TOOLS & PLATFORMS TO FACILITATE PARTICIPATORY EVENTS ONLINE

A practical guide on how to select the right technological tools to create an engaging event online

SenseTribe
Consulting

Facilitating and organizing an engaging event, it's an art in itself.
It requires the ability to understand what makes a conference / workshop / meeting **meaningful**, how to create the right dynamics to enhance participation and how to organize all the practical logistic elements in order to **create an experience that is engaging, effective and memorable**.

As our main work interactions nowadays happen online, we are faced with the **challenge to transform offline events into online gatherings that offer a similar level of engagement and participation**.

This presentation offers **practical guidance to** understand what elements make an event meaningful, how to re-think them in an online context, and specifically how to **select the right technological tools to recreate the same magic**.

We are specifically looking at events that require participation and engagement from the different attendees.
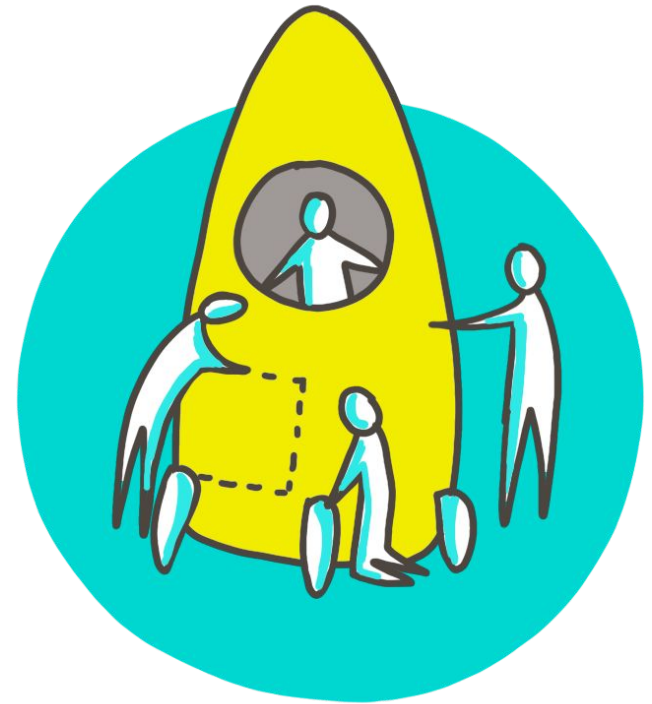
The role of Technology

As event organizers, we know that in order to make an event memorable, we need to understand what are the underlying expectations of the different stakeholders, and what are the different needs that have to be addressed.

When imagining an online activity, the same principles apply… we are "playing the same game", with similar rules, we are just handed different tools to play with!

What most people fail to realize, is that **any technological tool needs to be selected and used, based on the specific PURPOSE that has to be addressed**.

So how can we understand the different expectations/needs that we have to address?

And how can we select the right tools, based on these specific needs?

