

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 126

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

WITH ADRIAN SEGAR

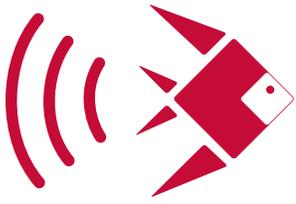
BETH: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I am on with Adrian Segar. Adrian is a meeting designer and a facilitator, and he's the founder of Conferences That Work. I have had the experience of being able to go to a conference that Adrian has designed, and it's literally like nothing you've ever experienced before, specifically in the way that people participate. Adrian has written some really tremendous stuff on this subject, especially in his new books. I really thought this is a perfect time to get Adrian to come on and talk about how participation plays into your meetings and your in-person event experiences. Adrian, thank you so much for joining me today.

ADRIAN: It's a pleasure to talk with you again, Beth.

BETH: You definitely have a bit of an unusual and extremely distinctive take on meetings, but most people don't wake up as a kid and say, "Hey, I want to become a meeting designer." How did you wander into this work?

ADRIAN: Well, I'll give you the lightning version because the full version that makes the most sense takes a very long time to describe. I think I can summarize it by saying I've done a lot of different things in my life and whatever I have been doing professionally, I've always been interested in, for reasons I didn't understand until maybe about 15 years ago, I've always been interested in holding conferences to meet with and to connect my peers at the time. So my first career, I have a PhD in elementary particle physics. I worked on a very important, probably the most important experiment in the second half of the last century in particle physics, and so I went to a lot of academic conferences, and I hated those because they were about status and they were very inefficient. I wanted to meet other people who did what I did and talk to them and learn from them



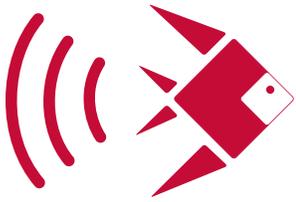


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and so on and I'd walk into a room with 200 physicists and there was no way for me to discover the 10-15 people or whoever they were in the room that I could maybe really get some useful information from and we could become colleagues and network, and so I was very frustrated about that with academic conferences. I didn't enjoy those at all. I came to Vermont. So I grew up in England, came to Vermont for 24 hours and decided that I wanted to live in Vermont, which you kind of do with elementary particle physics. So eventually I moved here in the late '70s and started a solar manufacturing business and I actually organized and ran some of the earliest, maybe the earliest solar energy conferences in the United States at that time in the late '70s, early '80s, but these were traditional conferences where we figured out who the speakers were and invited them to come speak to us, and then 25 years ago, some of the older listeners may remember the birth of the personal computer. Personal computers were finally becoming affordable, and at that time I was teaching computer science at the college level, and I went to the president of the college and said, this was a small school, and I said, "Hey, there are these things called personal computers. You can use them to keep track of things like inquires to the Admissions Office and so on instead of storing them on 3x5 cards." He said, "Oh, could you do that for us?" and this was happening all over the country, at small schools all over the country, and I organized a conference for the people who had kind of moved into this new job, this new role to come together and learn from each other. I realized very quickly when putting this conference together that there were no experts to come and speak. So I realized that collectively the people that came were the experts. The people in the room knew far more about this topic. We were resources for information and answers on this particular topic than anyone we could invite. So I invented a simple way of learning about who was at the conference, what they wanted to learn and experience and expertise they had that might be useful to the other people who were there and then we built a conference on the fly that met those needs, using the resources in the room. I sort of developed this by accident, this approach to conferences, and as the years went by, people heard about this and they started asking me about running conferences on topics I knew nothing about, and I thought, "Well,



