



## **MESA PLANNER FORUM - 15<sup>th</sup> December Event Planners and Event Suppliers in Conversation - Building Better Events Through Shared Understanding**

Thank you for attending the MESA December Planner Forum. Some key points made during the call were:

### **Suppliers want:**

- **Clarity in RFP's** - What is a must have, and what is a nice to have – **Planners** said that suppliers need to realise that the planners don't always know what exactly they want, particularly if they don't know what is possible
- **Conversation** - An opportunity to talk with the planner to learn more about their event, their goals, and their restrictions, with a chance to explore this together and come up with better solutions - **Planners** were happy with this and said that they would usually prefer to have informal chats with suppliers before then asking for an RFP (if that was required)
- **Recognition of expertise and experience** - Suppliers have a very good experience and understanding of the events that use their technology (as well as understanding of the possibilities of the technology itself) – so perhaps they should behave and act more as consultants rather than salespeople. There are many people on the supplier side that have this expertise, particularly where the people involved in sales are also involved in delivery/support. On the flip side, the same recognition of expertise and experience must be given to the **planners** as well - creative planners will think of ways to use the technology platforms that the developers themselves may not have thought of

### **Planners want:**

- **Transparency** - Be clear about what you can offer, don't sell me a dream. Trust is crucial
- **Communication** - Like the conversation point by the suppliers, but also with an emphasis on on-going communication
- **Realistic solutions to achieve the event's goals** – Suppliers can offer appropriate components – don't make the planner guess!

**Communication and relationship building** - There was a large agreement between the planners and suppliers in terms of what is important:

- **Neither group** feels that an RFP can work in isolation
- **Both groups** want conversations that will help them to understand the event, what the planner (and their client) wants to achieve and then explore how to do that
- Both groups want to **learn from each other** - and that learning could be from those conversations, from feedback (both on RFP's and on the event itself)
- There was a strong feeling from **both sides that they preferred to develop deeper** (in terms of understanding and shared learning) relationships and partnerships - not just a transactional supplier-client relationship
- **A deep/structured conversation** (probably multiple conversations) about all the "what if's" would help to ensure that together the planner and supplier had explored (simulated) and addressed all the issues they might hit, and therefore, would be well prepared
- **Ask more questions** from both sides!

How this better communication and understanding can be achieved?

- Planners having **chats/conversations** with suppliers before (or instead of) RFP's is one route
- Making sure that the **conversations continue** after the sale /event
- But are there other ways?
- What do the event planners need and what do they want to achieve with their event? - the next step is to work out **together** how the tech supplier can help to **achieve this goal**
- Event planners are looking for the best technology, not only for the best price
- **Feedback on feedback** – in-depth analysis after an event, or if an RFP is lost – feedback on why to help future supplier understanding
- Talking with someone to really understand the goals, and together discuss what might be possible, is key. An RFP can still happen after, but there will be a clearer understanding of the requirements

### Meeting at Industry Events

Planners learn a lot about what is available and what is possible by attending industry events - events where they can have informal chats with suppliers (and other planners!) and where they can see technology/solutions in action. Could those **industry events** could be structured in a way that puts **more emphasis on the learning/play/exploration side** - rather than stands with salespeople?

### Clarity in language

- **Transparency** in the offer - clarity of what exactly is offered - what does a tech supplier supply and what not? Where does the offer end?
- A **glossary** - what is what - explaining the terminology
- **Communication** is key: it is important that we talk with one another to work out how we can use the technology at its best. What do we do when problems occur for e.g.? What do suppliers expect when they say, "we need an attendee list"?
- Onus on planners to put in more descriptive words
- Eg streaming (I have 4 speakers and I need to .....)
- Words for scientific and medical and words for corporate events is very different
- And clarity from suppliers e.g., 'ticketing' won't necessarily be understood

### Snippet:

The **confusion about terminology** and about the **division of tasks**: A lot of misunderstanding about what is meant by certain things (what do we mean with chat, stream, camera - what is it exactly that you get?). Different suppliers offer similar features, but those are going to be different.

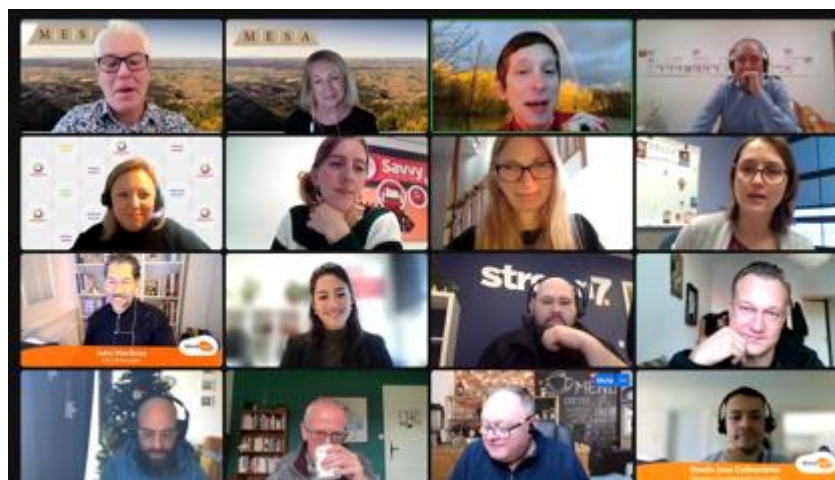
Tech people don't understand that you don't understand. Event planners and managers say, "we don't know - what we don't know". And technicians say: "we don't understand that you don't understand".

## Outcomes

- **A charter or best practice guides** need to be instilled into both sides for more common understandings
- An **industry wide glossary** (in proposals) - don't put people off by assuming people know everything, the new people coming in are being put off by the over complications caused by poor communications
- Stakeholders need to remember **not everyone is starting out** with the 'same time next year' mentality
- The suppliers **need to be sensitive** to where their clients are... for example, the US doesn't deal with VAT
- **Both sides** need Confidence, Contingency and Simulations
- Both suppliers and planners really want the same thing: **communication and trust**
- **Clear expectations and deadlines** when entering a relationship with a new client
- Promoting **education and communication** between both parties, with this we can have one single communication channel to meet the same goals
- Both planners and suppliers want **conversations and want to learn from each other**

**TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More!**

## Additional Comments from Speakers



**MESA Members can attend all MESA Founder Forums and invite industry Founder colleagues!**

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