PURPOSE

EXPECTED OUTCOME

FORMAT

TECHNOLOGY
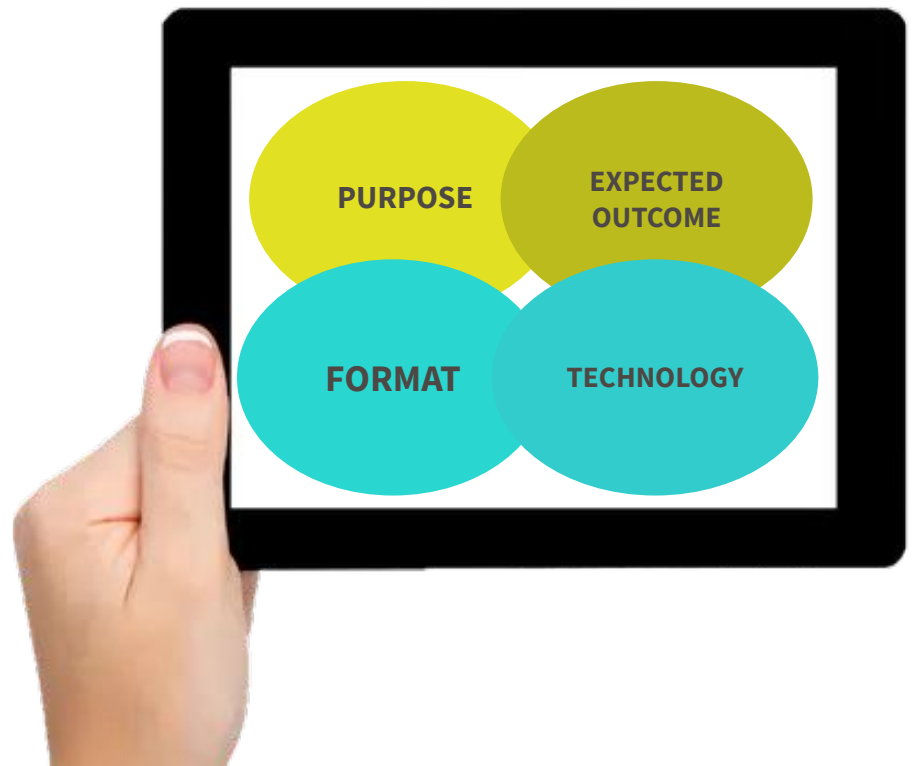
Participatory Events

When you are planning a participatory event, (conference, workshop, meeting, gathering…) and you aim to create a meaningful experience for your attendees, what you are actually trying to cover are their different NEEDS…. Here are the most common ones:

UNDERLYING "NEEDS" OF AN EVENT ORGANIZER:						
GATHER YOUR PARTICIPANTS	CONNECT & INTERACT	INFORM & COMMUNICATE	SHARE KNOWLEDGE	CO-CREATE KNOWLEDGE	CAPTURE LEARNING	KEEP THE ENGAGEMENT HIGH
Provide a venue for people to gather, meet each other and take part in your event.	Help people meet each other, connect, network, interact, and strengthen a sense of community. Provide a context for formal and informal interactions	Provide clear information about your event and the different activities;	Present the content in a clear and organized way. Share resources and knowledge	Create the right context for people to co-create/brainstorm/make decisions together and actively participate in the conversations that matter.	Capture key learning & highlights & organize any relevant learning material.	Care for the overall wellbeing of your attendees. Ensure they have a meaningful experience that leaves them energized and enriched.

Technology is in service of the purpose

Overall Goals

Principles

Practices

Tools

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If you are familiar with organizing events, workshops and gathering, you probably already have some ideas on what it takes to create a meaningful in person event…

But as we are now mainly interacting online, how can we ensure that the same level of engagement is re-created in our online activities? **How can technology enable us to care for these different needs and recreate the same magic, online?**

Selecting the right technological tools where to start...

The first thing to ask yourself when selecting a technological tool are:

From the eyes of the organizer (s)

What is the purpose we are trying to achieve? (See slide of needs)
How comfortable am I in using this tool/platform/technology? What would it take me to familiarize myself with it and use it in an effective way?
Is it feasible to implement the use of this technology based on our budget, know-how, timeline and available resources?

From the eyes of the participants:

Who is going to use this tool?
How familiar are they with this technology?
How easily can they learn how to use it in an effective way?
How is this going to influence their overall experience?
Will this technology enable them to cover their identified need?

Identify the specific need

Gather your participants

Connect & Interact?

Inform & communicate?

Share knowledge?

Co-create knowledge?

Capture learning?

Keep the engagement high?

What are your NEEDS? What is that you are trying to ACHIEVE?

Purpose: Gather your participants

Main Function:

Provide a "virtual space" that enables participants to gather, meet each other and take part in your event. This "virtual space" will need to be in line with the overall experience you want to re-create.