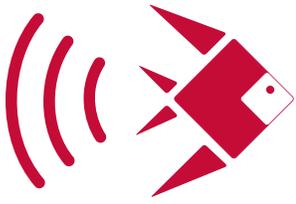


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maybe this will work for people with independent garden centers or people who run sports facilities or whatever,” and I slowly discovered the process I had developed a) worked really well for any group of people with a common interest and b) people loved it. The most common comment on the evaluation forms, the paper evaluation forms that we had at those times was, “I don’t want to go to a regular conference anymore. This was so much better.” So about 12 years ago, I wrote a book about what I had learned about putting these kinds of events together, which I describe as participation-rich and participant driven meetings, conferences. That book came out in 2009, and at that time I knew nothing about the professional meetings industry. I really didn’t know what MBI or PCMA, the two big associations, even meant, but very quickly when people I would call sort of progressive event professionals, people who were also sort of uneasy with the status quo and felt there was something wrong with meetings found this work and conferences that work, the first book that I wrote has now become very popular. It still sells seven years later throughout the world, and people are running many, many events using this format or versions of it. I don’t even hear about most of them anymore, and I’ve become sort of a part of the meeting design portion of the meeting industry. So I present at pretty much all the meeting industry conferences, and I do mainly these days a lot of association work. So I still tend to work with what we often call communities of practice, groups of people who have a common interest, usually professional interest, and they want to get together face-to-face and have a productive and useful meeting that’s useful at the individual level and meets the association’s outcomes. So I work with associations designing meetings and so I will often do meeting design, sometimes over the phone or I’ll do a day’s visit with a client and help them design an existing meeting or design a new one, but my favorite thing to do is actually go to meetings and facilitate them and be part of a wonderful experience over a really great meeting where people are learning, are getting their needs met, their wants and needs met and making connections in ways that really work for them that are often, that are generally far better than what happens at most meetings I’ve put up with.





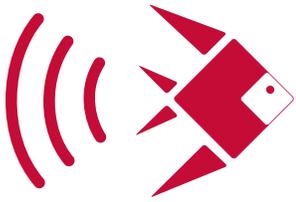
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BETH: You're probably the easiest person I've ever asked this of. I call my show Driving Participation because I really do believe that it's a huge factor getting people actively involved in things. It changes their perception and it changes their perception and the relationship to the organization. So in the work that you do, how have you seen participation help organizations thrive?

ADRIAN: Well, I think I've got to take a step back on that because most of my work is through events and I see actually events, association-sponsored or -organized events as one of the primary ways an association can provide value for their membership and my world is the event world. I have quite a bit of experience with associations. I've run two, the organization I started for that conference 25 years ago is still running today. It has a four-day annual conference, and I just stepped down from running it after 25 years in June. So I have association experience, but what really happens when you provide these kinds of participant-driven and participation-rich events at meetings that are associated with an association that are created by the association, it is I think there's a lot of benefit for the association in terms of, because the events provide I think one of the best ways to build community that is congruent with the association. So it strengthens the brand of the association a bit but also the feelings the attendees and members have about the association, which is obviously really good for the association and in time, over time, it has an effect on the kind of association, the way that the association works. Participation is such a sort of paradigm-changing force or can be inside of organizations, but it's something that takes time. You don't run, I would say that the situation very often that I come across with clients is that they come to me and they say, "We're running this conference and attendees are sort of somewhat dissatisfied about it. There's not as much interaction as we would like. Can you help us with that?" and I help them with that and their conferences get better and that over time feeds back on the association. People say, "This association is really great, is more responsive to our needs. I'm getting my needs met by what happens here through the events that the association is running," and I think in time what that does at the association structure level is it makes the staff and board and so on





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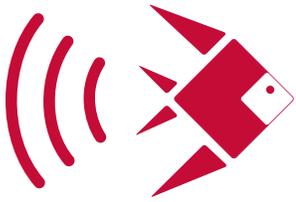
more open to a participatory approach, but it's a subtle thing. I think one of the problems with the work that I do is that most people have not experienced a conference like the kind that I've outlined very briefly so far do not really have an idea of the power that it has and so it's only when you actually experience one of those events and you integrate it into your association culture, your organization culture that it will start having an effect on how the culture itself works or it may not because the culture itself may be resistant. There's certainly many associations that have hierarchical structures that are less open.

BETH: Less flexible.

ADRIAN: Right, less flexible and so on. So I'm not sure if we're moving off the subject, but I'm trying to answer your question.

