

Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: High Touch to High Tech Tools

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WELCOME

I love technology, but I am not a technocrat. I love the applications and things “gadgets” can do but I leave the technical stuff (especially the problems) to my 19-year old stepson who is majoring in Information Technology.

Technology was once heralded as the end of face-to-face meetings. In reality, high tech tools have allowed meetings to be more interactive, more personalized, and more productive.

There are many sources for information about the technical details of using technology. And while many people have an appropriate level of “fear” about using technology, the successful implementation depends on more than just the technical set-up. Meeting participants, speakers and meeting leaders should be guided on how to most effectively employ the technology to insure it “works” for the meeting.

This issue of T.I.M.E. addresses how, after the technology implementation is complete, do you set up the people, the meeting, and the agenda to get the most out of the technology and the meeting.

I am also “walking the talk” by utilizing an electronic survey to gather information for a presentation I am doing at the ITME Motivation Show. I would appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete the survey. Click here for the [Survey](#) or see complete details in the second section, Walking the Talk. Thanks for your help!

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1. GADGETS AND GIZMOS

Technology and face-to-face meetings were once seen as opposite ends of the spectrum. Technology, by its very nature, is often viewed as a way to limit human contact and interaction. In reality, the evolution of technology tools has allowed an increase in interaction, an increase in personalization, and, when used properly, a way to improve meetings and events.

Here are some of the tools that offer tremendous boosts to meetings:

- On-line Surveys
- Electronic Whiteboards
- Audience Response Systems
- Personal Data Assistants (PDAs)

TOOL #1: On-line Surveys

Online surveys are a quick and innovative way to boost the productivity of a meeting. Use a pre-event survey to gather information about the participants. (See an example by clicking here [Survey](#)) Surveys can also gauge your participants' level of knowledge or understanding, explore attitudes, and allow you to ask key questions that will help your speakers build a better program.

Post event on-line surveys are effective at gathering evaluative information about the meeting, conference or event. Further, post event surveys can ask questions about information learned, comfort level with new skills or information, and changes in attitudes. Surveys can be distributed through email, on-site kiosks, on-site cyber cafés or through a website. Email surveys can also be used to learn why people did not attend.

TIPS:

- Capture email addresses through your registration process. Cathy Chatfield-Taylor in *The Meeting Professional*, March 2002, recommends that at least 70% of the participants receive an email survey. Otherwise, she warns the results will be skewed.
- Offering an incentive will increase your response rate.
- Don't ask duplicative information that is already being captured through the registration process.
- Use the survey results to substantiate the value of the meeting. Regardless of how you measure meeting results, survey results can help you demonstrate the impact of a meeting. Post event surveys allow people to easily respond. Use a post-event survey to measure "movement" or changes. Survey how much people learned, survey their comfort level, and survey their attitudes.

TOOL #2: Electronic Whiteboards

Electronic whiteboards are interactive tools that allow you to share notes as you meet. Electronic whiteboards incorporate other elements like Microsoft applications, websites, and CAD/CAM drawings. Each is accessed through the touch sensitive surface of the electronic whiteboard. Participants can even access applications or documents on the fly as the meeting develops. Participants can write on the board's surface to highlight or underline key points to focus the group's attention on critical issues. When the meeting is over, the electronic whiteboard will have captured everything to a computer so you can print the notes, post them on the web, email or fax the notes.

TIPS:

- Electronic whiteboards are a great tool for note taking and brainstorming.
- Use electronic whiteboards to simplify and condense meeting discussions. Also use them as a tool to facilitate collaboration and decision-making in meetings.
- Electronic whiteboards can be incorporated into web conferencing.

TOOL #3: Audience Response Systems

Audience Response Systems (ARS) are keypad systems where participants key in their responses to questions and the results are tabulated and displayed immediately. Audience Response Systems allow anonymous responses that provide everyone with a visual portrait of the group's responses. By employing this technology, speakers can learn from the group and the group can learn from each other. The displaying of results allows assumptions to be revealed and allows the group to move toward consensus or action.

TIPS:

- Script the questions out with your speakers to develop the appropriate type and number of questions. Multiple-choice questions, for example, are useful to help speakers prioritize points and issues as viewed by the participants.
- Use more complex questions rather than simple questions. The best questions are those that are thought provoking and can direct the discussion.
- Use questions to gather data that people would not be willing to offer unless it is anonymous.
- Use an Audience Response System for multiple purposes during a meeting. If you are using a system for a speaker, also consider conducting the meeting evaluation using ARS. In addition, add a fun element (game show, trivia quiz, etc.) to the meeting using the software. The incremental cost of using the system for other meeting sessions is usually nominal. The fun element can support the meeting theme or reinforce content.
- Save the data results for later analysis or follow-up.