Questions to ask yourself:

- *How many participant will take part in this?*
- *Do I want to create a formal/informal environment?*
- *What is the level of engagement I want to offer to my attendees? (Can they actively participate or are they mainly listening to speakers? Will they all be in the same "virtual space" the whole time, or do I need to create dynamics with smaller group conversations?*
- *Do I need to arrange different activities in parallel?*

Possible Tools to use:

- ZOOM
- HOPIN.TO
- MICROSOFT TEAMS
- QIQO CHAT
- GOOGLE HANGOUT

Purpose: Connect and Interact

Main Function:

Help people virtually-meet each other, connect, network, interact, exchange contacts and strengthen a sense of community. Provide a context for formal and informal interactions

Questions to ask yourself:

- *How important is that participants interact with each others?*
- *Do I want this interaction to also happen before & after my event? (Or is it enough if participants interact during the event itself?)*
- *Is this a one-off event, or do I want to create a community in the longer term?*

Purpose: Connect and Interact

Possible Tools to use (1):

If the main purpose is for your participants to **exchange their contact details** and be able to **reach out to each others**, you can **simply share a list of attendees**, create a shared Google document where participants can add their details, or substitute this with any engaging visualization of your attendees

Possible Tools to use (2):

If on the other hand it is important for you to **cultivate a sense of community** amongst your attendees, you might want to consider setting up and using a dedicated "member platform" so that participants can learn about each others prior to the conference/event. In this case it might be useful to look into platforms such as:

- Mighty Network
- Dedicated social media groups (facebook, linkedIn, Slack …)

These platforms will also allow you to create thematic sub-communities, share resources and knowledge in a dedicated platform and keep the engagement going beyond the event itself.

Purpose: Inform and communicate

Main Function:

Provide clear information about your event and the different activities;

Support your attendees in understanding what is happening, and where;

Provide clear information on how to join the different sessions

Questions to ask yourself:

- *Are all the different activities accessible to all the different attendees?*
- *Who should be informed of what?*
- *How diverse is my event in terms of activities and sessions and what do I need in order to make it as clear as possible for my attendees to understand how the event is structured, and where/when each activity is taking place?*

Purpose: Inform and communicate

Possible Tools to use:

For events that have a straight-forward agenda it might be enough to send out some emails explaining the different activities and clarifying the timing and how to join the different sessions.

If you virtual event presents a multitude of (parallel) activities and sessions, you might want to consider other tools that can provide additional clarity. Some examples are:

- ○ Sched
- ○ Mighty network (this can combine the "community platform" function, with the "inform & communicate" function)
- ○ Google Calendar
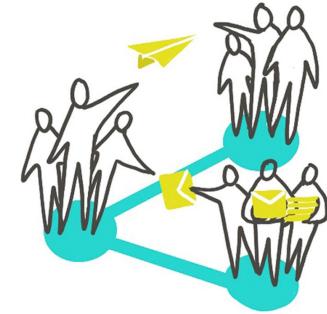- ○ Visual representation of your agenda
- ○ …

Make it as clear as possible for your attendees to understand what is happening and where!

Purpose: Share knowledge

Main Function:

Present the content in a clear, organized and engaging way. Share resources and knowledge

Questions to ask yourself:

- *What type of content needs to be presented?*
- *What would be the best way to make it engaging, visually appealing, and accessible to my audience?*

Possible Tools to use:

- A good-old PowerPoint presentation
- A visually engaging presentation using Prezi
- Videos
- Jamboard
- Slido (slido.com)
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Purpose: Co-create knowledge

Main Function:

Create the right space for people to co-create/brainstorm/take decisions together and actively participate in the conversations that matter.

Questions to ask yourself:

- *What is the design of this session?*
- *Do I need to gather participant's inputs during the session?*
- *What do I need in order to co-create knowledge together with the participants*
- *Are they all going to work together on a specific activity (ie: brainstorm)?*
- *If this session would have been done in person, what would I have needed in terms of material and support? A whiteboard? A canvas? Flipcharts and post-its?*
-

Possible Tools to use:

- Miro
- Mural
- Jamboard
- Whiteboard
- ...