BETH: No, it's interesting. I try to let people answer it the way they need to answer it because I'm interested in what comes up when people think about this and interestingly enough, I feel like a lot of the conversations I've been having with people lately, the word "culture" is popping up a lot. It's popping up when I'm talking about branding. It's popping up when I'm talking about leadership. It's all these different places. It comes down to culture, and I've definitely seen and I've talked about this for years myself that if you're trying to make something happen out of an organization, whether it's building your brand or getting people to just sign up for an event, you can have all the right words. You can come up with a great name for the event. You can do a beautiful website. You can have the best, most easy to navigate website that helps people find it. You can have a gorgeous logo and consistent colors. These things are all really, really important in helping facilitate communication and help in getting people to access and absorb and embrace the information that you have, but if you can't deliver on that promise, all of that is worse than thrown away. I really believe it actually counteracts your efforts. It's almost better if you did none of that and were mediocre. People can tolerate that, but when you set these expectations for excellence through quality design, quality writing, excellent targeting, beautifully





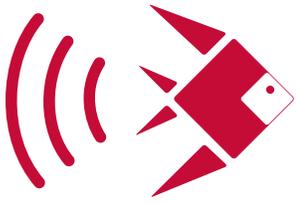
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designed websites that facilitate you doing what you need to do and then the show stinks or when it comes to customer service, if they have a question they can't get answered. If the execution of the experience, if it does not line up with people's expectations, you're shooting yourself in the foot.

ADRIAN: So I just want to say something about why I think participation, you know the topic of your focus is so important in the events world and there are so many reasons why this is the case, and I think you mentioned one of them peripherally earlier when we were talking before we started, and that is that the world has changed so much in really important ways in the last 20-30 years and there are two main ways that's happened in the world of work I think. One of course is obvious to all of us, but we don't think about it so much in the context of events as much as we should, I think, and that is of course the rise of online information or content. We don't have to, when we need some information these days much of the time we can go online and find it. It's certainly factual information, visual information, but even the kinds of information traditionally for at least a thousand years, meetings and if you include religious meetings, several thousand years, have been provided by physically going to a place and having someone who knows information telling it to you. Lecturing standard conference presentations where someone who knows stuff talks to a lot of people who presumably don't know that stuff or don't know it as well, and we don't need to go to meetings to do that anymore because if someone gives that talk once and it's videoed, you can watch that video on the web when you need it, anywhere you want to watch it. You don't have to go to a meeting to get that kind of information anymore. What that means is of course, the traditional meetings, the way we think about traditional meetings which are focused around presentations, lectures and some Q&A at the end has become really obsolete, and that's not to say of course there isn't breaking information that is available at certain events and you go to those events because you really want to be kept up to the minute up to date, but the moment the video of that lecture goes online, you know the next day or whenever it is, you have that information available to anyone who is given access to it. So what has happened is that the traditional model of events





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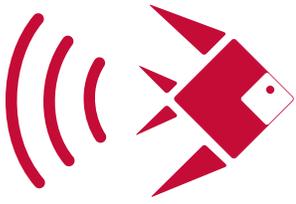
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with lectures being the core component of sessions is really obsolete. The second thing that has happened in the world of work and this has been happening for quite a long time, 30 years ago most of what you needed to know to do your work you learned in the classroom. You wanted to be an attorney or nurse or one of a million different professions

BETH: My dad always says it used to be that everyone had a one-word title.

ADRIAN: That's right, that's right, that's right. We were this thing and we learned about it. There were courses about it, there was training and so forth and that has not been true now for, it varies depending on the profession of course, but in general, that has not been true in the world of work for many years. There's some excellent work that was done at the turn of the century where they studied how people learned what they needed to know, what were the sources of what professionals working in these large companies would recognize, how they learned what they needed to know to do their jobs. They discovered and this is a 15-16 year old research now, maybe older than that, that most of what you need to know to do your job these days you learn either from self-instructions or you go online. You have a need in your job and you go online and you find it out yourself or you decide to take a course, something specialized or you call a colleague or it's through your peers on the job and the percentages vary, but typically these days you only learn about 10 percent of what you need to know from the classroom. Ninety percent of what you need to know to do your job, you learn either from self-instruction or, and this is critical, from meetings with your peers. So conferences, so my thesis is and I think this is blown out, if you ask people why they go to meetings, the answer is always the same, the two you get from them are they want to learn things. The first thing that people say is, "I want to learn stuff that's relevant. I had these problems, I had these issues. I want to learn things. I want to discuss things," and so on, but then the second is making connections with people and the second and in surveys that were done 5-10 years ago, both of those were rated more or less equally important. I think if you do surveys today, you will find the connection piece is more important for





