

## **MEETING PLANNERS KIT**

Information and Materials (from a Speaker's Point-of-View)

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## **We Have to Start Meeting Like This**

Janet E. Lapp, Ph.D.

Over dinner, in the halls, at social activities—career-changing information is exchanged. The energy that emerges during a convention cannot be replaced. So, when budgets are tight, trim other costs, but don't cut into people's convention time.

But conventions are different now—more efficient, with high-quality interaction and education. We are in the era of the ubiquitous and wired convention (see below). The convention is everywhere and instantly available off-site. Back in January 1997, the meeting of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)—which, by the way, of the 150 or so excellent conventions I attend every year, was by far the best executed—attendees were given smart cards to record session attendance and Omnicom AccessCards to voice message and network via kiosks. Handouts, registration and other services were through <http://www.pcmaconf.com>. These are now commonplace, but make sure you check our your standards against the PCMA standards.

### **How to Hold Ubiquitous Meetings**

1. Provide CEU's on the internet for trade and professional groups.
2. Allow downlinking via satellite of interactive video-on-demand.
3. Follow ITT Sheraton's example by creating your own CD-ROM training.
4. Give education through ATM's. Citibank and Toronto Dominion Bank ATM's have a wide menu of educational items.
6. Think of joining or setting up a superstore. At the Rio Grande Travel Superstore in Albuquerque, buy CD's and other items from your destination country.
7. Let your members access 24-hour education through in-home systems, TV, computers, and catalogs.
8. Join forces with other associations or corporations for joint meetings. Colorado Cattle Feeders and Corn Growers are intuitive. Disparate groups will create synergy.

### **Meetings in 2004**

How are meetings changing? The following are characteristics of associations and corporations that are staying tuned.

- o More interaction time. With the virtual community reducing interpersonal contact, more personal contact and networking is needed. Old-style learning with speakers addressing passive audiences is gone.
- o Meetings have built-in conversation groups and hands-on learning activities. Technology increases interactivity.

- o Audience seating is updated. If there are rows, they are semi-circular (see below). If a stage, it is room-center.

- o There are frequent attention-shifts, due to short attention spans.

- o Learning surroundings are interesting. Contrary to conventional wisdom, adults do not get distracted easily—they learn better in intriguing settings. People are no longer closed up in dark, windowless rooms.

More than ever, people at your meeting need to connect with each other. Meeting planners who don't plan for real participation won't get it, no matter what they say they want. If you want a highly participative, collaborative meeting, plan it in.

Planners have accomplished this successfully by:

- Planning seating at meal functions

- Team activities

- Round-table hot-topic discussions

- Requiring interactive sessions at all breakouts, and encouraging keynoters to include some audience participation

- Scavenger hunts

#### SET SEMI-CIRCLE

General session seating: except for audience sizes over 5,000, chairs can be set in a slight semi-circle facing the stage. Although almost imperceptible to audience members, this provides a greater degree of closeness, connection, and face-to-face contact. Humour works better with a slight semi-circle, and audience reactions are more positive.

#### SQUEEZE 'EM IN

Many planners overset the general sessions—even by 20%—“just in case.” In case of what? You destroy the ambience and connection of an audience by allowing more than one empty seat between attendees.

Make these changes in your next meeting or convention and watch people come alive!

## Choosing the Right Speaking Expert for Your Meeting

Our research has shown the following 10 criteria top the lists of both audience and meeting planner satisfaction. It will help you to evaluate the top three experts you are considering. Place a check for each speaking expert for each criterium met.

Speaking expert 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking expert 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking expert 3: \_\_\_\_\_

#1\_\_\_ #2\_\_\_ #3\_\_\_

**Will your speaking expert know what your organization does** and why it does it, know the theme of your meeting and relate the presentation to it, and understand what the average audience member is feeling and thinking as a result of current corporate and competitive events?

Does your speaking expert review the questionnaire that you complete, your materials, magazines, and reports; and interview by phone and e-mail at least three representative persons from your company or association?

Where possible, does s/he ask to visit your manufacturing or retail sites, and use your products?

#1\_\_\_ #2\_\_\_ #3\_\_\_

**Energetic, Entertaining? Can hold the audience beginning to end?**

So many speaking experts do not have the energy or ability to connect and hold audiences, right to the back of the room. You cannot afford to lose the audience. These days, audiences demand laughter and inspiration from general session presenters, regardless of speech content. Opening keynote speeches have both high content and high fire-up energy, opening people's minds for the upcoming conference. A closing keynote summarizes the meeting and sends your people home with optimism, a real "high."

