the jokes, the statistics and the frustration of having to work outside of working hours because of back-to-back meetings all suggest is that there is a tremendous opportunity to teach the average employee how to conduct meetings more effectively. Instead of being a punchline, meetings can become a game-changing experience for organizations.

MEETINGS THAT ARE FOCUSED ON UPDATING AND TASK REPORTING ARE A SURE-FIRE WAY TO DISENGAGE AND FRUSTRATE YOUR ATTENDEES.



SYMPTOMS OF AN UNPRODUCTIVE MEETING

When meetings are not being run effectively you may either witness or personally experience some of the following symptoms:

- Missed parts of a meeting by arriving late or leaving early;
- Did other work while in the meeting;
- Had other conversations during the meeting (email, text or with the person sitting next to you);
- Day dreamed during meeting; and/or
- Dozed.

What do any or all of these symptoms indicate? Attendees just do not see how the meeting content is relevant to them.

Meetings that are focused on updating and task reporting are a great example of this and are a sure-fire way to disengage and frustrate your attendees. There is a passive quality to sitting through a checklist rundown on what everyone else is doing that is quite simply, unstimulating! Therefore it is critically important to first ensure that everyone understands that every meeting they schedule must create value for attendees.

GAME-CHANGING MEETING ACTIVITIES

First, a productive meeting has purpose. Everyone is gathered to get something done. This means no updates or status reports. Second, productive meetings are well prepared and structured. They have agendas, they use facilitation techniques to keep the conversation moving and always have a clear objective and deliverable. While this sounds logical and simple, the fact is many people don't know how to run a productive meeting.

TECHNOLOGY ALONE WON'T GET US THERE!

There is a belief that technology will resolve our meeting issues. Verizon's study further shares that some 89 per cent of respondents believe that technology will make meetings easier in the future.

In one way this belief is correct. Technology can help to

reduce the need for the status-update/task-list meetings that really add no value.

However, technology is only a tool and, while it can assist organizations in reaching goals, it must be used effectively for this to happen. For example, if you wanted to get into shape, a piece of equipment or gym membership alone will not get you to your goal. Instead, it will be the energy and effort you put into working out at the gym or on the equipment that determines your success. In essence, it's really all about how you use the tools. The same is true for meeting technology. If we implement these new technological productivity tools without becoming aware of and changing our unproductive meeting habits, then we will continue to have unproductive meetings.

So, if meeting technology alone won't help us, what will?

FROM PUNCHLINE TO GAME CHANGER

STEP 1: MANDATORY MEETING TRAINING

If we want to improve meeting productivity it is critical to change our meeting behaviour which requires employee education and training.

Most employees assume that running a meeting is a simple process. Yet those in the meeting planning industry know that to create apparent simplicity and flow requires planning and preparation. Knowing this, and knowing that meetings are the most common, go-to tool for ensuring that companies reach their business goals, it's shocking to find that employee training on how to handle meetings to ensure productive outcomes is so rare.

The focus of meeting training should be on facilitation skills and meeting preparation for those who run meetings and also on how to be a productive meeting participant.

A well-run meeting will result in great meeting outcomes. A good meeting facilitator is prepared with agendas, data for the meeting and meeting deliverables, to name a few. They are

also neutral and understand the importance of participation. There are some great facilitators out there, but the “game-changing” meeting also requires that every participant be great and meet certain standards in their approach to the meeting. Training and practice is the only thing that will ensure this happens.

They need to be trained on good meeting etiquette and how to properly participate and challenge ideas. Being a good participant means giving your full attention to the meeting agenda and facilitator. It means not interrupting with non-agenda related items that derail the meeting objective. If an issue is identified, engaged participants also present potential solutions. Constantly being a nay-sayer in a meeting drains the productivity and is counter-productive to the goal of resolving problems and moving project momentum forward.

Overall, productive meeting behaviour is a two-way street. Everyone’s participation is critical for success. And, as with any new change initiative, introducing training to evolve an organization’s meeting behaviour will require the support and commitment of the organization’s senior leadership.

STEP 2: SHIFT UPDATES AND STATUS MEETINGS TO TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

We live in a technology-rich society, so why not use these efficient tools for corporate updates and status reporting. For example, you could use video and/or audio updates. Most people have access to a video camera or smartphone recording

app. Ensure that you have a common location to house all of your video downloads, and set rules around the length of updates, which ideally should not be more than three minutes. This will ensure reasonable file-sizes, force everyone to be succinct in their updates and demonstrate respect for each other’s time constraints.

For status updates, you need a great task tracker that allows for comments. For example, use the comment section to provide an update on the status of your activity, to ask for a due date, an extension or to provide additional detail to the actual task. Empower the team to update the tracker in the comment section with their updates. The manager or team leader for this tracker can then review it and speak to individuals separately if additional information or clarity is required, instead of doing it in a meeting.

HUMOUR ME FOR ONE LAST MOMENT!

In-house meetings are truly a system of collaborating that enrich participant’s experiences and add value to our organizations. However, the likelihood of them going wrong is high, as are the costs associated with the lost productivity from mis-managed meetings.

If the office meetings you frequent are the brunt of productivity jokes, then it’s time to introduce some meeting productivity training and technology tools to ensure that the meetings inspire game-changing insights and transformational outcomes.