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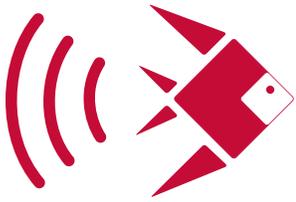
most people because so much of the content that is available at these meetings you can get online. If you don't go to that meeting and the main session is a video, then you can go to the website a month later and watch the ones you're interested in. So the connection piece has become very important and my thesis is if we're going to make our meetings, continue to make our meetings which are very expensive in terms of the cost to attend them very often, the cost of the expenses to get there and of course the participant's time that is given up, we're gonna make meetings continue to be relevant to people. We are going to need to bring the connection piece, which is probably now more important than the learning piece unless the learning piece is targeted learning and we will talk about that hopefully a little bit later in this podcast, the connection piece has to be brought into the sessions themselves. In traditional meetings, connections are completely absent from the sessions. They are things that are done in the breaks, at the meals, at the socials. How often have you heard someone say, "The best thing about the meeting, this conference I went to, was the conversations I had in the hallway."

BETH: That's because every conference I feel like ...

ADRIAN: Well, the conferences I run, that's not true. People do not report that because you bring those conversations into the sessions. There's learning going on, peer-to-peer learning that is happening in the sessions, and one of the reasons why participation is so important is the moment you bring it in, well there are two reasons. One reason is and I'm sure you've talked about this in your podcast. When you anticipate using two completely parts of your brain, you are doing active learning. When you are forced to think of an answer to a question and tell the person sitting next to you what you think your viewpoint is on this particular topic that maybe a facilitator has maybe provided at the front of the room, different parts of your brain are working that are totally different from you sitting and listening to someone talking for 50 minutes.

BETH: I'm curious about that because a lot of people when they go to a





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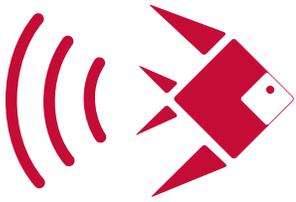
conference, I feel like every time I leave my office to go to a conference, I say, “Well, if you guys need anything just text me because I’ll just be sitting in sessions,” and I feel like I look around the room and everyone has their computers open or their phones open, and it’s no different really than when you’re sitting in on a webinar and you’re still checking your email, and I am a firm believer that there is no such thing as multitasking. It’s very binary. Brains are very binary. You’re doing one thing or another thing. So how do people at your event, how do people react when they realize they can’t just skulk in the back like Catholic church and sneak out if something better comes along?

ADRIAN: The vast majority of people, once they’ve experienced that, once they are brought in, which again is the first time it happens at an event, people find this a little weird.

BETH: Yeah, that’s what I was thinking.

ADRIAN: But very quickly, but very quickly, and I would say this is true for about 98 percent and there’s maybe 2 percent of people that say, “No, I just want to sit and listen to someone who really knows more about this than me,” and you’re not gonna change them, but the other 99 percent, the 49 out of 50 people in that room, they find it, what happens is they realize, “Geez, I’m actually being drawn into this. I’m being asked what I think about this,” and this brings us to this whole other piece about participation. Besides the actual fact that participating actually means what you are talking about and there’s much research on this, you will remember more of it, you will remember it more accurately, you will remember it for longer. In other words, just active learning is a far better, a far more efficient way of learning something than listening. So there’s that piece, but the other wonderful thing that happens when people are participating and especially if they have formats that I use these days is that they start having some control over what happens in the session and so they start to be able to steer what they are learning and what people are learning from them in the room to things that really matter to the people who are there.