#1\_\_\_ #2\_\_\_ #3\_\_\_

**Meaningful, Real-World Content. What real-world experience does the speaking expert have?**

Is there significant work experience, and has s/he been successful in a profession or in a significant corporate position? Is there evidence of solid interests and activities outside speaking? You need a well-rounded and full human working with your people. Is there evidence that the speaking expert is constantly working at upgrading his/her craft as a performing artist, from theatre to voice training to a sports regime to a workout schedule?

#1\_\_\_ #2\_\_\_ #3\_\_\_

**Easy to Work With: Is the speaking expert available at any time?**

Can you speak to him/her directly? Does s/he seem down-to-earth, without arrogance? Are the requests minimal? Non-smoking accommodation on a business or concierge floor is reasonable; a suite, special pillows or food, are not. Does s/he listen to you and seem interested in your needs? If this isn't present during the pre-meeting period, it won't magically appear onstage.

- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **Extra Value: How easy is it to get needed materials, and what other materials are available?**  
 You should have: Introduction, AV setup, photos, articles to publish in your newsletter or magazine, books or CD/cassette programs available to pre-purchase as gifts. What follow-up is there for reinforcement and long-lasting value? Does s/he offer complimentary blast e-mail messaging, voice mails, or extra coaching for a strategic few audience members?
- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **Audience Commitment** What other activities does s/he attend? Does s/he show up to speak and then leave right away, or do you see him/her at the reception the night before, immersed in the audience culture? The morning of the program, is s/he at breakfast with the others, or hidden in his/her room? Do you see him/her mixing easily with others? Is s/he there early in the morning, mingling with people in the meeting room? Is s/he standing at the entrance door, greeting people into the general session, or hiding in the back, self-focused?
- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **Professional and Educational Background** Is there adequate educational background to gain the respect of the audience? Is s/he a knowledgeable and professional speaking expert with outstanding credentials, e.g. and MD or PhD, an MBA or JD with proven field experience? If you have an international audience, has the speaking expert lived long enough in a country outside the US so that you can be safe in the approach to the audience?
- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **Cutting Edge Information** Is the A/V support technology used for media presentations updated beyond PowerPoint? Watch for speaking experts who still use slides and even overheads; chances are other parts of their information is dated as well. Is s/he up to date on market trends? (Many of the best speaking experts use no A/V support at all).
- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **Trust and Reliability** Does the extensive high-profile client list show experience speaking in nearly every industry? Are references and a detailed client list and/or sample testimonials available? How many speeches has s/he missed over his or her career? The answer should be *none*.
- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **Fair Travel Policy** Although the speaking expert might travel business class, is there an attempt to bill a flat fare or even full 'Y' coach? You don't want surprises following the event.
- #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ **A veteran speaking professional? A CSP and CPAE?**  
 Receipt of the CSP indicates solid experience and a proven record, and the Speaking experts Hall of Fame Award indicates platform excellence, the best-of-the-best. It usually takes years to establish this ability, upwards of 15-20 years of regular professional speaking. With this experience, these speaking experts have "been there, done that" and you can rest assured that they can adjust to virtually anything. They will *never* go over their allotted time, rather; they will adjust their program lengths to *your* schedule.

## AudioVisual Tips

**Lighting:** People tend to laugh and listen more in brightness. Dim the screen area (by unscrewing ceiling bulbs), but leave full house lights on during the program. If the room has ceiling spotlights in the ceiling, aim them for a general center front wash.

### **Visuals and Sound:**

If you are using front screen projection, please place the screen at front left or right corner of room. If you are using rear screen projection, the screen placement is at your discretion.

#### **1. OVERHEADS (small groups under 25)**

Use a simple, 18-point font or larger.

Put the sheets in order of use and number them in case they get shuffled.

Make an index of pages for easy reference in case you need to go back and reemphasize a point.

Use color to make the visuals more appealing.

Use multiple overlays to build your ideas.

Use a pointer and stand near the screen instead of standing at the overhead projector with your back to your audience. No one wants to strain to hear what you're saying. The screen should be to your left. That way, you will be standing at the beginning of each sentence, or bulleted point, making it easier for the audience to read the visual aid.

