



Meetings

# Creating Engaging Meetings:

## *A Blueprint for Success*

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In this post-pandemic environment, engaging participants in meetings and events remains crucial but challenging. Engagement extends beyond mere registration and attendance; it involves providing attendees with valuable learning and networking experiences. Often, predictability in conference agendas and meeting activities leads to disengagement, but by injecting novelty and intentionality into event planning, we can maintain participant interest and involvement.

To elevate engagement, consider focusing on two main areas: the educational content delivered by instructional designers, education staff, and speakers, and the sensory-rich environments crafted by meeting planners.

## Educational Engagement

Engaging learning and networking sessions begin with clear outcomes. Once those have been established, here's how your team can better engage participants:

1. **Active Partnership Between Speakers and Learners:** This involves understanding the audience's needs and incorporating interactive elements like real-time polls and breakout discussions. Speakers should view attendees as co-creators of the session, making the experience interactive.
2. **Personalization of Content:** Tailoring content to fit the specific contexts of the audience makes learning relevant and impactful. For instance, in a session for healthcare professionals, using real-world medical cases can make the content more memorable.
3. **Application of New Ideas:** Maximum engagement is achieved when attendees can apply what they learn. Incorporating practical activities like role-playing exercises or simulation games helps translate theoretical knowledge into practical skills, fostering real-world application.

## Sensory Engagement

The environment plays a crucial role in engagement, as well. Meeting planners can enhance this by focusing on the sensory aspects of the event space, particularly when in-person:

1. **Visual Elements:** An appealing setting with vibrant colors and dynamic visuals grabs attention. Digital displays and thematic graphics can enhance the visual appeal and reinforce the event's message.
2. **Sound and Music:** Proper sound systems for presenters and audience contributors helps ensure all participants can hear session information. Likewise, strategic use of music and sounds can create a mood that either energizes or relaxes attendees.
3. **Taste:** Offering a variety of healthy snacks and meals keeps participants energized and engaged. Diverse food options cater to taste preferences and dietary needs, enhancing the overall experience.

4. **Tactile Interactions:** Providing items like fidget toys and creative supplies like colorful paper, pens, and markers, encourages hands-on engagement and helps maintain focus and creativity during sessions.
5. **Scents:** Utilizing aromatherapy can subtly improve the environment. Calming scents like lavender or invigorating ones like citrus can enhance the atmosphere, but it's important to consider potential allergies.

## Integrating Content and Environment

Creating engaging meetings requires a holistic approach that combines well-crafted content with a thoughtfully designed environment. Instructional designers, education staff, and speakers must work in tandem with meeting planners to ensure the learning, networking, and sensory needs of participants are met. By fostering active participation, personalizing content, facilitating the application of new ideas, and stimulating more of the senses, meetings can transform from mundane to memorable, driving meaningful engagement and lasting impact.

To learn more about engaging meetings, check out [Designing Engaging Learning](#)<sup>1</sup> or email Aaron at [aaron@eventgarde.com](mailto:aaron@eventgarde.com).



### Meet Aaron

With more than two decades of association experience, **Aaron Wolowiec** is a nationally recognized meeting professional, designer of engaging learning and networking experiences, and a certified facilitator who prioritizes participatory and equitable approaches to both consensus building and strategic planning.

<sup>1</sup> <https://eventgarde.com/blog/engaging-learners-a-guide-to-successfully-designing-engaging-learning>