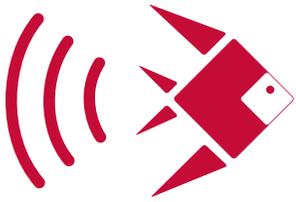
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BETH: That's really interesting because I feel like and a lot of people have been to sessions where the speaker, because it's always a lead session, says, "Well, now we're gonna do an activity," and mostly what happens next is everyone goes, "Ugh," because it's turn to your neighbor and do this thing. Can you talk a little bit just to make sure that people who are listening that haven't experienced this, how is what you're talking about different than that?

ADRIAN: Well, I'll give you an example. So this is something I did last month at an association leadership conference in San Antonio, Texas. So I was given before a conference, I said, "This is a hot topic that these leaders want to talk about," and it was an issue about a fundraising issue that most of these associations were using to raise money for their association. I did some research about that topic, and I talked to three experts before the session, so I didn't come across as a total idiot because when you facilitate a session or a topic, but I said this at the start. I said, "I'm the person in the room who knows least about this topic because I'm a facilitator, but I'm gonna give you some process to actually talk and share and talk about your ideas about how we deal with this issue and share some really great ideas and also share questions and get some responses to those questions," and I had that set up. I use something, I'll describe this very briefly, a fishbowl sandwich where I, so I start off with something, a very basic technique called pair share where I had everyone in the room there, I don't know, there was about a hundred people in the room, I had them turn to their neighbor and say, "All of you, I know that all of you have done work in this area or do this thing and you've done something interesting about it and I'd like you just to share. Take one minute for one of you to share to the other in your pair this interesting thing that you've done and then we'll swap and the second person will share the same thing for a minute with the first person." Immediately you're doing just that very simple technique, you get people to realize first of all you're modeling the fact that this is not a session where everyone is gonna sit and listen to me, which would be a terrible waste of time in this case or a few experts, a panel sitting up and just talking all the time, that it's basically saying everyone here has potentially something to offer in this session. Not all of you are going to talk. We've got an





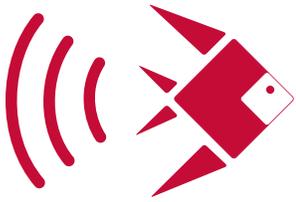
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hour and a half and we're not going to have all hundred of you come up and say some things, but many of you will and this two minute exercise got people in a frame of mind where they're thinking, "Yeah, actually there is this neat thing I did and maybe some people are interested." Maybe they'll say something about it during the session if it comes up and I feel like it's OK for me to do that and so on. So it immediately puts them in a state where they're thinking, "Oh, I could be part of this," and also "I have a good idea that maybe other people would want to hear about," and then I ran the rest of the session as what I call a fishbowl, and it was very simple. I sit in the front of the room with a few empty chairs next to me and the rule of fishbowl very simply is that we're gonna have a discussion, we're gonna talk about some things that have come up and I'm gonna invite anyone who wants to come in and sit in a chair and tell me stuff or tell the audience stuff and we have more than one person up at a time. We might jump on a theme and several people have things to say, but the essential rule of fishbowl is you can only talk if you're in one of these chairs. So then what happened in this session is I had a set of things where I knew were hot topics, potential hot topics I'm being told about from the three experts that I talked to before hand and we went through some of those and what interestingly became clear is that the attendees at this session were far more interested in one of the topics. One of the possible things we could have talked about that the three experts had mentioned and I knew what it was, but it was mentioned as a kind of minor thing and it turned out there was a lot of interest and people talking about how this particular thing was done at different associations around the country and so we spent a lot more time on that topic than any of the three experts thought we would. I mean, they weren't surprised, but we basically, the people in the room basically were saying, "This is what is really on our minds right now most of us and so let's spend more time on this," and I was able to create a session on the fly that responded to that and that session was far more useful than if I had those three experts stand up and talk about what they thought people were interested in.