Turn off the light when you are not using the overhead.

Carry extra light bulbs and extension cords.

#### **2. 35MM SLIDES (why? – see 4. below)**

#### **3. VIDEOTAPES, FILM**

Videotapes and films are both good options for formal presentations that don't require or invite interaction. Both are expensive presentation tools (expect to spend several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on complexity), but if you make a lot of presentations, it may be worth the investment, especially if the subject matter is particularly artistic or technical in nature. Your audience will be duly impressed if you present a well-organized, professional video or film showcasing your products or services. Keep the video less than 10 minutes in length. After that point, viewers may lose interest and begin to get fidgety. Some pointers for using videos and films:

Don't turn the lights off - just dim them.

Learn how to troubleshoot in a pinch (fix VCR's tracking, speed, etc.)

Review the film or video prior to your presentation for focus, clarity and volume.

Fast forward the videotape to the starting point prior to your presentation. You don't want to be fumbling after you've started - it will only add to your anxiety level.

Thread film prior to your presentation, and have it ready to run at the starting point.

Use a remote control.

Locate and test electrical outlets. You want to ensure the proper placement of the TV/VCR or film projector.

Take extra extension cords, bulbs and videotape cleaner.

Put it on a digital file (see 4. below).

#### 4. DIGITAL PRESENTATIONS

Just because you *can* ... doesn't mean you *should*. Powerpoint (Astound, Keynote, Corel) has anesthetized the nation. Use ONLY if you need it to emphasize or clarify, and don't use word-only slides as a text support. The higher you are on the corporate ladder, the less you should use it.

Copy your presentation to a hard drive and back it up on a disk or memory card. Bring the transfer device with you (USB, Zip, etc).

Have a back-up plan. Prepare another presentation format, or plan to go without.

Remember all your accessories, including remote mouse, batteries (if without AC power), a back-up modem, an external CD-ROM drive (if not on your computer), and blank CD-RWs.

Incorporate movies into your slides when possible, or use hypertext-like features for interactivity during your presentation.

The Internet has a wealth of information that presenters can use, much of it free. Charts, graphs and other statistics can be found easily by using various Internet search engines (Yahoo.com, Lycos.com and Google.com are several good ones) for sites related to your topic. Many web sites offer speakers a variety of visual aids to download or print.

Many Web sites offer "Shareware" allowing you to sample a presentation graphic, sound bite, or other software. If you like what you downloaded, after a certain time frame, these Shareware developers expect to be compensated for their product. DigitalJuice.com is a good site to purchase images and snazzy graphics.

Some people, of course, are more auditory than visual learners. With this in mind, look for interesting audio files on Web sites to incorporate. The more senses you can connect to with audience members, the better your chances to capture more attention. Consider your audience, its needs, and the overall objective of your speech before deciding which visual aids to use.

Of course, all music you use requires an ASCAP license; see <http://www.ascap.com/index.html> for information. Request that your speakers provide evidence that they have an ASCAP license before using copyrighted music in their presentations.

#### **Staging:**

Position the first row of seats within three feet of the stage or use a 'T' shaped stage with the runway extending to the first row of seats.

Set the lectern back a few feet from the front of the stage so that the speaker can walk in front of it.

Riser dimensions should be a minimum of 12 feet across and 6 feet deep with height appropriate to size of audience.

#### **Recording Devices:**

Check with the speaker if audio or video taping is authorized.

## Speaking for Beginners (or presenters who feel like it)

Whether it is your first presentation, or you have spoken lots, all of us have some level of stage fright or performance anxiety. Although the fear of speaking in public ranks ahead of death, flying, and heights, this ‘fear’ is only an ‘anxiety.’ It is not real, and it can be controlled. It is a form of energy that can be channeled to your benefit.

Are any of these *your* anxieties?

- 1. Fainting, Doing Something Really Stupid.** You may feel faint, but it is highly unlikely that you will faint and even more unlikely that you will do anything stupid. You will make mistakes, that’s all.
- 2. Fear of boring the audience.** Make sure that your material is interesting, back it up with research and anecdotes to enhance your points. Show enthusiasm about the topic with your voice and body language. If you are happy to be there, so will your audience.
- 3. Fear of your mind going blank.** This can happen. We have all seen it happen to other people, and you need to learn what to do if it happens to you: Pause, look at your notes or outline and try to pick up again where you left off, or move on to your next thought. I ask the audience where I was; then say my memory is good, it’s just very short.
- 4. Fear of being judged.** If you enjoy your subject, even if you’ve made some mistakes or have lost your place, you will be accepted. A sincere and well-prepared presenter doing his or her best, will not be judged harshly. Like any other anxiety, the most accepting and forgiving audiences will be easiest for you; the tough ones will always be a challenge.

