



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

Topic: The Technology-Tied World

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## Welcome

I wasn't planning on writing about technology this month...until my hard drive crashed last week. The experience drove home how heavily I rely on my computer, the internet and how it affects the flow of my work.

I felt lost. I was disconnected. There was information that I could not access as easily or as instantly as I wanted. And I am not even of the generation that grew up in a connected world.

Despite the lack of a laptop, I still scraped together the information for this month's newsletter addressing how technology is affecting meetings.

My pearls of wisdom this month are:

- Back up your files (I do fairly consistently, will now do very consistently)
- Embrace the way technology will continue to affect business and meetings
- Rob Levy (At Home Computer Services) is my hero. If you need a resource, I highly recommend him (847-255-4240, rlevy795@aol.com). The company offers a full-range of services beyond helping out stranded people.

Sue

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## Technology as a Tool in Innovative Meetings

Technology is a great tool - an enabler. We all have the opportunity to create innovative meetings by using technology. Much of what I read is focused on selecting the right technology tool (the techie stuff).

While I could benefit from more techie knowledge (like when my hard drive crashed), I know that any tool is not useful unless it is being used. So, this issue of Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events takes the tact of categorizing technology on how the technology can create more innovative meetings.

Each technology tool will be introduced as either a way to act as a:

1. Knowledge Sharing tool
2. Networking tool
3. Content Development tool
4. Content Delivery tool
5. Publishing tool

And of course, as soon as I publish this issue - it will be obsolete or incomplete. Such is the way of the technology train - it keeps moving. Despite its inevitable obsolescence, this issue is your ticket to exploring new ways of using technology. Let me know how it works out - innovation is not without some experimentation.

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## Reality Check

I know that I am not alone in my reliance on technology.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project maintains statistics on internet uses. Their statistics show that 71% of US adults use the internet. Internet users use email (91%), use search engines (91%) and research products and services (78%) (Pew, 2007, [http://www.pewinternet.org/trends/User\\_Demo\\_1.11.07.htm](http://www.pewinternet.org/trends/User_Demo_1.11.07.htm)).

The reliance and dependence on technology will only continue to grow. As younger generations move up into the workforce, their expectations will change the landscape of meetings. For example, younger generations are well-versed in sites like MySpace. Corbin Ball sums up the importance of social networking as a tool when he wrote in 2007, "With 106 million registered users, if MySpace were a country, it would be the 11th largest in the world between Japan and Mexico." (Ball, 2007, *Between You and Me – The Impact of Social Software on the Meetings Industry*).

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## Where Technology and Meetings Overlap

Audio visual equipment is not the only the only area that technology plays in a meeting. The use of digital technology has transformed AV from being equipment into being computer technology. AV equipment now offers meeting planners, presenters and the audience more options.

Basic AV technology includes:

- Overhead transparency projector
- Slide projector
- Projector screens
- Flipcharts
- LCD panels
- Microphones

Advanced AV technology includes:

- Plasma screen
- Webinars/webcasts
- High speed Internet services
- Wireless (Wi-Fi)
- Audience Response Systems
- Document cameras

Yet meeting technology is more than AV technology. Technology plays a role in meetings in the following functions:

- Knowledge sharing
- Networking
- Content development
- Content delivery
- Publishing

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## Definitions Please

These definitions appear in the order introduced within this newsletter.

### Wikis

A wiki is a website that allows visitors to add, remove and edit content. A collaborative technology for organizing information on Web sites, the first wiki (WikiWikiWeb) was developed by Ward Cunningham in the mid-1990s. Wikis allow for linking among any number of pages. This ease of interaction and operation makes a wiki an effective tool for mass collaborative authoring. Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, is probably the best known wiki (Wikipedia on Wikis).