BETH: I can see that because I feel like you, I speak at a lot of conferences still and I'll go to a conference, come home and within 3-4 weeks an email comes out





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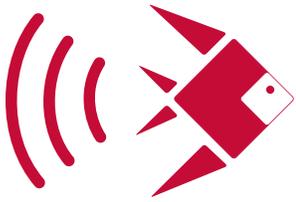
that says, “I’d like your pitch on what you want to talk about at the conference next year,” and I’m sure there are some sort of things that are always interesting, but I work in media and marketing and social and the idea of knowing in April what’s going to be an important thing to talk about next March, it’s just so hard. To think everybody that’s paying money to come to a conference is coming to hear, “What’s the thing I need to know right now?” and the reality is that what they’re learning is the thing that somebody thought was important 10 months ago and that’s really interesting.

ADRIAN: So I should say that my first book conference work is about how you build conferences on the fly and in the way that I just described what I did in that single session. I want to add the sandwich at the end of the fishbowl sandwich. At the end of that session we had people that had a really great discussion and there was no shortage and I often had people up in the chairs and I facilitated that, but at the end I just had people turn to each other and do the old, but “What’s the one takeaway that you’re gonna get from this?” and tell your neighbor that. Take a minute to tell your neighbor that and have them tell you the same thing. I’ve done this now multiple times and what happens is and it’s a very unusual thing and I think you will agree happens after session. You do this and then the session is over and people don’t leave and they stay and talk. I ran this at a big conference. I did a similar thing with a forum of about 300 people in Las Vegas early this year at a huge conference and I did this and I did this fishbowl sandwich. It’s where I invented this technique and the director of education of the conference came in 10 minutes later and three-fourths of the people who had been at the session were still there talking in the audience seats.

BETH: Wow, that never happens!

ADRIAN: He said the same thing. That’s exactly what he said. “They’re all still here. This never happens,” and I said, “Yeah, that’s because even though you had hundreds of people here, you can create connection and you can create participation and engagement in an audience using this simple, but different





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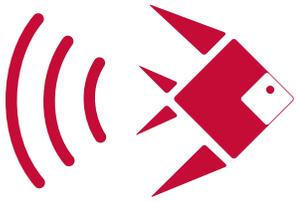
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kinds of approaches by giving people the power to participate in ways that work for them and are meaningful for them and for the whole group. That's what happens when you do this work."

BETH: So you just hit on something that's really important that I think we should discuss. You said participation and engagement. It's funny. When people ask me, "Why did you name it Driving Participation?" typically people use the words involvement, engagement and participation interchangeably, especially I see a lot in association and nonprofit work that we focus on. How do you see the difference between those words?

ADRIAN: I think that's a really good question, and I think and I don't claim to be the authority on this, but the way I see participation first of all is I see it as an individual act. Each person is either participating or not. You're sitting in your seat for 60 minutes and you don't say a word, you're not participating. You're listening, but you're not participating. You're having a conversation with your neighbor, you're going up on stage and saying something for a minute, sharing things with people, you're participating and you can measure how much someone is participating by the amount of active work that they are doing, the non-listening work. Now engagement, I see engagement as more, you certainly can say and we do say in the English language that people are, individuals are engaged, but I see engagement as something that is more of a group property than comes out of people participating. If you don't have participation, you don't have engagement. If you have a hundred people in a room and they sit and listen to someone, there's no engagement going on except maybe a passive engagement, what I would call passive engagement with the speaker, but there's no participation going on, and if the speaker is talking all the time, there's no participation going on and passive engagement, again we have research on this. Most of what you hear if you listen to a speaker for any length of time, 90 percent of what they've said you will have forgotten within a month and there's the learning curve. The forgetting curve is very, very steep. If you participate with that material, you contribute to it, you ask questions, people will respond,