SOI

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WHAT'S THE HOOK?

Creating events that speakers and participants clamour for

By Teresa de Grosbois

That's why you must be intimately aware of the influence game. Understanding the way influence works will have people lining up for your events, deeply glad they came, and telling everyone in their world they should all be there next time.

What will set your next event apart from the rest? How can you make it go viral? It's not as difficult as you may believe. Begin with this influence-building checklist, be consistent, and you'll be well on your way to meetings that are loaded with value, well attended and well loved.

WORD OF MOUTH IS KEY

Studies show that 74 per cent of people now use word of mouth to inform their decisions. And, getting people to talk about your event is as simple as understanding one key principle. You can't make yourself famous or influential. You need other influential people to do that for you. The simplest way to find influential people is to create them. Get in the habit of routinely endorsing and helping others whom you admire, especially those in your market. In essence, you are helping them become influential. When it comes time to promote your event, they'll be clamouring to help you get people there.

FIND YOUR MAVENS

Who are the key influencers among your target audience that will sell the rest? Agree to have these people on your stage or endorse them from the stage, and they will likely be willing to help promote the event. If you don't know them personally, find someone who can connect you and develop the relationship before asking for their help in promoting the event. You can make it a win-win for them to promote your event by publicly acknowledging them as key players in its success. Avoid the mistake of inauthenticity when choosing who you endorse or acknowledge. My definition of authenticity is simple – make sure your inner voice is always saying the same thing as your outer voice. Otherwise, you will come off as a smarmy sales rep. Choose who you play with based on who you truly admire.

It's every meeting planner's nightmare. You can hear a pin drop in a room optimistically set up for two hundred. Stifled yawns and sideways glances at the only escape route spread steadily among the thirty-two attendees. What happened to the other 150? Wearing masks of controlled optimism, your team shuffles chairs to make the room appear full. Is it too late for a miracle?

According to a Quickmobile study, event planning is the sixth most stressful job in North America. No surprise. The entire measure of your performance happens in only a few short days, sometimes hours, but will reflect on you for years to come. What took weeks or months to build could come crashing down in moments. To be successful, an event must be loaded with value, well attended and well loved. The event planner must be prepared for every possible setback or disaster while delivering an event with high perceived value in a cost-effective manner.

MAKE SURE HIGH VALUE IS THE REASON FOR YOUR MEETING

Does it celebrate something important or does it solve a big problem for others? If there is not a high motivator for people to come, they won't. Ensure all your marketing materials or invitations make it clear that there is something big in it that speaks directly to what's important to them. Be specific. The biggest mistake I see people making in this regard is creating an event that's too broad. If it feels generic, intended for anyone and everything, it's less likely to be attractive to the exact market you'd like in attendance. Martin Luther King, Jr. made his life about creating racial equality. He did so by going after a specific problem – unfairness in the Montgomery, Alabama bus system. So ditch generic and all-encompassing and dive into specific problems. The impact will be far greater.

PARTNER WITH MANAGEMENT

If your event is in-house, make sure the management team is your partner. One of the best gifts you can give management is to increase their influence. Beyond having their buy-in, make sure it meets their needs, both now and in the future. Acknowledge key team players for their contribution and their commitment. Engage the company newsletter before and after the meeting. Get examples and endorsements from participants talking about why the meeting is needed and what it will achieve. Every person you quote becomes an advocate for your event. Influence research shows that once people endorse something their commitment to it increases significantly.

CATCH THE WAVE

What are the dominant conversations you can piggyback on? What's going on in your organization? Check local and national media for topical stories that your event can relate to. Then feel free to let your local media know about your event and how it relates to the bigger conversation they are covering. When you merge your event with the conversation already going on in the media, you're more likely to get coverage.

USE PASSION TO SELL

They are not words you hear often in business, but excitement and passion really do attract people. Are you excited about the event, or is it another ho-hum gathering in your eyes? Create those surprises and fun moments that everyone will love. Create a "spontaneous" flash mob that surprises your guest of honour. Tweet a selfie from the stage. Give fun gifts. Tell everyone they have to give 20 compliments. Bring in speakers who don't just teach but also make people laugh.

Request testimonials during the event while folks are excited. If you leave this to the last moment when they are packing up to go home, they simply won't participate. Pull out your smart phone and record their comments about the day or have forms ready during a break. An added bonus: people who have endorsed you are three to five times more likely to attend your next event.

MAKE IT FUN

Fun generates gossip. If it aligns with your organization's in-house policy, share the excitement of the event straight to Facebook and Twitter while it's happening. People smiling and having fun create the desire for others to be there with them. You want them to feel as if they're missing a big party! Make sure your staff or volunteers greet participants with a smile – no issue is too big to be resolved. Remember, it's your example that staff and volunteers will follow. You want your registrants to feel like cherished guests.

MAKE IT HIGH ENERGY

Energy equals learning. Bulgarian scientist Georgi Lozanov first developed the theory that the more energetic you keep your audience, the more they will internalize their experience. Bore them with lecturing and they'll walk away remembering less than 12 per cent of what was said. Get them participating and having fun and they'll retain over 92 per cent. So, choose speakers who use accelerated and fun learning techniques.