### Blogs

Weblogs or blogs are regularly updated online logs usually with links to related content. Blogs are one of the Internet's fastest growing features. Blogs are easy to create. In business, team blogs have many applications. In team blogs, the idea is to create a community and share information rather than being a platform for one person's opinion (not that a blog like that is bad). To learn more about blogs read my

back issue from April 2003. At <http://www.suetinnish.com/April%202003.pdf> or [Blogs from April 2003](#)

#### Difference between blogs and wikis

Blogs and wikis are different and each offers different possibilities and meeting applications. A blog is an online journal that allows posting of information which is generally displayed in reverse chronological order. Many blogs allow readers to comment on these posts. A wiki is website that allows multiple users to collaboratively create and edit pages (versus simply posting and commenting). On wikis page content is actually changed by the last person editing the page. For a more thorough understanding of the differences between blogs and wikis, see the Freebies.

#### Moblog

Moblog is a blend of the words mobile and weblog. A mobile weblog, or Moblog, consists of content posted to the Internet from a mobile or portable device, such as a cellular phone or PDA. Weblogs made from such portable devices are also sometimes known as cyborgLogs, abbreviated as 'glogs, especially when primarily image-based.

Much of the earliest development of Moblogs occurred in Japan, among the first countries in the world where camera phones were widely available. According to Joi Ito's History of Moblogs, the first post to the web from a mobile user was from Steve Mann in 1995. The term "Moblogging" itself was coined by Adam Greenfield to describe the practice in 2002. Greenfield went on to organize the First International Moblogging Conference (or 1IMC) in July 2003.

#### Social software

Social networking sites are just one form of social software. The full spectrum includes:

- Instant messaging
- Internet bulletin boards and chat rooms
- Smart name badges
- Networking tools
- Business networking sites like LinkedIn
- Social networking sites like MySpace or FaceBook.com

Only smart name badges, networking tools and social networking sites will be defined.

#### Smart Name Badges

While Wal-Mart may be using RFID to track inventory, meetings employ it at conventions or meetings to help people connect. RFID (radio frequency identification) is being used as "smart nametags" to help people find others with common interests. RFID badges with encoded name and contact can be read via radio waves.

#### Social Networking Sites

A social network site focuses on building communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others, and which necessitates the use of software. Most social network services are primarily web based and provide a collection of various ways for users to interact, such as chat, messaging, email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, discussion

groups, and so on.

While Facebook.com and MySpace.com are social networking sites, there are many general, business and subject specific social networking sites. Consider just a few:

Classmates.com (Target audience schools with 15 million users)

LinkedIn (Target business professionals with 11 million users)

CarDomain (Target car enthusiasts with 1.6 million users)

Stumbleupon (Target webservers with 1.2 million users)

Infield Parking (Target NASCAR fans with 36 thousand users)

Soundpedia (Target music community with 1.5 million)

### Web 2.0

Social networking sites are part of Web 2.0. Although the term Web 2.0 suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to Web technical specifications. Rather Web 2.0 is a change in the ways systems developers and end users are using the web. This change, a second generation in use of the web, facilitates collaboration and sharing.

### Audience response systems

Audience response is system that creates interactivity between a presenter and the audience by polling or voting.

The presenter uses a computer and a projector. Presentation slides built with the audience response software display questions with several possible answers. The audience participates by selecting their answer and pushing the corresponding key on their individual wireless keypad. Their answer is then sent to a base station - or receiver - that is also attached to the presenter's computer. The audience response software collects the results and the aggregate data is graphically displayed within the presentation for all to see.

Depending on the presenter's requirements, the data can either be collected anonymously or it can be traced to individual participants in circumstances where tracking is required. Incoming data is also stored in a database that resides on the host computer, and data reports can be created after the presentation for further analysis.

### Webcasting

A webcast is a live media file distributed over the Internet using streaming media technology. Essentially, webcasting is broadcasting over the Internet.

### Webinars

A webinar is a type of web conference, although the direction of the presentation more often than not is primarily one way from the presenter to the audience as in a Webcast, which is transmission of information in one direction only, like watching a concert on the internet. A webinar however can be designed to be interactive between the presenter and audience. A webinar is 'live' in the sense that information is conveyed according to an agenda, with a starting and ending time. In most cases, the presenter may speak over a standard telephone line, pointing out information being presented on screen, and the audience can respond over their own telephones, preferably a speakerphone.

