

HOW TO WAKE UP YOUR MEETINGS

- *"My brain is fried."*
- *"I'm exhausted."*
- *"I can't take in another piece of information!"*

Ever felt this way after a long day at a convention or meeting? Of course you have. For most people, there comes a point when attending meetings or conferences when the brain becomes overloaded.

Even if it is content that is interesting to you, there comes a point of saturation where you simply cannot take in anything else. You are fried! You need a break.

So why do so many people think that when it comes to meetings, trainings, and conventions that they must pack in content, content, content to the exclusion of anything else? We've all seen it at conferences: the person standing at the lectern, using PowerPoint, droning into the microphone: "And that concludes our analysis of the proposed multilateral trading initiatives. Now let's discuss these multilateral initiatives as they apply to penguins." Good gravy.

Television and the internet have lowered the attention span of the modern adult. In order to stay engaged, meeting attendees need variety and multi-sensory stimulation to have their mood uplifted and their concentration enhanced throughout the day.

Thankfully, there are many meeting professionals who understand the value in providing motivation and humour during their conferences and meetings.

Engage Your Attendees with Motivation and Humour

We live in an entertainment-based culture. It is not enough to simply present a "data-dump" of information and expect people to stay tuned in. To keep meeting attendees engaged throughout the day, many seasoned meeting planners use the following formula:

- Motivational or humorous speaker for morning general session to kick off the day with a bang.
- Content-rich breakout sessions in alignment with learning objectives that are led by presenters who are well-versed in adult learning principles.
- Motivational or business humour speaker after lunch to reenergise attendees for the afternoon breakout sessions.
- More content-rich breakout sessions in alignment with learning objectives that allow for learner application and interaction.
- High energy wrap-up to end the day on a positive note.



This format energises, motivates, and connects people during the general sessions, so that they can refocus and reengage in significant learning throughout the day. Because attendees aren't suffering from information overload, they are more likely to be fully present in their learning experiences during the breakout sessions. According to Debbie Taylor, owner of Taylor Made Events and Speakers, there is great value in adding motivational humour to the general sessions of a conference: "Laughing and learning go hand in hand. Humour holds the audience's attention and helps them to think creatively. It releases stress and creates great memories. Find a way to add humour to your meeting and you will see an increase in the bottom line."

Build a Positive Community through Humour

Besides creating educational opportunities, meetings and conventions are also occasions to build community. When people laugh together, they are bonded in a positive experience. These good feelings create a positive association with the organisation in which they are members. It allows for deeper a connection among attendees.

Cara Tracy, CMP, meeting planner for the National Speakers Association, uses humour at their conferences throughout the year. "At our meetings we like to lighten up a content-filled program by kicking it off with humour. This raises the energy level in the room and engages the audience--setting the stage for a successful learning environment. I find that the use of humour in meetings can really help unite a group--giving them inside jokes to laugh about when they get back to the office or to carry a funny incident throughout the event."

When planning your meeting, in addition to assessing your learning objectives, also ask yourself, "What experience do I want to create?" Then, use the general sessions as the time to create those positive experiences. Additionally, make sure that you allow ample networking time for the attendees to share their insights and laughter in order to enhance the feeling of community.

Engagement + Community=ROI

Utilising motivation and humour can increase attendee satisfaction. Furthermore, it can make learning stick because attendees are more alert and engaged throughout the meeting. When attendees are satisfied and learning, there is a greater chance that an improvement in behaviour and results will follow, thus increasing your ROI. If your attendees are tuned out and overloaded, your ROI suffers.

Mark LeBlanc, President of the National Speakers Association adds: "Humour is one of those intangible elements of a presentation that is invaluable. Without it, even the best strategies and ideas can fall flat. It's the intangibles that drive the tangibles and make them stick. It turns a meeting into an experience."

A meeting without levity is like a joke without a punch-line...it flops. However, a meeting that creates a positive experience while offering educational value is priceless.

*Tim and Kris O'Shea of The O'Shea Report provide comic relief for meetings and conventions. To learn how The O'Shea Report can wake up your meeting, visit <http://www.theosheareport.com>
Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/788052>*