PROMOTE INFLUENCE IN THE ROOM

Acknowledge your speakers, your host, the hotel and the audience. Sounds boring, right? It doesn't have to be; there's an art to acknowledgement. Describe how someone contributed. Share a story about your personal experience with that person. When I first started doing events, someone really helped me with advice. Whenever she's in the room, I share a heartfelt story about how much her mentorship meant to me. Do this, and the audience will fall in love with you and the person being acknowledged. Don't give a long list of acknowledgements all at once. Weave it into your content like a beautiful tapestry. As well, give key people mentions in social media before, during and after the event. Let technology be your herald.

SELL NEXT YEAR BEFORE YOU CLOSE

What do you have planned next? Forty-two per cent of meeting planners book large meetings more than three years in advance, so promote your upcoming events at the existing one. Have the details ready in the room with an in-room special price that'll knock their socks off. The audience that's already engaged will fill half or more of the next event in one day! Make it the event people have to be at. That will make your life easier and you'll look like a hero to those you are organizing for. And then let people know via social media that you're half sold out already. Focus on the fun people had, and thank the sponsors, the mavens, keynoters and the key management team players. People want to be associated with success, and when you acknowledge them for the current success, they're more likely to put their energy and resources behind your next event.

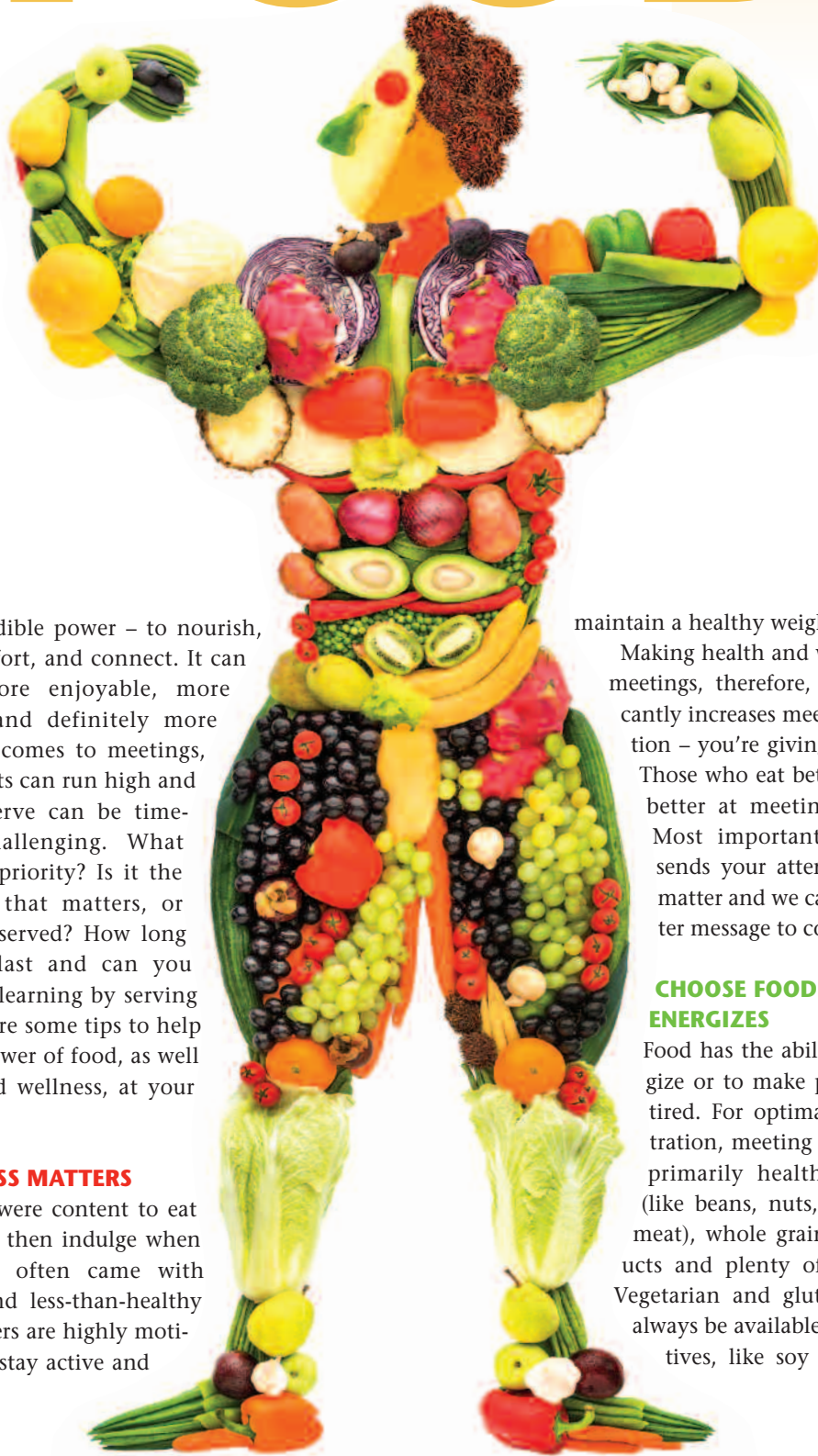
Ultimately people will move away from what's boring or painful and toward what they believe to be fun, pleasurable and high value.

