Successful Presentations
Engaging Your Audience

Remember, your presentation is about the audience and what they will learn and be able to do differently. Learning is not a passive activity; today's audiences are more experience-driven than ever and connecting with participants on a personal level is crucial to making sure that your ideas and concepts stick. To help promote audience interaction, FMI will provide two easy-to-use audience response technology tools that will grab the attention of today's tech-dependent audience and encourage interaction. In addition, we'll provide engagement ideas that don't involve technology.

Live Polling

Using a live polling app, speakers can keep an audience interested and engaged by asking them to respond to questions or vote on a topic. It's also a great way to gauge which way participants' interests skew or test whether you're getting your message across effectively. Here's how it works:

A link to the polling questions is embedded into the session description on the conference mobile app. Attendees click on this to access the polls.

The presenter launches a slide with a multiple choice question on it, along with possible answers. Participants then use their mobile devices to answer the question and the results are displayed live on the presenter's screen and in the participant's device. The answers can be displayed as a pie chart or a bar graph. In addition to multiple choice questions, the presenter can also pose open-ended questions or ask for one word answers that can be displayed as a word cloud.

The polling app can also be used PRIOR to the session, if the presenter wants to gather information about the audience for use during the presentation. The resulting graphics (pie chart, bar graph, list or word cloud) can then be used in the presenter's slide deck or displayed live on the screen.

At the end of the session, the speaker can download the responses to use in follow up materials.

Your conference manager will provide support in setting up and explain the polling process.

Digital Q&A

Our digital Q&A app provides session participants with the ability to pose anonymous questions through their mobile device. This allows even the shyest of attendees to participate in the session, without feeling intimidated. The Q&A app also allows speakers and moderators to gauge the interests and understanding of the audience and how much time they should leave for questions.

Typically, sessions that use the digital Q&A feature tend to generate more questions from the audience than ones that don't, which can alleviate that awkward moment at the end of the presentation when the speaker asks for audience questions. Here's how it works:

A link to the Q&A function is embedded into the session description in the conference mobile app. Either before or during the session, the participant can type in a question which will appear in everyone's device and on the screen (if desired). Other participants can then upvote a question so that the most popular questions rise to the top of the list. This allows the speaker to know which questions he should answer first, which is useful if there is limited Q&A time.

A third party can also moderate the questions as they are entered, which allows them to filter out inappropriate questions or comments so that they don't appear in the participant's device or on the screen.

The speaker or moderator can also enter answers manually, so that the attendee has a record of them. FMI can also distribute the answers to the attendees after the conference ends.

Your conference program manager will provide support in setting up and explaining the Q&A app.

Additional Audience Engagement Tips

Don't speak for more than 10 minutes without engaging the audience.

The most obvious way to get participants to engage with you is simply to tell them to. Let them know that you want the session to be interactive and that you expect them to be responsive.

Although less effective, polling the audience can be done without the use of technology using a simple show of hands.

Ask participants to divide into small groups to discuss a concept for a few minutes. They can "pair and share" by conversing with the person next to them, change seats or move to discussion areas.

Consider using props to demonstrate a product or concept or invite a volunteer onstage to do something relevant and fun. This usually works best if you pre-arrange who the volunteer will be!

Keep the conversation going! Share your Twitter hashtag with attendees and encourage them to engage in discussion about your topic before, during and after the conference. See our speaker resource page for more information on using social media for event content marketing and audience interaction. Where practical, make yourself available for questions after the session.