TOOL #4: Personal Data Assistants (PDAs)

PDAs are hand-held devices with calendars, databases and notepads in one convenient location. Information can be exchanged via the wireless connection called "beaming".

TIPS:

- Download useful information to participants. Take advantage of wireless distribution to beam information that people will want on the go. Trade shows offer great opportunities here. Transfer exhibitor information, maps, and trade show floor layouts.
- Insure your meeting participants have the appropriate software. Specific software on the PDA is required to allow people to download PowerPoint or Excel documents. “Beaming” can only be done between shared programs on two PDAs. One recommendation is [Documents To Go 4.0 Standard Edition](#) or the DVD packaging [Documents to Go Pro 4.0 \(DVD Packaging\)](#). And this also looks like a bargain at only \$10.00 and no other “hidden” costs: [50 Power Programs for the Pocket PC](#).
- Watch for more capabilities in this area. Some travel providers are able to send itineraries and travel alerts to PDAs. Many hotels are now offering wireless connectivity. Use it for program information, announcements and news.
- Encourage participants to create personal meeting agendas appointments.

If you are using a PDA for your own personal use, are you fully utilizing its capabilities? Or is it simply an address book and calendar? I personally found that a gift of a book (from my techie son) helped me get more out of my Handspring. For Handspring users, let me recommend [How to Do Everything with Your Visor](#). For others, check out [How to Do Everything with Your Pocket PC](#) and Handheld PC.

If you want to explore more product ideas, check out the following links:

[PDAs](#) (There are some deals to be had on PDA's.)

[PDA Accessories and Supplies](#)

[PDA Software](#)

And the following is on my wish list: [Handspring TREO 180 PDA Phone](#). The Treo combines a phone with a PDA. Truly innovative and from all I've read it works (meaning TREO is easy to use, ergonomic and people love them).

2. WALKING THE TALK

Mike Hamilton of [Synchronicity](#), a marketing company focusing on face-to-face events, and I will be presenting at the ITME Motivation Show in Chicago. Our presentation, Beyond Logistics: Becoming the Valued Knowledge Worker, will address ways to increase your value to and visibility within your organization.

As we have begun crafting our presentation, we decided it's important that we collect some data and statistics. And so we have constructed a pre-event electronic survey (Tool #1) that is open to all readers of T.I.M.E.

If you never have taken an online survey here is your chance to see how easy and quick they are. You'll gain new knowledge by completing the survey AND we will be happy to share the results with you after all the tabulations are in. Also please feel free to forward it onto other people.

Please click here [Survey](#) or past the following link into your browser (<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?AEX8RACD3CHTSR8XKS9215LV>) to complete the survey. Thanks again for your help.

If you are interested in learning more about the ITME Motivation Show please click here. <http://www.motivationshow.com>. And please don't forget to mark your calendar to come see us! Our presentation is Tuesday, September 24 at 2:00 pm at McCormick Place, Room S102D.

3. USING THE TRIED AND TRUE MOST EFFECTIVELY

What did we do before PowerPoint? Here are my ideas for making PowerPoint Presentations more effective:

- The presentation should not be the PowerPoint. The PowerPoint is a guide; use it for organization and structure. Reading bullets from a PowerPoint is not a presentation!
- Speakers should use a pointer so they don't turn their backs on the audience.
- Maintain the audiences' attention by simply pressing the "b" or "w" keys. Pressing "b" will cause the screen to turn to the background color, while pressing "w" will cause the screen to turn white. Simply hit the key again to return to the presentation.
- Add bullet effects (Transitions) so that the audience doesn't read ahead.
- Style should never overpower substance. Animation, flying text and other effects are good ways at providing variety and interest. Overused, they distract from the message.
- Consider incorporating impromptu PowerPoint slides into a presentation. Poll the audience, prioritize their feedback and then show the results on a newly created PowerPoint slide. Encourage your speakers to incorporate audience feedback into the presentation.
- Some presentations may not require PowerPoint slides or may be useful only during a segment of the speaker's presentation.
- Use digital photos at the event to run in a looping Power Point presentation.
- Coordinate the look and feel of everyone's PowerPoint templates. Consider using one overall template or a series of coordinated templates so the presentations flow and support the theme of your meeting.