Here's to your next "knock their socks off" event!

SOI

FOOD

HAS POWER – USE IT WELL



By Liz Pearson

Food has incredible power – to nourish, energize, comfort, and connect. It can make life more enjoyable, more meaningful, and definitely more fun. When it comes to meetings, however, food budgets can run high and deciding what to serve can be time-consuming and challenging. What should be your top priority? Is it the actual food choice that matters, or where and how it's served? How long should each meal last and can you enhance participant learning by serving certain foods? Here are some tips to help you maximize the power of food, as well as overall health and wellness, at your next meeting.

HEALTH & WELLNESS MATTERS

At one time, people were content to eat healthy at home and then indulge when travelling. Meetings often came with donuts, croissants and less-than-healthy fare. Today's consumers are highly motivated to eat healthy, stay active and

maintain a healthy weight, wherever they are.

Making health and wellness a top priority at meetings, therefore, makes sense. It significantly increases meeting participant satisfaction – you're giving them what they want. Those who eat better at meetings also feel better at meetings (it's a double win)! Most importantly, a focus on health sends your attendees this message: you matter and we care. Could there be a better message to communicate?

CHOOSE FOOD THAT NOURISHES & ENERGIZES

Food has the ability to nourish and energize or to make people feel sluggish and tired. For optimal learning and concentration, meeting menus should showcase primarily healthier sources of protein (like beans, nuts, fish, chicken and lean meat), whole grains, lower fat milk products and plenty of fruits and vegetables. Vegetarian and gluten-free options should always be available, as should milk alternatives, like soy and almond milk. Any

food intolerances or allergies should be determined in advance. The lunchtime meal, in particular, should be well balanced and relatively light, to minimize the afternoon slump. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks should be served to make sure no one goes hungry and people remain alert. Including protein with all meals and snacks helps people to feel full or satisfied longer. Carbohydrate-rich foods are necessary to provide glucose to fuel the brain; however, be sure to choose less processed carbs that are higher in fibre (like 100% whole grains, beans, and whole fruits and vegetables, including the skin) to help keep blood sugar levels stable and energy levels high.

PROMOTE HYDRATION

The majority of our bodies are water. Not surprisingly, even mild dehydration can impact our mood as well as our ability to think, learn and pay attention. Water should be available in every meeting room and at every meal. Pitchers of water or water stations are less costly and more environmentally friendly than individual, bottled waters. Both caffeinated beverages (coffee and tea, including green tea and black) and caffeine-free beverages (decaffeinated coffee and herbal teas) contribute to hydration and should be widely available, too. Limit fruit juice and serve whole fruit instead at most meals and snacks (results in more stable blood sugars). Keep sugary soft drinks off the menu. Alcohol promotes dehydration and drinking to excess, particularly in the evenings, should not be encouraged.

LEAVE TIME, BUT NOT TOO MUCH

How long should each meal last? People shouldn't feel rushed while eating, but you don't want them getting restless either. Generally, allow 30 to 40 minutes for breakfast, 45 to 60 minutes for lunch, and 20 minutes per course for dinner. When it comes to snacks, allow a minimum of 15 minutes for up to 100 people, 30 minutes for up to 1,000, and 30 to 45 minutes for groups larger than 1,000. Buffets are faster, offer more variety and work well for breakfast or lunch. A more formal, sit-down meal is often best for dinner.

ENCOURAGE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

One of the most important functions of mealtime is human interaction and connection. This is especially important in today's technology-driven world where most people spend more time connecting to devices than to each other. Create an environment that promotes connection. Consider a moment of silence before the meal starts (this is especially appropriate for more formal, sit-down meals). This gives people time to settle their minds and become more focused and present with themselves and others. The silence can be followed by someone saying grace or reading a quote or poem. A simple, non-denominational invocation can be used.

Also important, if a speaker is scheduled for meal time, don't have them start speaking until the coffee and tea are



A SAMPLE FOOD PLAN

Breakfast Buffet

Steel-cut oats (with dried fruit and nut toppings), high-fibre and whole-grain cold cereals, low-fat milk and yogurt, eggs, whole-grain breads, nut butters (like peanut and almond), fresh fruits (including berries), 100% fruit juice.

Lunch

Entrée-size salad with grilled fish, chicken, or shrimp and whole grain rolls; veggie-loaded stir fry with chicken or shrimp and whole-grain rolls; soup, plus assorted whole-grain sandwiches or wraps made with shredded or grilled veggies and chicken, fish or beans; buffet salad bar with leafy green salads, bean salads, fruit salads, whole-grain breads and assorted cold chicken, fish, and lean meats; chili with small salad and whole-grain cornbread; fruit for dessert.

3-Course Dinner

Soup or salad; chicken, fish, or lean red meat (pork tenderloin, sirloin steak, or filet mignon), served with steamed, roasted or grilled veggies and a whole-grain side (like quinoa or brown rice); a mini decadent dessert.