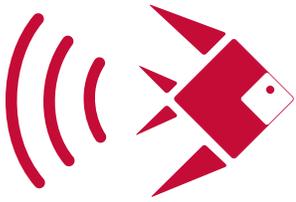
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you will remember far more of that. I see engagement as an outcome of good participation and engagement is the thing you want in terms of the community of practice which may be your association. You want engaged members, but engagement is often used as a sort of feel good word. It's like we really created a lot of engagement here and it's a word that doesn't have I think a very precise meaning whereas participation is something that you can actually measure if you want. You can see how people are actually actively learning as opposed to passively learning. If you have high engagement that leads to or it's a corollary of community and for me, associations, good associations, healthy associations have community. It's a group of people who care about each other professionally, support each other, are there to try to help their peers with problems, know that their peers are resources when they have an issue that they want help with and so on. This goes back to fundamental human needs. Most human beings need community. They need and obviously we get it in many different ways in our lives through our families and geographically near the places that we live, but we also get them and I think this is a very important piece for many people, especially those that are into their work. It's more than just a paying job for them. Professional communities are very important too. They certainly have been for me and I think for a lot of people and you can create professional communities that are really, professional communities that are really functional, high functioning communities which have a lot of engagement and you get that engagement by having their members or attendees at events participating in them and not being passive. It's participation that creates engagement and creates community.

BETH: I love it. So one of the other things I'm curious about is you've been involved in a lot of these really paradigm-shifting events at different types of associations and organizations. What have you seen? Has any outcome happened that's gone beyond just like the event's over. People said, "This was a great event. I really learned something individual." How has doing this changed the organization or changed things at the organization either for the members or for how the leadership or how people that are planning things start to think differently about interacting with their members?



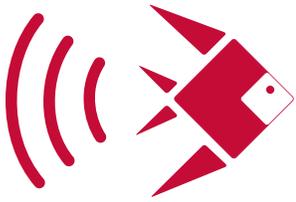


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ADRIAN: Well, I haven't talked about the kind of overall structure of a participative event. To answer that question, I think I need to. I want to talk about how you end events, but I just want to very briefly describe this sort of arc of participative event. There is a beginning, middle and end as opposed to most traditional conferences, which is also sort of a mish mash of lectures put together. At the beginning of a participative event, you have a process where you uncover what the needs of the attendees are. You learn about the individual attendees and you do this in group work and typically in groups as large as 50 at a time. If I have hundreds of people at an event I will split them into smaller groups and we'll do some exercises which are described in my second book where you learn inside that group. In an hour or so, you learn who else is there, why they came, what would make the conference really great for them and you also learn about the experience and expertise they have that others in that group might not have. So you discover a really cool thing at their association. They mention it casually at this round table process and 20 people say, "Oh my gosh, that sounds really great. I'd like to hear more about that" and then in the middle. So you get that information. You have a huge amount of information about what people want to talk about, what they want to discuss, the questions they have, the problems they have and you also have the resources in the room, the end of that beginning you know that and then there are processes you can use where you build a conference program that is optimum for the express needs and wants and the resources in the room. You match those two, the needs with the resources and you build a conference program around that and that's the middle of the conference. So when that starts, that looks like a traditional conference session. You have concurrent sessions, though they tend to be more informal. Nobody is expecting someone to do a polished presentation when they were asked the previous day or three hours earlier to do it and that's OK because everyone is cool with that. It's a different kind of level of event. So that's the middle. You run the middle parts and the middle parts are always successful because they are what people wanted. There's no sessions in there that people didn't want because they chose them. Anyway, let me go on about the end. So the ending of conferences that is usually something completely glossed





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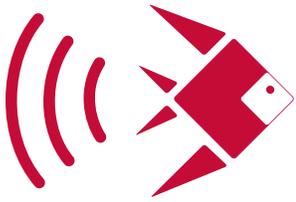
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over. People think we'll have this farewell dinner or raffle or a big motivational closing speech and there's nothing to actually consolidate the learning and the connections that have occurred and so I run a couple of things at the ends of my meetings. One is called a personal introspective. I won't take the time to describe it in any detail, but the personal introspective is a structured process that takes people through what they have learned and what changes they want to make as a result of that learning in their professional lives and then gives them support and feedback about the things they come up with. That's a really powerful and useful session, but the last session I had run at one of my events is something I call a group-spective and the word spective is a combination of a retrospective looking back at the event and a prospective, which is a rarer word, which means looking forward into the future. You do both of those at a group-spective and the exercise I invariably start a group-spective is a very simple event, a process called PlusDelta which many of your listeners may be familiar with, but what it does is it provides ...