### What To Do

#### Visualize

Picture yourself in front of an audience, composed, confident and in control. By picturing yourself in a successful situation, you are more likely to have the confidence you need. Repeat: “I have valuable information that others will value and enjoy. They need me to be here.”

**Prepare your Body.** You probably won’t sleep much the night before; don’t worry. Lying still with your eyes closed will be enough rest. Eat lightly; avoid alcohol, high fat, excess sugars. No caffeine the morning of your program; warm water with lemon is best. Avoid ice water; it will constrict your throat.

Robin Williams does jumping jacks. Some speakers run around the hotel. Some do deep knee bends. Get your body moving before you go onstage. Low guttural grunts help your voice warm up.

### ONSTAGE

**Stance.** If in doubt, stand still with your arms relaxed at your side (not in pockets). Unless you have a reason to move, don’t move. Face the audience head-on. Keep your head up.

**Notes.** You can read from notes, but you’ll need to lower your head to do that (not good). You can use the top half of an 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. Better yet, summarize each paragraph in your mind, and

use just a cue to get you going. That way your whole speech can be on one index card. See techniques for visualizing speeches to make this process easier.

When Winston Churchill was asked why he carried notes, but seldom used them, “I carry fire insurance, but I don’t expect my house to burn down.” If you do use notes, use bulleted points instead of sentences. Make the type easy to read (use felt tip pen or minimum 18 point type, boldface, if typed), only use the top 2/3 of the page to avoid looking down, use highlight pens to indicate the must/should/fun-to-know information.

**Gestures.** These are visual reinforcements of the words and ideas you are trying to communicate to your audience, so make sure they do just that. The most effective gestures are spontaneous ones. They come from what you are thinking and feeling and they help the audience relate to you and what you are telling them. If there is no meaning to a gesture, don’t use it.

**Practice.** Practice your speech in the room where you will be giving it. If you cannot, simulate the stage. Check your equipment and get comfortable on the stage. Practice getting on and off the stage. Sitting down and getting up. Peter Drucker says, “Spontaneity is an infinite number of rehearsed possibilities.” Tiger Woods practices.

**Lectern.** If you use a lectern, move it to where you want it. Standing behind a lectern separates you from the audience. If you cannot bear to do without it, at least walk to the side from time to time before scurrying back in your hiding place. If you are five feet or shorter, ask for a 6” riser behind the lectern, or better, walk to the front of the stage and speak from there with a wireless mike.

**Connect.** Make eye contact with audience members! Most professional speakers naturally make eye contact with a person about 4-5 seconds before moving on. Move here, move there. No sweeping or staring, move from face to face if you can. See the audience as sitting in a ‘Z’ formation. Start with a friendly face, complete a thought, and then move on in a Z around the room.

**Expressions.** It isn’t easy to speak and smile at the same time, but smile during your presentation if it’s congruent with your message. Videotape your presentation and follow your expression to see if your expression is appropriate.

Be clear about what you want your audience to do as a result of your program. Begin with the end in mind. Use the Pre-Meeting Questionnaire supplied in this kit to study your audience beforehand.

**Preparation** Use an energy roller-coaster to prepare your program (see the Keynote section in your kit). Collect analogies, metaphors, humorous stories (not jokes), stories of depth, stories to illustrate, examples, audience involvement techniques, and case studies. Make no more than 3 points; keep the message simple.

Start with impact including the benefit of the presentation to the audience, and end with strength and a call to action.

**Practice.** Professional speakers, like all artists and performers, have given their presentations so many times, and they do it so well, that it looks easy. Don’t expect to be as polished as a pro, but the more often you run through it the better it will be.