Snacks

(Choose one for mid-morning, one for mid-afternoon) Smoothies (made with Greek yogurt, veggies, and fruit); nuts or trail mix and fresh fruit; whole-grain flat breads served with assorted bean dips, like hummus; fruit skewers with Greek yogurt dip; cut-up veggies with Greek yogurt dip; apple wedges with nut butters; granola bars (made with nuts, seeds, dried fruit and whole grains).

served, so people still have time to talk. To stimulate conversation, especially if people don't know each other well, consider placing thought-provoking questions, quotes, or "conversation starters" at each table. Think strategically about where you seat people, particularly if you want certain groups or individuals to connect.

MAKE MEALS UNIQUE & FUN

Meetings and mealtimes are more memorable when they're fun. At snack time, let people build their own Greek yogurt parfaits with toppings like granola and fresh fruit, as well as chocolate chips and sprinkles (no one's ever too old for sprinkles)! Depending on your meeting location, order boxed lunches for a picnic or excursion outside. Have ethnic-themed meals. Replace the traditional sit-down meal with walk-around food stations that serve sushi, crab cakes, wood-fired pizza, satays, tacos, fajitas, or quesadillas. Consider a chocolate fountain with berries and fresh fruit for dessert. Popcorn makes a fun and healthy snack for meetings that run into the evening.

SITTING IS THE NEW SMOKING

Food is important, but don't forget physical activity. People who move more are healthier, happier, more likely to make healthy food choices and more likely to maintain a healthy weight. When it comes to meetings, it's especially important to minimize the amount of time spent sitting. Too much sitting increases the risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, and shortens our lives significantly. It also makes meeting attendees restless and decreases their ability to pay attention

and learn. Incorporate regular stretch or fit breaks into the meeting schedule (one of the most consistent comments I get from meeting participants on my own evaluation forms is how much they love and appreciate my fitness breaks). Participants should never have to sit for longer than 45 minutes to an hour without some kind of movement. Try to schedule specific times at the beginning or end of each day as well, when people can have a workout or enjoy a walk or run. If possible, also allocate time in the program for group activities like hiking, yoga or golf.

MEDITATION ISN'T JUST FOR GURUS

If you really want to move your meeting to the next level, add meditation to the mix. Just two to three minutes of meditation (with either guided imagery or a focus on breath) throughout the day can help participants reduce stress, feel calmer, and become more focused and present. It also helps them assimilate the information they've learned so far and become ready to learn more. Becoming more mindful at meal time (eating with both intention and attention) also helps us to eat less and enjoy our food more.

THE BOTTOM LINE...

Make meeting participants happy by serving meals, snacks and beverages that are healthy, energizing and fun. Give people enough time to eat, but not too much. Encourage meaningful mealtime connections. Keep people moving and active. Mix in some meditation too. Give health and wellness the priority it deserves at your next meeting!

SOI

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF MEALTIME IS HUMAN INTERACTION AND CONNECTION. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN WORLD WHERE MOST PEOPLE SPEND MORE TIME CONNECTING TO DEVICES THAN TO EACH OTHER.



By Paul Tobey



Paul Tobey is CEO of Training Business Pros, Canada's leading digital marketing training company, and is a Certified Partner and Trusted Advisor for Infusionsoft, a leading marketing automation software for small business.

• www.trainingbusinesspros.com

Get With the Digital Times

Bringing marketing automation to the party

The latest advances in digital marketing automation are boosting revenues for companies that employ them, yet most companies are still holding out. Why? Because, either they don't know what's possible, or they are too firmly entrenched in "old-school" marketing practices to embrace change. For the second group, burying your head in the proverbial sand is ludicrous. To remain on top, your company has to get with the digital times.

There are only three ways to create more revenue: Get more clients; Increase the frequency at which your clients buy; Increase your prices. One way to maximize your profits in all three areas is to use an automated marketing system I call the Customer Revenue Maximizer System (CRMS).

CRMS works by focusing on seven key areas of marketing automation. Let's take a quick look at each and use "event marketing" as an example.

Traffic Sources

Choosing the right traffic source is important but it's critical to pay strict attention to the conversion metrics of each. Whether you're dabbling in Facebook Ads, Google Adwords or even Twitter Ads, you'll want to know what's converting. Let's say you want to fill a seminar or sell out seats at your annual conference. For this task, Facebook targeting and remarketing is very effective. While a lead from Facebook may cost you more, because the demographics are precise, it will give you a greater chance of converting prospects into higher priced offers later on.

Lead Magnet

This is a low-cost in time and no-cost in money "brain-dead" offer that converts the maximum amount of cold traffic into leads. This is a top-of-funnel strategy that many companies struggle with because of the complex relationship between advertising and lead capture. Think about how a pre-event free webinar, low-cost seminar or even free video series could capture the greatest amount of leads.

Tripwire

A low-cost in time and money offer that is low-risk but gives the client high value. This is your opportunity to build trust and credibility by over-delivering on your promises. How might this work for event marketing? Create a "super-early-bird" discount or "buy-one-get-one" free offer. You could also bundle previous event videos and sell them at a greatly discounted rate.

Core Product

High cost in time and money. This is where you make the bulk of your revenue by moving clients from Tripwire to Core Product. Selling an event registration becomes easier because of the trust factor built by the Tripwire.

Profit Maximizer

Highest cost in time and money. Use your data-rich contact list to find out what your clients want and create it for them. Or, you could bundle your products and services to make bigger sales. There are multiple areas for maximizing profits from an event. Perhaps some of your speakers could be allowed to "sell from the stage" and share profits, or maybe you could sell a lifetime subscription to your annual event.