BETH: I'm not familiar with it.

ADRIAN: Well, it's a very simple process that provides a public evaluation of the event, which is very powerful and very useful in many ways. It's useful and now I can describe PlusDelta very quick. You basically have two columns. You can do this with a small group with a flip chart. With hundreds of people I would do this with a projected Google Doc, but you basically have two columns and you have two microphones on the stage if there's a large group and I have people come up and start with the plus column and the plus column is I ask people to come up, just line up and quickly say something that was great about the event. It doesn't matter what it is. It could be a session, it could be the food, it could be something that somebody did, anything that's positive, things that they liked and all they have to do is share it. People share their stuff, sit down and the next person comes. You keep inviting people up until that sort of peters out and you have a long list of stuff that people liked. Then you switch to the delta side and the delta side are the things you would change if you did this event again. What





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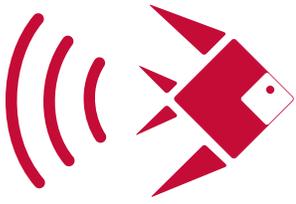
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would you do differently? What didn't work out so well and how would you make it better next time? The delta side is very interesting because often on the delta side, you get a lot of the, the organization gets a lot of really great ideas. For example, what is really common is a group will say, "You know, our association should be doing this and we're not doing it. There's nothing in this event here. We didn't really talk about it and I think we should do this," and you get some ideas like that. Some may not be so great and some of them may be fantastic. Typically you get some.

BETH: You're opening yourself up to that. Like if you don't and you don't know and doing it publicly, let's you also see the reaction.

ADRIAN: I want to add that when you're doing the Delta's I keep the Plus mic open because often people will say, "I didn't think we should do this. We should do this this way," and someone else will say, "No, actually I really liked that. In fact, that's a plus for me," so they will come up and add things to the plus side, and the cool thing about that, so the two cool things about doing this process, which you can take 20 minutes for 600 people. It can be really quick and you can get these huge lists is first of all the association gets a lot of really great information, the people running the event. Secondly individual attendees get group experience of what the event was like. So you might have come to the event and thought, "Doing this thing was really a waste of time. I really think we shouldn't have done this," but then you discover, "Whoa, there's actually a lot of people that thought that was great," and it doesn't mean that it changes your perspective, like, "No, that was a waste of time for me," but at least it allows you to realize, "Oh, maybe that's why they kept us in the program," because there are people that found this really useful. So a lot of people around associations are very scared about doing this the first time, but I've never seen one that was bad. I mean that wasn't really great. You start off with the good stuff and there's always good stuff and then there's thing, you get a lot of kudos. The association gets a lot of kudos for doing this because it seems to be a gutsy thing to do. The evaluation is never as bad as people think they're going to be and you





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get really good information. The attendees are really impressed. It's like this is being transparent. This is like we're putting this out there. I got heard. I didn't like this very much and I had this idea for making it better and maybe it will get incorporated next year or maybe the association will move in some new direction to handle this.

BETH: I really can see how it would all pile on for an association to get some good information, try something different, be seen as moving forward. It's all such good stuff. I hate to say this, but we actually have to wrap up now. We could probably talk about this forever, but because there's still so much to talk about, how could people get in touch with you? Where should they go to learn more about the kind of things that you're talking about?

ADRIAN: Well, probably the best place to find out more about anything that I do and have written is my website, which is ConferencesThatWork.com, all one word, ConferencesThatWork.com and that has a pretty popular blog on it and has a lot of descriptions about what I do and has information about the two books I've written, which cover in far more detail some of the issues and many more of the things that we talked about today.

BETH: Excellent. Well, I will definitely send people there. Thank you so much for sharing your perspective and your insights with both me and our whole nonprofit community.

ADRIAN: You're very welcome Beth. It's a pleasure. I always like talking about these things so thank you very much for inviting me on.

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