If you want to improve your own presentations or the overall presentation quality at your next meeting, consider these books to help you.

[Creating Dynamic Multimedia](#) Presentations Using Microsoft PowerPoint by Carol Lehman. This book covers the basics and also includes macros, distribution, delivery, charts, and customization. It also includes snippets of extra info from presentation gurus worldwide.

If you are proficient in Microsoft applications including PowerPoint, you can benefit from ideas for your PowerPoint slides and presentation skills from [Effective Executive's Guide to...](#) PowerPoint 2000: The Seven Steps to Creating High-Value, High-Impact PowerPoint Presentations.

Follow real-world examples in [How to Do Everything with PowerPoint](#) to create simple to dazzlingly sophisticated presentations. Examples include animation, sound, graphics, video clips, and finishing touches--including fills and 3-D effects--to make your presentations jump off the screen.

A comprehensive guide for speakers, ["TechEdge": Using Computers to Present](#) and Persuade addresses microphones, and projectors, how to develop a "webliography," plus tips on creating interesting and useful slide presentations, including what software to use and how to add multimedia enhancements.

4. I CAN SEE YOU

If a picture paints a thousand words, how can we use technology to “show” what we are talking about? This is a clever (and easy) solution that shows that technology doesn’t have to be reserved for BIG meetings.

A group at Rockwell Automation uses digital cameras to take pictures of supplier problems. They send the photos to engineering and the supplier at the same time. Then they use videoconferencing or a conference call to talk about the issue. The use of digital images has shortened the resolution time of their supplier and design issues from days to hours (Darwin Magazine, January 2002)

Once you have the videoconference set up, here are the “people” hints from Mel Silberman’s [101 Ways to Make Meetings Active](#): Surefire Ideas to Engage Your Group that will help insure success:

- Minimize participants to maximize visibility, conversation flow and overall connection
- When participants are strangers, ask them to send photos, short biographies or other personal tidbits about themselves prior to the first meeting.
- Establish participation signals. Participants can be asked to any of the following to gain permission to speak
 - Raise their hands
 - Say the facilitators name first (Sue, Ron here. I have an idea.)
 - Tap the table in front of them
 - Whistle

- Use some other sound signal
- Take turns deliberately going from meeting site to meeting site. Or you can rotate sites for one brief contribution from each.

For more ideas on the smart use of videoconferencing, use [Smart Videoconferencing: New Habits for Virtual Meetings: Be Your Best on Camera, Save Time, Save Money, Get Better Results](#). In this book, the authors address the most basic concerns of users: how to handle the equipment, how to reduce distractions, how to avoid mistakes, and how to look and sound your best on camera and get the most out of virtual meetings.

Videoconferencing need not be for elaborate meetings. In fact, technology now supports both "group" videoconferencing and the emergence of "desktop" videoconferencing. Applications explored in [Mainstream Videoconferencing: A Developer's Guide to Distance Multimedia](#) include everyday meetings, training, recruiting, tech support, manufacturing, medical clinics, and entertainment.

Another source for technical information and provides practical advice is [Videoconferencing for the Real World](#).

If you are looking for a source to better understand videoconferencing including hardware and software; selecting and accessing videoconferencing networks; developing a videoconferencing RFP; and operational and business considerations for videoconferencing, look at [Videoconferencing: The Whole Picture](#). Another book by the same author, James Wilcox is [Videoconferencing & Interactive Media:...](#) The Whole Picture.

5. FINAL THOUGHTS & FREEBIES

****Technology Cannot Replace Content****

Insure that any technology tool you utilize helps by:

- Improving delivery of the message
- Increasing participation and consequently speeds learning
- Adding interest and excitement
- Simplifying the meeting processes
- Improving communications or the flow of information

Spend Time On The Human Implementation

Tom Boissy, a Business Development Consultant with Graybow Communications Group, a full-service technology solutions company (www.graybow.com) states, "A "Can Do!" attitude and patience are key traits that your employees must possess when beginning to use technology to communicate and collaborate during meetings." No one can force speakers or meeting participants to use technology effectively. That's why training and rehearsals and practice are so important.

Again, Boissy says, "Training your employees is the only way to deliver the "Return on Employee" you hope to receive from technology."