Email Automation

Automated emails are the engine that moves clients through the system from lead magnet to core product to profit maximizer. Emails do the heavy lifting. When setup properly, clients will engage in a "choose your journey" experience much the same as choosing the different steps at an ATM machine. Client actions trigger pre-sequenced events and many of those emails will deliver them to key landing pages. Having an automated system that gives you proper metrics, e.g. delivery rates, open rates, click-through rates, bounce rates, conversion rates etc., is the key to successful optimization.

Return Path

A system of automated triggers and communications that return clients to where they left off. For example, if they've purchased a Tripwire, don't send them back to your Lead Magnet. Instead, move them to another Tripwire and, eventually, Core Product (i.e. when they buy a ticket to your event, start a marketing sequence that upsells them to a gala evening, video recording of all the seminars, or even potential sponsorship).

It is critical that you choose the right CRM software to handle your CRMS. My personal preference is Infusionsoft, but whatever your choice of CRM, consider this: The one thing you cannot do without is a system that tracks client movement. We use "Status" tags to let us know where clients are in any given campaign. Only then can we optimize our campaigns by fixing "drop off" points where clients didn't do what we wanted them to do.

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Celebrity Speakers and the Y Factor

Y should a meeting planner include what has come to be known as a “celebrity” speaker in their meeting design? Decision factors include cost, availability, impact, keeping your client happy, etc. This article explores the Ys and the Y Notes when making your decision. Most celebrity speakers are represented by speaker bureaus. So, we chatted with the CEOs of three Canadian speaker bureaus. Our thanks to: Martin Perelmutter, CEO of Speakers’ Spotlight at www.speakers.ca; Cathleen Filmore, CEO of Speakers Gold at www.speakersgold.com; and Theresa Beenken, CEO of National Speakers Bureau at www.nsb.com.

Y Hire a Celebrity?

There are definitely some “wins” when hiring a celebrity. For example, a celebrity could attract a broader audience to your event, thus adding more of the ever-elusive “bums in seats!” A ripple effect can be generated when word of mouth or social media spread the news that a well known/well respected speaker will be at a particular event. Fundraising can be built around a celebrity, thus generating more revenue. In fact, the entire event could be built around your speaker.

For those events where attendance is compulsory, celebrities can generate a much needed “WOW” factor. There may also be the potential to engage the celebrity in follow-up work with your client’s executive team, depending on the organizational relevance of the topic that was presented, thus adding more value.

From a predictability standpoint, it is likely a celebrity’s content is stable and predictable. And, because they are often represented by professional speaker bureaus, you can acquire good insight into what it will be like to work with the celebrity based on the bureau’s experience.

On occasion, the softer benefits of having a celebrity at your event can be the most significant ones. Bragging rights are a direct or indirect benefit of hiring a celebrity speaker. The photo ops are generally very well received too, especially if the CEO of your client organization is a fan of the speaker!

Y Not Hire a Celebrity?

As with most things, there is a downside to hiring a celebrity. For example, having celebrity status is no guarantee that he or she will be engaging as a speaker. Some well-known authors, for example, are abominable speakers – even when quoting their own work!

Celebrities often have rather sizable egos. This may create a lot of extra time and cost to keep them happy. I recall one meeting planner who vowed never again to hire a particular speaker (or even recommend him) in spite of the fact that the speaker’s presentation knocked it out of the park. The excessive demands, special treatment and disrespectful outbursts were such that everyone in planning and executing the meeting was totally turned off.

On average, fees tend to be relatively high. One speaker can easily consume your entire budget. The cost of bringing in a celebrity speaker might be better invested elsewhere, to increase the overall value of your event to the participants.

Advice from the Pros

- Be clear on the purpose of your event to ensure a celebrity speaker will support that purpose;
- Assess the celebrity’s ability to deliver a message;
- Do you want the celebrity for inspiration, content, relevance or some combination? Be clear on the purpose and value you expect;
- Be aware of any ego issues that may arise;
- Determine flexibility with timing, focus, etc;
- Seek other ways for a celebrity speaker to add value to your event, such as a VIP reception, meet and greet, photo ops, etc.
- Focus on the value the celebrity can deliver to your client – it may not be equated to their fee;
- Be cautious of celebrities who are overused – their perceived added value may be diminished;
- Look first for a celebrity within your meeting’s industry, then look for someone outside the industry – someone with a message that has broad appeal;
- Don’t allow yourself to be dazzled or impressed – keep a relentless focus on providing value to your client;
- Be cautious that the selection of a celebrity is not simply because your client is a fan;
- Be aware of surrounding elements that may increase the costs beyond an already high speaking fee (helicopters, private jets, luxury accommodation, an entourage, etc.); and
- Get clarity on the format of the presentation, what you can expect before and after the presentation. **SOI**



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Brian Fraser works primarily with not-for-profits to help them revive their VIBE in every dimension of their service. He uses the wit, wisdom, and workings of jazz to provoke COOL Conversations that generate SMARTer Leadership.

- www.jazzthink.com

By Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF



Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF, is listed as one of Canada's most in-demand speakers. Surf over to his website to discover how to put humour to work for more success in your organization.

