

Nesta...

Idea generation events

Generating ideas

Open space
technology

Unconferences

Social
innovation
camps

Hackath

Barcamps

Innovation
hous

RESOURCE

What

There are a number of event formats for generating and developing ideas in larger groups. Many of these have been refined over many years and are used across the world.

Why

Events can be a great way to tap into the collective intelligence of the room, to provide space for serendipity and to blend different skills and approaches. Often using the artificial time constraint of an event (e.g. what idea can you prototype over the course of a weekend) can help to develop an idea further and faster than in day-to-day work.

How

Think about your objectives for the event and the most effective way of tapping into the skills and wisdom of your participants. Structure is important, even if you are using open space approaches (an intentional lack of structure is still a structure of sorts). Establish the basic rules so that participants are clear about what is expected of them and what behaviours are desirable. Ensure wherever possible that the environment adds rather than detracts from the event. Be sure to capture the flavour of the event as well as the final outputs. Most of all, have fun!

EVENT FORMATS

Open space technology

- At open space events it is the responsibility of the participants to organise themselves and create the agenda.
- You can volunteer to run a session around ideas or issues you find compelling, or you can freely attend another session that takes your interest.
- The events assume that principles of self-organisation will enable the strongest results to develop: the issues that are most important to people will be discussed and the ideas that are most compelling will be developed, by the people most capable of developing them.

Unconferences

- Meetings involving open discussions that aim to be different from traditional conferences, where timetables are set and speakers are carefully chosen.
- Participants organise themselves and are responsible for creating the agenda, within broad parameters set by the unconference organisers.
- Anyone who wants to start a discussion suggests a time and a space where this will take place.
- Unconferences tend to work well when there is a good range of participants who bring with them a high level of expertise or knowledge in their specific area.

Hackathons

- Events that support groups of people to work intensively towards a goal for a fixed time period.
- Also known as a hackdays, hackfests or codefests, these started as opportunities for computer programmers and others to collaborate intensively on software projects, with the goal being to create usable software or to improve existing software.
- They typically last between a day and a week in length.

Barcamps

- Events led by similar self-organising principles which create plenty of room for creative input and new ideas to spark.
- They tend to focus specifically on digital development and technology. In fact, BarCamps have formed an open network and wiki for people running their own events, so they can swap tips and connect with one another.
- People also often get together to develop, sketch out and code new ideas at a web-focused barcamp. Sometimes working prototypes come out at the end of the event.

Social innovation camps

- Weekend long events that support the creative development of a selection of ideas.
- They use a fun, sociable competition format to help a diverse group of experts to work together and create a rough version of a digital solution to a social problem.
- Ideas can be entered by anyone with a passion for addressing a particular social issue.

Innovation hothouse

- Essentially, competitive pitching sessions where people present their early stage ideas to panels of experts who may dispense money or other forms of advice and support.