Technology Does Have Its Limits

Double-check the "legality" of having a virtual meeting for a Board of Directors Meetings. Also, insure that all your meeting participants have access. Just as you must be concerned with physical access to buildings and compliance with the ADA, the electronic technology world also offers some access concerns. Under new standards in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, all Federal agencies must ensure that technology is accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities to the extent it does not pose an "undue burden." While the Federal government is at the forefront in ensuring access to electronic and information technology, the rest of the world will not be far behind. Consider how technology impacts people with disabilities, including those with vision, hearing, and mobility impairments in your planning process.

Want more techie tips? Email us for an assortment of technology tips by sending an email to Sue Tinnish at stinnish@ameritech.net with the words TECHIE TIPS in the subject line. These ideas will help you in your office and on the road with your own productivity, presentations and meetings.

6. ATTENDANCE OPTIONAL

Remember how cool it was to see Princess Leia appear as a three-dimensional hologram in the first Star Wars? Back in 1977 the idea of being transported anywhere in such a fashion seemed nearly impossible. Fast-forward to 2002, though, and the technology has finally caught up with Hollywood.

The creators of the Teleportec, a 3-D projection device allows holographic images of people to be transmitted over high-speed connections. The Teleportec system allows people to give speeches in one location and have a 3-D image of themselves transported to another location. The audience can interact with the person in the same way it normally would. "Intellectually, the brain knows that the person is not there, but the image is so lifelike that the audience forgets," Philip Barnett, vice president of Telpotec Inc. says. "We've had executives try to shake hands with the projection or hand it something during a lecture."

Seen in Sales and Marketing's online newsletter (<http://www.salesandmarketing.com/>).

Watch for more information on Virtual Meetings later in an upcoming issue of T.I.M.E.

Should I go/Should I stay? Nokia and The Weather Channel have teamed up to launch a new product that allows wireless phone users can now receive airport weather forecasts and average airport departure delays on their mobile phones. The subscription service is

designed for the frequent business or leisure traveler. For more information, go to <http://www.weather.com/nokia>

7. T.I.M.E. GONE BY

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be downloaded as a MS Word document. Here is an index of topics and “freebies” offered in the past:

May 2000:	Teambuilding And (Freebie) New York Times Reprint On Teambuilding
June 2000:	Green Meetings And (Freebie) Resource List Of Exercises
July 2000:	American (Values) And (Freebie) Meeting Analysis
August 2000:	Minimum/Minimal Meetings And (Freebie) Web Winners
October 2000:	Evaluations And (Freebie) Sample Evaluation Questions
November 2000:	Politics
December 2000:	Toys And (Freebie) Brainstorming Ideas
January 2001:	Sales, Award Presentations And (Freebie) Sales Tips
February 2001:	Change And Communicating Change And (Freebie) Change Bombs
March 2001:	Open Space Technology
April 2001:	Adult Learning Styles And (Freebie) Learning Style Questionnaire
May 2001:	Trade Shows And (Freebie) Trade Show Timeline
June 2001:	Emotional Intelligence And (Freebie) EI Quiz
July 2001:	Presentation Skills And (Freebie) Speaker Introductions
August 2001:	Ice Breakers And (Freebie) Resource List
September 2001:	Facilitation And (Freebie) Problem Personalities In A Meeting
October 2001:	Humor And (Freebie) The Benefits Of Laughter
November 2001:	Customer Care And (Freebie) Complaints
December 2001:	Slack And (Freebie) Quiet Time
January 2002:	The Many Faces Of Teambuilding And (Freebie)
February 2002:	Promotional Products And (Freebie) Case Study
March 2002:	
April 2002:	
June 2002:	Creativity And (Freebie) Building The Case For Creativity

8. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

I usually work with people face-to-face although I am open to being teleported! Call me if I can help:

Provide Facilitators
Customize a Teambuilding Program
Deliver one of my seminars

Reprint past newsletters for further distribution (Past clients have used my issues for Internal Speakers, Trade Shows, etc.)

Provide Links/Articles for your web site

Preparation for Internal Speakers

Training and Seminars (Development and Delivery)

Meeting Management Consulting

Sue Tinnish, SEAL Inc., Telephone: 847.394.9857, Email: stinnish@ameritech.net

In the meantime, I would really appreciate it if you would forward T.I.M.E. onto your colleagues, associates, and clients. Just press the forward button.

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