### Virtual Worlds

Virtual worlds or 3-D online environments incorporate computer graphics and sound to create an online space that many people can experience at once. Each participant creates an image of themselves known as an avatar visible on every other user's computer. Avatars can communicate with each other, usually via a chat program or instant messaging system, but small groups often converse via conference call. To reach a larger audience, audio can be broadcast to everyone in a specific area (say, a virtual auditorium).

These virtual worlds are not limited to role-playing games. Some worlds exist as a place to interact with others. Virtual worlds include Entropia Universe and Second Life.

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## Knowledge Sharing Technology

Technology allows meeting managers to provide new ways for people to share their knowledge before, throughout the meeting (during) and after a meeting. The four tools that facilitate knowledge transfer are:

- Wikis
- Blogs
- Moblog
- Social networking sites

Meetings are knowledge sharing events and technology will be used to supplement that knowledge or to facilitate the easy exchange of information. Sites already exist to share photograph (e.g., FLICKR) or bookmarks (del.icio.us).

Consider how meeting managers and meeting participants could use a social bookmarking site:

- Research – Use to keep track of the source materials and commentary. Pre-reading (web-based) could be stored using social bookmarking.
- Planning - Save links to hotels, activities, and transportation and use tags to mark them. A meeting manager could share with other members of the team by using the "for:username" tag.
- Collaboration – Coworkers and other team members can use a shared account, special tag to collect and organize bookmarks that are relevant -- and useful -- to the entire group.
- Share - Share favorites "finds" with coworkers. In many cases, sites will already have information developed around a specific topic by a member of the community so using the sites saves time.

Example #1: Social networks are beginning to be adopted by healthcare professionals as a means to manage institutional knowledge, disseminate peer to peer knowledge and to highlight individual physicians and institutions. The advantage of using a dedicated medical social networking site is that all the members are screened against the state licensing board list of practitioners. The role of social networks is especially of interest to pharmaceutical companies who spend approximately "32 percent of their marketing dollars" attempting to influence the opinion leaders of social networks.

Example #2: Novell set up a wiki that includes important links to the company's 2007 conference, links to replay conference speakers, tips on getting more out of the event, conference pictures, links to conference blogs. "At every tech event we participate in nowadays, wikis have become a key component, says Jeff Brainard, director of marketing. (Corporate Meetings & Incentives 2007). Groups at Novell have used wikis before meetings to discuss content and begin networking during the conference to extend participation, answer questions and keep a calendar of official and unofficial events; and afterwards as a powerful archive and resource center.

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## Networking

An intrinsic value of face-to-face meetings is the ability to have human contact with other people. Most people enjoy interacting with others. The larger the meeting, the more challenging it is to find the people that you want to connect with.

And that's where technology can play a great role. Our discussion this month will focus on smart name badges and networking tools.

Example 1: The Motivation Show (held in Chicago in September) is using a networking tool to connect conferees attending the show to the Motivation Show community and find the knowledge, people, and products most closely matched to meeting a conferee's show objectives. I am looking forward to registering for the conference and using this networking tool.

In addition to enhancing the show experience for attendees, the tool helps justify attending the show and creates a show plan for attendees.

Example 2: At a Lucent conference, nTag, one version of smart name badge was used to foster networking. Key information was displayed on the face of the badge. The nametags also recorded interactions with people, exchanged electronic business cards and enable conferees to make notes about people they met. All information collected was disseminated to a personal webpage at the end of the conference. (Source: nTag Case studies at [http://www.ntag.com/docs/case\\_studies/Lucent\\_Case\\_Study\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ntag.com/docs/case_studies/Lucent_Case_Study_Web.pdf)).

Example 3: TripHub ([www.triphub.com](http://www.triphub.com)) allows business or leisure groups to plan a trip (create a trip home page, send invitations, discuss and share plans) using the site.

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## Content development

Content for meetings is most often developed through PowerPoint. Technology tools can provide interesting ways to develop content before during or after a meeting. Consider some of these examples of technology tools discussed before.

- Wikis or any other forums to poll the audience for interest in topics or develop topics
- Electronic surveys to survey the audience around topics

- Speaker blogs to develop interest in the speaker or topic as well as guide the direction of content

Example 1: I have worked with clients to create blogs as a way of defining content and exchanging resources around topics. I am creating my first wiki as I write this that extends the content by continuing the "conversation" established at a second meeting.