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Offbeat Networking Ideas

Need creative ways to network? Forget technology. These ten fun and low-tech methods do the trick

- 1** Create a "humour resources scavenger hunt" sheet for each participant where people need to find other people who match various offbeat criteria. For example, "Find 2 people who can show you a new dance step," "Find 4 people who say they have an above average sense of humour," "Find 3 people who can sing the theme song from Gilligan's Island or The Big Bang Theory," "Find 2 people who can wiggle their ears or touch their tongue to their nose" etc. Award a prize for the person who completes the hunt the fastest.
- 2** For the really adventurous, have people group up into circles of 6-10 people and have each person introduce themselves to the rest of the group by spelling their names out using only the movement of their hips.
- 3** Speed networking – networking à la speed dating! This is a simple and fun way to force everyone to move quickly around and interact with as many people as possible. Everyone gets only three minutes to talk to another person they haven't met yet, then someone rings a bell, bangs a gong or blows a whistle to signal it's time for everyone to move immediately on to someone else for the next three minutes.
- 4** Have a list of offbeat questions printed up on cards or displayed to help everyone get interesting conversations started. A few simple ideas to get you started: "What celebrity or superhero would be of the most help to your organization and why?" "What TV show or movie title best represents your workplace or job?" "What was the worst job you've ever had in your life and why?" or "Would you rather have the ability to fly or the ability to read minds?"
- 5** Rather than just wearing a name tag, wear a tag that answers a predetermined question. For example: Where were you born? What's your favourite number, animal, sitcom, movie, or book? How many times have you moved in your life? If you could stay at a certain age for the rest of your life, what age would that be? What's your favourite junk food indulgence? What's your favourite word? It's an easy way for everyone, even introverts, to break the ice with one another.
- 6** Have a table full of unusual and assorted photos and objects and invite everyone to take one that they must then carry around with them that best embodies how they are feeling about the event OR symbolizes something they are passionate about.
- 7** Have everyone form up into groups of three. The triad then finds another group of three to introduce themselves to, but with this catch: one of the three people in each group introduces a completely made up story – an alias, fake job and a phoney back story. The other group must then decide which of the three people is the "imposter." Keep rotating the groups around as time and numbers warrant.
- 8** An easy one for the less adventurous: Put everyone's nametag in a basket and have people draw a nametag and hunt down its rightful owner.
- 9** Pass an imaginary ball of energy around a circle to wake people up. Have groups form circles of 5-8 people. One person starts by clapping out an imaginary ball of energy to another person in the circle, who must then "catch" the imaginary energy ball with a clap before clapping it out to another person in the circle. Encourage people to toss the ball of energy randomly to anyone else in the circle as fast as possible around the circle to encourage people to wake up and get them laughing.
- 10** The name toss game. Similar to the energy ball only groups pass their name back and forth to each other as a way of introducing themselves to other people. The person who you pass your name to with a clapping motion must repeat the name that gets passed to them before introducing themselves and passing off their own name to another random person in the circle. Keep going for three minutes, encouraging people to keep passing their names around until everyone learns everyone's name.

SOI

By Maggie Chicoine



Maggie Chicoine's company, The Idea Sculptor, specializes in "Strategies to Think Ahead". With 30 years as a professional speaker and Master Coach, Maggie brings a twist of ingenuity and humour to each engagement.

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Invite Einstein's Mother

It's not about the right answers but the right questions

Fact A: Meetings cost money. Fact B: Have you thought about the price tag attached to bored or frustrated participants after months of the same routine agenda? What about the loss of productivity and morale attached to griping and complaining once the meeting is adjourned?

Let's take a look at the structure and dynamics of your meetings, specifically the rhythm of dialogue and cadence of conversations. Start by thinking about a typical meeting you attend or chair. Can you recall who dominates the conversation? Who asks what? Does anyone question the direction of critical information? Are agenda items too lengthy and time too short to generate alternatives? How often does the group laugh together?

We all know that the most essential post-meeting conversations materialize in odd places; huddled around the corner in hallways, washrooms and parking lots. The truth leaks out in nods and mutterings, apart from the planned agenda.

Consider this fact as well: the agenda does not drive the agenda. Essential and explorative questions are the heart beat of engagement, not the issues listed on the page. Participants need and want a voice in decisions. Does your agenda include opportunities to express individual thoughts, or do you assume that the discussion itself is enough to fill gaps in thinking?

Albert Einstein's mother, Pauline, didn't take conversation for granted. She knew what to do about digging deeper into her son's apparent slow speech patterns. She had a simple daily agenda. It's said that from the time her little dyslexic genius started school, she would ask one key question: "What good questions did you ask today?" She's the kind of meeting participant I'd like to have at the next strategic planning event!

Obvious questions are often not asked, and that oversight leads to assumptions, flawed solutions and short-sighted decisions.

GREAT QUESTIONS CLARIFY

Take Lois Lane, for example. She never did ask Superman if he knew Clark Kent. Questions, carefully designed, bring out the best in people to develop commitment, truth, integrity and innovation. They are a powerful tool that nourishes a living system. Is your meeting system almost dead or alive?