At least 24 hours in advance of your presentation:

1. Do a test run of your presentation from start to finish. It helps to practice in front of several people.
2. Get to the room early. Make sure the room is set up correctly, the microphone is working and check any visual aids you may be using. (Never ask an audience if they can hear you after you start; you should have checked that before now!) Test the setup of your computer, especially your presentation software. If you are unfamiliar with the system, allow yourself ample time to get acquainted with the software.
3. Check the lighting, temperature and line-of-site. You'll want your listeners to be comfortable. If they're too warm, they're likely to get groggy. If they're too cold, they won't be able to sit still trying to stay warm—65 degrees is good.
4. Be available to mix with your audience as they arrive

**Time.** Plan for 75% of the allotted time. If you end early, people are happy. If you end late, they will complain. If you plan for audience involvement, plan on only 50% of the time and 25% for interactive sessions. When preparing your speech, consider the *must* know, *should* know, fun to know. Limit material to must know. Top planners always have timers at the front of the audience to warn the speaker, and remind the speaker to finish on time.

**Clothing.** Nothing should distract your audience from you and your message, whether that be a meeting badge (take it off), brassy blond hair (fix it), or anything dangling, anything too short, anything too anything.

**Speech.** Pitch, volume, rate, punch, pause, and diction – lots to remember! For amateur speakers, speak clearly and enunciate. Slow down! It will seem as you are speaking in slow motion, but all speakers speed up too much when nervous. Vary your tone and speed. Punch certain words for effect, pause when you want something to sink in.

Whether it is your first presentation, or you have spoken lots, stage anxiety is common. The more you speak, the more the anxiety leaves. Keep it up!

### 10 TIPS FOR Q&A PERIODS

1. For a sales or training session, take questions during your presentation, but if you are planning to cover the material later, tell the audience member so (and then don't forget to do it.) Spend no more than about 60 seconds on each answer; audiences wander off after that.
2. For a successful Q & A, start to prepare the audience early. Early in your presentation, tell the audience *when* you will be taking questions. You might even give them cards and ask them to write questions down to save for the end; to ask throughout your presentation, or at certain points during the presentation.
3. Before you answer, listen carefully and paraphrase the question before you respond. Include the question as part of your response.
4. Keep your answers as short as you can, some research shows that audience minds will wander after 60-75 seconds of your response no matter how eloquent you are.
5. Look at the questioner at the beginning of your response, but look at the entire audience when answering.
6. Call on experts in the audience when appropriate, but take back control after they have responded. Remember *you* are the final expert for the session.
7. Tell those with several questions or questions that are not relevant to the whole group, that you will respond either at the end of the session, or later by e-mail or by telephone.
8. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the truth and get the information for the questioner.
9. End the question-and-answer period with a strong closing remark, or a punch line or even some humour that reflects the content of your program.
10. When your presentation is over, and the questions have stopped, or time is up, instead of simply saying "thank you" and leaving, take the opportunity to refer back to your closing statement, or talk about next steps. Your closing should wrap things up neatly, and end on a positive note.

### What if An Audience Member is Hostile?

A great opportunity to show how credible and professional you are! Research has shown that you can actually win people over to a high degree of loyalty if they were once hostile to you and later, friendly. If an audience member is hostile to you, try this approach:

- Let her/him get it out. You listen while s/he vents. Paraphrase what has been said, and how s/he feels about it. “Let’s see if I have that right; you are saying that ... and the effect it is having on you is that .... It makes sense that you would be ...”
- Ask probing questions to try to find out what the real issues are “So then, if that happened, what else would happen do you think?” “And that would lead to ...?”
- “Ok I think I get it, now let me respond in this way.”  
“Let’s see if we can solve this together ...”

If s/he is becoming belligerent or out-of-control, you will need to say “In the interest of everyone, we will need to talk about this afterwards. Let’s look into this after we’ve finished here.”

Then follow-up with a security request.

By using this approach you have shown that you value the thoughts of the questioner. The audience will respect you, and you will diffuse hostility at the same time.

## Handouts (or workbooks)

Handouts are not dead; using handouts that allow the audience members to take notes during the presentation is a great way for them to capture key ideas. When they take notes in their own words it's more meaningful. Handouts need to be visually interesting, but have lots of white space for writing.