Example 2: Keynote speakers are establishing blogs to create interaction with audience prior to their appearance at a meeting.

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## Content delivery

Meeting content can be enhanced through technology. Tools that allow an innovative delivery of content include:

- Audience response systems
- Webcasts
- Webinars
- Virtual worlds

While webcasts and webinars are defined, we'll limit our discussion to Audience Response systems and virtual worlds.

### Audience response systems

Audience response systems improve meetings for many reasons. First, there is a tendency for participants to answer based on crowd psychology - using audience response systems eliminates hand raising, so it is difficult to see which selection others are making. The ARS also allows for faster tabulation of answers for large groups than manual methods.

Additionally, audience response benefits meetings and participants through:

- Improving attentiveness
- Increasing knowledge retention
- Polling anonymously
- Tracking individual responses
- Displaying polling results immediately
- Sped-up decision making
- Fostering individual ownership of group decisions
- Creating an interactive and fun learning environment
- Gathering data for reporting and analysis
- Confirming audience understanding of key points immediately

### Virtual Worlds

When a face-to-face meeting is impractical, many organizations are turning to virtual worlds. As an alternative to conference calls and web-based meetings, virtual worlds allow people's personalities to show through in the creation and actions of the avatars.

I recently introduced the idea of creating a conference call among a targeted audience- they were lukewarm to the idea. However, when I hoisted the trial balloon idea of using a virtual world, the people were intrigued and enthused. It gave me some ammunition to further explore the possibilities.

Example: To facilitate peer learning, IBM delivers its orientation, "Your IBM", using virtual 3D technology. It allows workers to meet, great and work together as avatars in a simulated environment. Ted Hoff, Vice President of Learning "It's about global collaboration. (Weinstein, M. Virtually Integrated. 2007, April. Training magazine, pp. 11-14.)

If IBM can explore it, then I see other corporates investigating it for their own uses.

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## Publishing

Technology has also changed media from being a broadcast media to a more participatory event. When newspapers radio and television were the only news outlets in town, their editors controlled the one-way flow of information. Journalists developed "a sense that we dictate what people should know; we're the high priests of information," says Betty Brenner, publisher of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Kwan, J. 2006, Fall. The Future of News. Northwestern magazine, pp 26-35).

Just as there has been a change in media, meeting managers must understand the ability of participants to publish information about meetings whether it is sanctioned or not.

Publishing information about meetings and events can occur through:

- Blogs
- Websites
- E-marketing
- Electronic brochures

Electronic publishing has advantages. It's:

- Fast
- Almost anyone can do it
- Less expensive

Some high-tech companies have read feedback on blogs during a multi-day meeting and adjusted the meeting based upon information posted on the blogs. Talk about being responsive to participants...

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## Freebies: Technology Resources

Within the confines of this newsletter, I can't cover all aspects of technology. And since I readily admit that I am not a techie, the people that I turn to for technology information are

Corbin Ball ([www.corbinball.com](http://www.corbinball.com))  
Jeff Rasco ([www.attendeenet.com](http://www.attendeenet.com))

### Technology Resources

I subscribe to Corbin Ball's newsletter and I heartily recommend it. You will find a link to it on my website at [www.suetinnish.com](http://www.suetinnish.com) or directly on a Resources We Love page at [http://www.suetinnish.com/index\\_files/Page399.html](http://www.suetinnish.com/index_files/Page399.html) [Sue's Home Page](#) or [Visit Suggested Resources](#). Or go directly to Corbin's website at [http://www.corbinball.com/techtalk/index.cfm?fuseaction=cor\\_sectionView\\$ionCode=techtalk](http://www.corbinball.com/techtalk/index.cfm?fuseaction=cor_sectionView$ionCode=techtalk)

### More Freebies

Perplexed by the difference between a wiki and a blog, email me for the additional freebie at [sue@suetinnish.com](mailto:sue@suetinnish.com) or click here [Blogs vs. Wikis.](#) I will also share with you what applications I have chosen to use.

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