Let's do some investigative fact finding about that. At your next meeting, "Question Track" dialogue in a number of categories to summarize "who is asking what." Make up a chart to record the following items:

- Who asks questions, including the chair?
- Which open questions are asked (who, what, when, where, how)?
- Does anyone ask "Why?"
- How often does someone pose a closed question requiring a "yes" or "no" response?
- Who reflects and summarizes?
- What is the ratio of positive to negative statements? (The ideal is 5:1).
- How often does the group laugh?
- What does the overall score tell you about your meeting?
- Does your agenda actually reinforce a structure for sharing and deeper dialogue?

GUIDING IDEAS

When you are chair of a meeting:

- Plan your questions in advance beside each agenda item;
- Consider how to encourage silent members to speak, and dominators to listen more; and
- Connect in advance with people who are presenting issues, so that they can anticipate questions and stick to a healthy time-frame.

As a participant (especially if you drag yourself in):

- Take the initiative to generate more discussion;
- Plan a couple of questions ahead of time;
- Try "Tell me about..." as a substitute for who, what, where, when and how;
- Use "Why?" carefully. People become defensive instantly, so preface with reflection ("I've been thinking about what you said about... could we look at the issue from an alternate angle?");
- Share this article with the chair, and collaborate to shift the rhythm of the meeting.

Finally, my best suggestion is based, as you may have guessed, on Pauline Einstein's question. New practices spread easily by introducing the simplest formulas. Ask three cascading questions, allowing some discussion before proceeding to the next. Begin with "What's important?" Refine it with, "What's really important?" And, finally ask, "What's most important?"

The right questions posed with respect will support the right people, to make the right decisions, for the right reasons, at the right time. It's like inviting Einstein's mother to the table. **SOI**

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By Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF



Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF, is listed as one of Canada's most in-demand speakers. Surf over to his website to discover how to put humour to work for more success in your organization.

• www.mikekerr.com

Need Dough?

A sure-fire recipe for money-making meetings

When we last met in this space, I offered up some extremely helpful tips on how to cut costs at your meetings. So, now let's look at the other side of the equation, shall we? We shall. (In case you had any doubt, I just thought I'd ease your mind right away.)

The other side of the equation is of course: How can we turn our meetings into epic profit centres so that everyone, save the meeting participants, leaves richer than when they started? After all, isn't the goal of meetings to enrich our lives? So, here are just a few ways you can make sure your meetings turn a profit that would make Donald Trump's hair blush.

Borrow from the airline model. Airline passengers have become accustomed to paying extra for, well, pretty much everything. "Oh, you want to sit during the flight? AND you want access to the washrooms? Let me just add those to your bill while you print out your boarding pass and luggage tags, attach the tags to your luggage correctly, schlep your luggage over to the conveyor belt, purchase your bag lunch for the flight, load your bags onto the plane and help us clean out the aircraft before an on-time departure."

This is a highly successful model for one critical reason. It defies all reason and, yet...it works! So, why wouldn't the meeting industry look into a similar money-making model? You could start charging extra for everything from the meeting agendas to the table mints. Better still, how about a "meeting space improvement" tax? And – we're on a roll now – a premium charge for attendees who want to bypass the registration line and premium seating where "business seating" gets you a front row seat with only five other participants per table, while "coach seating" leaves you languishing in the back bowels with 14 sweaty participants sandwiched around a table.

Meeting fundraisers. If you're a parent then you are more than accustomed to getting involved in car washes, raffle ticket drives and assorted money laundering schemes in order to pay for the heating at your child's school. It's a textbook case in how to raise money to purchase cases of textbooks. So, take that same "we

have no choice because you have us over a barrel" attitude and get your meeting participants involved in raising money for their own education and enlightenment.

Maybe it's a casino night to raise money for the meeting planners' salaries, or a dunk tank to raise funds for the printing costs, meals, or in-room heating. Maybe it's selling off raffle tickets where the winner gets to emcee the meeting – in which case you not only raise funds, you save the costs of bringing in a professional emcee!

Make the speakers pay. Speakers are being trained to speak for free through such high-profile outlets as TEDTalks, so why not take the next natural step in the evolution of the speaking business and ask them to pay for the privilege of being able to share their opinions in front of complete strangers. There are a number of different models that might work, for example, a price per word fee – the longer they speak, the more they have to pay.

There is also a huge opportunity for speaker levies, taxes and surcharges. For example, an overtime charge levied against any speaker that runs over their allotted time. This alone could raise untold thousands of dollars.

Or, how about a "Toastmasters' UM-Tax." Ding the speaker for every "um" they interject. Or an "ego tax" for every time the speaker wastes the audiences' time sharing self-gratifying epic stories about just how epic they are.

And, although it might be controversial (as all new taxes are), a pseudoscience or "BS-Tax" on speakers (BS, of course, standing for "bad science"). Think of it as a "carbon offset tax." The more the speaker strays into hot air territory, the more they must pay, not only to reduce the impact on climate change, but as a penalty for lowering the intellectual standards and discourse in society. Common phrases to tax might include, "the Law of Attraction," "quantum thought vibration," "the universe wants you," and "you too can be a millionaire in only five days if – and only if – you buy my book today."

If you have a meeting money-making idea, please drop us a line. (Just be sure to include the \$500 "reading fee.")

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