Planners are getting stuck in the transition; people like their CD's but cannot yet give up their notes. Plan a 3-year phase-out, and announce ahead that the big workbooks are on their way out. However, many presenters change their presentations considerably from the time you need to collect their materials to the time of the presentation. *Ask you presenters to bring hard copies of their Powerpoint slides to the presentation with them.*

According to *Presentations* magazine, there are **five steps** to follow for improving handouts:

1. Stay focused on your goal - always customize your handout around what you are trying to accomplish.
2. Avoid an information glut—avoid the temptation to overload audience members with information simply because it's possible. As with the presentation itself, your handout should not include any “data dumps.” Delete any material that does not directly support your message.
3. Use graphics whenever possible—any time you can put a graphic in a handout vs. text—do it. People will study a chart or diagram to learn information, but may skip a detailed explanation of the same data.
4. Use white space—wide margins and lots of room for taking notes. Fill no more than 65% of the page with words or graphics.
5. Your handout should feel good (paper quality) and look good (printing or copying quality). A handout can't salvage a horrible presentation, but a well-designed and planned handout can make the difference between a good presentation and a great one.

## Other Handouts

### Laminated book marks or wallet cards

These book marks or post cards have key ideas from the program as a reminder for participants. Include your name, phone number and other contact information.

### Small gifts or trinkets that are somehow a reminder of the topic.

Giving away a ruler, for example, can remind you of personal growth. A packet of seeds can be used to convey the thought of seeds for success. I give people a small candle to remind them of their own star power so they will let their light shine. Be careful, however, you don't want to go overboard with this sort of reminder. Any small gifts that you do use should have all your information listed - name, phone numbers, address.

**Books, booklets, audio and videotapes, and software packages are excellent learning tools.**

These learning tools can be a reminder of the information given in the presentations. Speakers mail these types of learning tools out regularly—perhaps once a month—to audience members so there’s continued learning.

### **Newsletters, reminder letters and tip sheets**

Ask your speaker to offer to send out a quarterly newsletter. Presenters also can use these types of materials by having audience members sign up for a mailing list and then regularly mailing letters and newsletters to participants.

### **Web site invitations**

Audience members access the presenter’s Web site to obtain free downloads whether these be articles, copies of slides from your presentation, special reports, eBooks, so on

I like the booklet **“Wow that’s a great idea!”** produced by [www.wowgreatidea.com](http://www.wowgreatidea.com).

Ed Bernacki and Suzanne Merritt, the co-founder of the Polaroid Creativity Lab found that the participant’s did not use ideas and information from the speakers as much as they could. They created a 60-page idea journal designed to help people find more ideas and find better ideas; prompt people to act on these ideas after the conference, and enhance the value and importance of a conference in the process. The first 30 pages are interesting, colourful and useful, and help participants get more take-home value from the conference. It includes tips for networking, complete with a page for inserting business cards.

*This section is excerpted from this booklet:*

### **Conference Participants**

#### **How to get the most from your Conference**

How often did you say, “wow, what a great idea!” at the conference you attended? Conferences and workshops can be inspiring and informative, but don’t let your ideas get lost, be forgotten or die. Work with your notes, ideas and contacts to get results. Finding great ideas is just the start. Develop the discipline of acting on your ideas to create innovations.

Follow these steps to get the most from the conference you have just attended:

#### **Review your notes**

Look through the notes, ideas, handouts, business cards and brochures you have collected.

Find the important ideas or insights from each session.

Sort your ideas into idea bins. Which ones are hot, loony, chilly or recycled? Act on the hot ideas and put the others on ice until you have the time or resources to act on them.

Rate your participation in the event. Were you an active participant? Did you get value from the conference? If not, why not?

#### **Act on the hot ideas**

Some of the insights and idea will be too good to ignore. The sooner you act, the sooner you benefit.

Summarize the hot ideas that you will work on. Put your energy and enthusiasm into the idea.

Ensure it is a great idea (see the workshop inside the guide).

Review on the material on taking home the innovations. How can you shape your work environment to be more open to new ideas?

### **Store your materials**

Most people admit that they have attended a conference, made notes, collected handouts, and never looked at them again.

Which handouts, brochures and contacts do you want to retain? Keep material that you will use rather than keeping everything and never looking at it again.

### **Turn ideas into action**

Are great ideas enough?" No.

1. Pick the top four hot ideas that will make a difference. Use the last four pages of the guide as this provides a framework to convert ideas into actions.
2. Define and refine each idea. Write down the issues that are important to its success.
3. Set a deadline but be realistic and disciplined in meeting your deadlines. Consider the roadblocks that may arise and manage around them.
4. Prepare to sell the idea to get the involvement and commitment necessary to put the idea in to action.

