

Meetings – Are You Feeling Engaged

Testing the Axis Engagement Model

Slide 1: Introduction to the presentation

Slide 2: We looked at the concepts of engagement in work, and summarised with these two quotes:

- "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (*Kahn, 1990*)
and
- "an employee's involvement with, commitment to, and satisfaction with work. Employee engagement is a part of employee retention." (*Schmidt, 1993*)

But that's quite heavy. And what does it mean in the meetings and events environment?

Slide 3: at events, do you feel genuinely included: we collated a wealth of research that suggests indirect (And direct) discrimination occurs based on gender, culture, status and even personality; many events seem to allow the 'extroverts' to take control. Delegates may not feel listened to; that attempts to involve them are superficial; that they aren't really communicating and networking with their colleagues; and they certainly don't feel motivated.

Slide 4: although engagement is a 'hot topic' for organisers, the literature available – summed up with a screen grab from one source – is that 'engagement' is seen as allowing delegates to ask a few questions and then sticking up a poll. Our conclusion: attempts are superficial and shallow.

Slide 5: we use the word 'engagement' as though it's a switch; our delegates 'are' or they 'aren't.' In reality, nothing can be further from the truth; there are stages of engagement and we move consciously and unconsciously through these stages.

Slide 6: This is vital to organisers. We need to take the following approach:

Identify Delegate State	What mood are our delegates in at any given time? Are they likely to be receptive to our messages?
Describe how this appears	Some stages are simple – delegates don't register, or they do, but don't turn up. But when they are physical, what – if any – feedback are we getting
What is the client Rol	Return on Investment is vital. At the lower levels we can measure sign-ups, click throughs, and monitor how long people stayed (in the flesh or online). Gradually we may also get some data, through questions and responses.
What techniques are used	Is a simple 'raise hand' or 'ask a question' enough? How do we hear the invisible voices? Are we using Chairs, Presenters, Speakers or Facilitators? These are very different roles, with different purposes.
What technology is appropriate	In a workshop of 10 people you might ask each delegate to introduce themselves. In a conference of 1000 that won't work. Choosing any kind of tool has to fit the objectives. And don't talk about 'engagement' if your event is really only about 'telling.'

Slide 7: this then takes us into our 5 stage model. Stage 1 we call 'Attendance Averse.' They are the 'no shows;' maybe they responded to an invite but their interest was minimal, and since they accepted something else has happened. They don't see the value of joining.

Slide 8: the 'reluctant must;' they are responding to an 'all hands' or 'Three Line Whip' to attend. There's a degree of 'I must be seen.' They may have to participate for CPD reasons, or to be able to remain current in their role. Their attitude might be to have the event on another screen, or to sit at the back disengaged. Don't expect much interaction from them.

Slide 9: the 'passively neutral;' often taking their cues from colleagues. They might give each speaker a chance but their attention will dissipate quickly; expect them to be focussed on at least one other screen.

Slide 10: delegates who reach the 'actively engaged' stage. They will have planned their attendance and taken effort to consider which elements will give them most return. They will

be open-minded to activities and exercises without knowing the outcome, and they will ask questions with purpose; and network to find new opportunities.

Slide 11: ideally we achieve the creation of 'Change Makers;' those who put huge effort into their participation, and understand that their personal Rol will often be dependent on their own contribution. This stage is one enjoyed by Speakers, who are getting valuable feedback (as well as other delegates). People in this state are also likely to be the ones willing to take an active part of future events, as Speakers of Facilitators

Slide 12: just a reminder that the levels of engagement will change at all times, and on an individual as well as a group level.

Slide 13: As part of this research we gate-crashed an event run by M&IT magazine on 'Sustainability' in the events industry. We presented this model as part of the introduction session and requested a 'gut reaction,' with answers being collected anonymously.

Slide 14: we asked the audience to consider their 'overall' level of engagement after the last event they attended.

Slide 15: we asked the audience to consider their 'overall' level of engagement at the start of this event.

Slide 16: we asked the audience to consider their 'overall' level of engagement at the end of this event

Slide 17: The graph showed that the last event had large numbers of 'reluctant musts' and passively neutrals;' with some 'actively engaged.' For this event the starting point was a more engaged audience, with a higher number of 'actively engaged;' and at the end of the session (and experience of using the Axis software as part of a facilitated workshop) there had been a dramatic move to the right, with a spike in those willing to be 'change-makers.'

Slide 18: it's important we therefore use the right tools for the right meetings. If your objective is to communicate ;lots of information, or launch a new product, then polling may be suffice. But for genuine ideation a tool such as Axis would be the perfect solution

Slide 19: which takes us back to thinking about the questions we asked in slide 6:

Identify Delegate State	What mood are our delegates in at any given time? Are they likely to be receptive to our messages?	<i>What state does the organiser need delegates to be in?</i>
Describe how this appears	Some stages are simple – delegates don't register, or they do, but don't turn up. But when they are physical, what – if any – feedback are we getting	<i>What evidence does the organisers have; what techniques can work to change the level?</i>
What is the client Rol	Return on Investment is vital. At the lower levels we can measure sign-ups, click throughs, and monitor how long people stayed (in the flesh or online). Gradually we may also get some data, through questions and responses.	<i>Client measurements; registrations, connections, duration, activity, polls; many of these are quantitative. How do they move to qualitative measurements?</i>
What techniques are used	Is a simple 'raise hand' or 'ask a question' enough? How do we hear the invisible voices? Are we using Chairs, Presenters, Speakers or Facilitators? These are very different roles, with different purposes.	<i>Are the chosen tools appropriate? Do clients understand what else they could be using – and how to implement the tools in event design?</i>
What technology is appropriate	In a workshop of 10 people you might ask each delegate to introduce themselves. In a conference of 1000 that won't work. Choosing any kind of tool has to fit the objectives. And don't talk about 'engagement' if your event is really only about 'telling.'	<i>Tools, techniques, add-ons, apps, 'soft skills;' all form the armoury, but the right weapons have to be used for the right event.</i>

Slide 20: Thank you.