Purpose: Capture Learning

Main Function:

Capture key learning & insights and organize any relevant learning material

Questions to ask yourself:

- *What needs to be captured/harvested regarding each session?*
- *Who should have access to it after the event is over? (just the organizers? All the participants? Anyone else?..)*
- *How & where do I need to make this material available?*

Purpose: Capture Learning

Possible Tools to use:

How to capture key insights:

- Some of the platforms mentioned before make it possible to not only run a brainstorm session, but to also capture the essence of each conversation and have it accessible afterwards (ie: Mural/Miro/Jamboard)

- Google shared docs / Google forms

- Feedback forms / questionnaires / Mentimeter

Another way to capture learning and key insights is through VISUAL HARVESTING

→ Highly recommended for increased engagement!

Purpose: Keep engagement high

Main Function:

Care for the overall wellbeing of your attendees. Ensure they have a meaningful experience that leaves them energized and enriched (NOTE: nobody wants their participants to fall asleep behind their computers!!).

Questions to ask yourself:

- *What part of my event can become more interactive?*
- *Where can I ask questions to my attendees?*
- *How can I create quick moments of engagement to increase the attention span?*

Possible Tools to use:

- Zoom (chat function)
- Mentimenter
- Kahoot (kahoot.com)
- NearPod
- Slido (Slido.com)
- PollEveryWhere

Summary of different needs and tools that can be used for that

GATHER YOUR PARTICIPANTS	CONNECT & INTERACT	INFORM & COMMUNICATE	SHARE KNOWLEDGE	CO-CREATE KNOWLEDGE	CAPTURE LEARNING	KEEP THE ENGAGEMENT HIGH
ZOOM	SHARED PARTICIPANTS LIST	SCHED	POWERPOINT	MIRO (200 persons)	MURAL	ZOOM CHAT
HOPIN.TO		MIGHTY NETWORK	PREZI		MIRO	MENTIMETER
MICROSOFT TEAMS	MIGHTY NETWORK		VIDEOS	MURAL (25 persons)	JAMBOARD	KAHOOT
		GOOGLE CALENDAR				NEARPOD
GOOGLE HANGOUT	DEDICATED SOCIAL MEDIA GROUPS		JAMBOARD	JAMBOARD (50 persons)	GOOGLE FORMS	SLIDO.COM
		VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF YOUR AGENDA	SLIDO		MENTIMETER	POLL_EVERYWHERE
QIQOCHAT				GOOGLE DOCS (80 persons)		
Spatial	SLACK				VISUAL HARVESTING	
Airmeet				WHITEBOARD		

The Best Collaboration Tools for Your Virtual Team

https://www.collaborationsuperpowers.com/tools/#meetings

Last few words of advice

As you are jumping into the wild wild world of online facilitation, remember to keep your participant's overall experience in mind when selecting the right tools to use.

Focus on what really matters and make sure your participants can still enjoy your session instead of stressing out from using many different tools that they might not be familiar with.

Keep it fun and engaging… and ask yourself: "Is this good enough for now? Is it safe enough to try?"

Enjoy and share with us your reflections!!

SenseTribe Consulting

Our Purpose

ecosystems

collectives

individuals

Collective Wellbeing
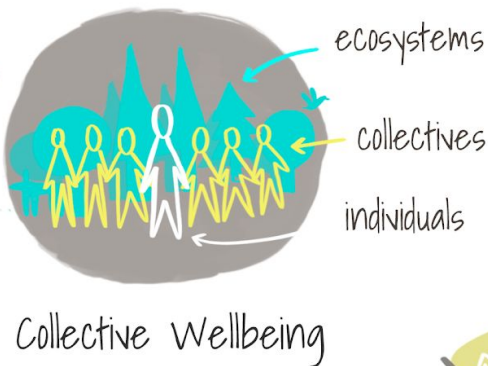
Our Mission

Addressing
United Nations Sustainable
Development Goals
one at a time

Our approach

Multidisciplinary teams

We bring together
multidisciplinary teams
to work towards the sustainable
development goals and contribute
to collective well-being.

A sense of togetherness

Effective collaboration and collective well-being are important to us.

That's why we integrate practices like Sociocracy 3.0, non-violent communication and participatory leadership.

Let's stay
in touch

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