**WEB CONFERENCING**, or Internet or E-meetings, can be a less effective alternative to face-to-face presentations and speakers still can effectively use visual aids. A hosted service provider such as Communicast, PlaceWare, WebEx) issues e-mail invitations to participants. Attendees then "arrive" by clicking on the Web site address provided. Conference organizers make audio available either through traditional phone lines (party calls), or streaming audio (involving opening another computer window to receive the audio portion). Use these resources for your pre- or post-conference connections as well.

Audience members can view a presenter's slide show simultaneously, or any other files or demonstrations. Some Internet meeting software allows users to automatically make changes to documents online. Various providers can also allow attendees to post questions live as text-based inquiries or on an "electronic whiteboard." Instant surveys of audience members can also be done to add another visual element, since results can be posted almost immediately.

Whatever they are—low-tech or high-tech—they must be visually attractive, prepared with the audience in mind, and used effectively.

Although the presentation technology (hardware and software) keeps changing, the basic rules of using visual aids do not. They are:

1. Always use the visual aid as an aid NOT the presentation.
2. Be prepared to speak without them just in case there is equipment or power failure.
3. Remember, people come to see speakers ... they are the best visual aid!

## FOR PANEL PRESENTERS

### Your Panel Needs a Leader

Not just a moderator ... a leader. Many moderators show up and think that all they need to do is keep everyone on time. No, the moderator is responsible for all aspects of each presentation—an overseer. The moderator develops and implements the strategy of the panel.

Each panel member will be a SME, or subject matter expert. He or she also should be organized and dedicated to seeing the presentation to its successful conclusion. The team leader needs to be aware of a potential pitfall—delegating too much too soon. The leader should be hands-on until the entire panel is planned.

If the panel's purpose is to inform the audience, then it needs to provide new and useful information. The moderator makes it clear that new and up-to-date research and/or methods must be communicated to the audience members; otherwise you will have audience members dribbling out during the sessions muttering ... “BTDT , BTDT” (been there done that) and you cannot afford that!

If, however, the panel's goal is to persuade, then it needs to make audience members believe in the message, or call them to action. The moderator will then perform the same preparation as a keynote speaker (see Pre-Meeting Questionnaire):

Who is in the audience?

Are they colleagues or prospective clients?

Why are they there?

What ages, positions, origins)?

What knowledge do they have now, and what do they need?

How many people will be in attendance?

What visual equipment is available?

How much time does each panel member have to present?

Determine the overall objective of your panel and use it while communicating to each panel member.

What do you want your audience to know, do, or feel as a result of the panel?

### Build the Right Panel

When putting a panel together, the moderator evaluates personality and skill and creates a menu of energy throughout the session. Balance a humorous presenter with a ‘straight’ presenter, a high-content speaker with a more process-oriented speaker. Keep the energy going. If you end up with all high content, humourless speakers ... you as moderator better be able to spice it up or the whole thing will fall flat.

### Preparation

The moderator gives each panel member a set of criteria for their presentation, and for the Q&A periods.

1. Purpose
2. Content
3. Transitions between panel members (panel members create their own). Transitions create a common thread to all presentations, so when one ends, the next begins logically.
4. Visual aids (no overheads or slides, use only digital format)
5. Audience materials (handouts, books)

## 6. Participation in scheduled practice sessions (yes, hold at least one run through)

The moderator asks the panel members to

1. use analogies and metaphors, stories, examples, audience involvement, or case studies. Forbid presentation of data alone.
2. present as if they were making a speech, with a beginning, middle and ending.
3. stand up while speaking where possible. At least remove that terrible table barrier between presenters and the audience. Sit each panel member on barstools despite their protests.
4. end their presentation with strength and something memorable.

The moderator keeps in touch with the panel members regularly, and holds conference calls as needed (most organizations have bridge lines; if your presenters do not have access, call a company such as FasComm and sign up for one yourself for \$69 per month, and have it available to all your presenters).

Schedule a run-through at the conference a day ahead of the planned panel, including a run-through of all visual aids.

**INTRODUCTIONS** Introductions can be made briefly by the moderator, each panel member can do a self-introduction before speaking, or the previous panel member can announce the next one.

**QUESTIONS** The moderator decides if questions will be answered at the end of each speaker segment or if audience members will be asked to hold all questions until the end of the panel.

When a question is targeted to one panel member, but another feels compelled to address it, the moderator steps in. Decide beforehand who will answer certain subject areas, or which cues to use to invite other panel members to address the question.

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