



Delegate Engagement at Events

Thank you for attending the recent MESA Planner Forum – Thank you to [Richard John](#), COO of [Realise.Me](#), **MESA Member**, for reading the MESA Pledge, and thank you to [Claire Forestier](#), Event Host, **MESA Member**, for moderating.

Key points that came out regarding delegate engagement at events were:

- It's important to make delegates **feel welcome**
- Attendee audience engagement **is not always to do with technology** – mascots, themes and involvement can increase engagement at events – it can also be carried through to sister and future events
- **Audience acquisition** – getting people to commit to turn up
- People are increasingly **registering late** for on-site events, and even later (and very last minute) for on-line events – this is something that needs to be managed
- **Focus on the people and the community** – fewer conferences are attempting to provide the 'white space' for people to connect
- **It's all about engaging people** – there are so many free events online – we must engage them way before the event and create a FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)
- The greatest competitor of live events is online – **you can create a 'negative engagement'** in online events to increase this FOMO, so they want to attend a future live event (e.g., online – switch off at certain times of the live event e.g., artists / creative sessions – so online delegates know they are missing out on something important and engaging)
- **People want to have experiences** – where they feel and when they are there
- **You can use technology** eg structured networking **but make it pleasant** for the participant – **some generations do not know the technology** and are scared or embarrassed to ask how to use it – **make sure you include them and engage them** – have a short tech session at the beginning to make sure everyone knows a technology you may be using - There are now 5 generations for our events and we have to include them all, helping and encouraging them
- **You can use technology in a simple engaging way online** e.g., in our forum everyone looked up their ideal holiday home vacation and showed each other images and were able to discuss and see the comparisons and differences – **take moments to engage people and bring them together**
- Some organisers want to try and use every feature of a technology engagement product – but it doesn't always enhance engagement – find out what works and what doesn't for your event and **don't use it if it is not necessary**
- **Time is crucial** and some organisers are juggling so many balls they haven't got time to look at unique areas of engagement opportunities. [Remember Habit 7 – Stephen Covey – Woodcutter cutting down a tree "Sharpen the saw – Don't you see I am busy I haven't got time to sharpen the saw"](#)

Some key points from breakout groups:

- Make sure the **audience is participating** - **Have a story to tell** - what makes it memorable? You want them to come back
- **Create a legacy** – things you will remember forever – what memory will the delegate leave with and remember after the event is finished? What brings you closer to the event, after the event is over?
- You can bring the food and culture of the city/country to your event **so delegates experience** the place and the culture – take them outside to different venues
- **A very personal approach** cannot always be automated - Sometimes what is holding us back is the **communication between planners and suppliers around the technology** and what can be used better

CPL International Research stats shared with us about events:

- 68% of participants aged 40-60 use **networking apps**, 25% of participants over 60 (100% of younger ages use)
- 67% of participants aged 30-40 use **chat rooms**, 15% of participants aged 40-60 and 0% of participants over 60
- 96% of participants aged 40-60 use **networking apps at events** and only 23% of participants over 60
- Those under 40 **prefer the programme** in the app, participants aged 40-60 don't mind – printed or both, but participants over 60 prefer printed
- Those over 60 find **some technology** such as SpotMe **too invasive**
- All age groups use **QR codes**
- 70% of those under 30 are ok with **virtual speakers**, 63% between ages 30-40, 35% of participants between 40-60 and over 60 was 0%
- All groups were ok with **social media** but participants over 60 were at 78% being ok with it

POLL 2

00:00:47 | 1 question | 19 of 37 (51%) participated

1. As an event planner, what strategies have you found most effective for encouraging delegate participation and maintaining engagement during large events?
(Single Choice) *

19/19 (100%) answered

Interactive sessions and workshops	(7/19) 37%
Gamification elements	(0/19) 0%
Networking opportunities	(8/19) 42%
Mobile apps and audience response systems	(4/19) 21%
Other (please specify in chat)	(0/19) 0%

Polls

From our polls - suppliers mainly engage directly with the organisers to gather information in the early stages of the event planning process. From our planner poll (Poll 2) about most effective strategies for delegate engagement at events - networking opportunities came out on top, with interactive sessions and workshops at a close second.

Please [complete our short post survey](#) to let us know what you thought about the event!

Thank you to our speakers / panellists:

Moderator – [Claire Forestier](#), Event Host, MESA Member

[Liz Lathan](#), Co-Founder of [The Community Factory](#)

[Linda Pereira](#), CEO of [CPL Events](#)

[John Martinez](#), CEO & Founder of [Shocklogic](#), MESA Patron Member

[Merijn van Buuren](#), Founder & CEO of [Event Mender](#), MESA Member



We look forward to seeing you at our next events!

[Meet with us at ibtm in Barcelona on Stand A30, A35!](#)

[MESA Events page](#)

[Please connect to our LinkedIn page](#)

Thank you