

# Designing Engaging Educational Experiences

How to help event participants engage with content before, during and after your event in ways that will help them learn, remember and value your conference content

# What's in this guide

## Designing engaging educational experiences

What is educational engagement?

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Remember the 3 core content concepts

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Resist the urge to overstuff your conference agenda

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Invite participants to engage with content before, during and after the event

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Give learners engagement options

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Increase engagement with event technology

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# What is educational engagement?

No matter the age of the learner, no one thrives in a lecture-only environment. Learning comprehension increases when you can apply what you've learned or discuss it with others. We've all had to cram for an exam. How much of that content did you remember a week later? Studies show that as quickly as we learn something, we're prone to forget it. That means the conference high might evaporate before attendees return to the office.

Yet, what do conference organizers typically do? Overstuff agendas with multiple sessions, give attendees very few breaks or opportunities to refresh themselves, and rely on lecture-based or minimally interactive sessions. That traditional model does nothing to engage audiences, help them learn or retain information.

What should you do instead?

## Remember the 3 core content concepts

When you program a conference, remember these three rules to help people engage with content

### **1. People can only remember three things at a time.**

For example, three facts from a presentation or three lofty ideas per conference day.

### **2. If you want people to remember, tell them three times.**

There's a reason why TV commercials repeat a phone number or website. Repetition helps people retain information. Three times is a magic number.

### **3. Tell them in three different ways.**

People learn in diverse ways. Help them process information by diversifying the way it's delivered. For example, during a session a presenter can mention a fact, get people on their feet for an interactive role play, then conclude with a story contextualizing what was learned.

## Resist the urge to overstuff your conference agenda

**Look at the survey data from your last conference. Now parse it by the time the sessions were delivered. Notice a pattern?**

Chances are people will report being more engaged and enthusiastic about sessions that were delivered before lunch than after. Why is that? It's because in the morning, they are fresh. They fill their heads with added information. At lunch, they have the chance to discuss what they learned. So now they're invigorated by social interactions. Then we interrupt those connections by rushing them off to learn more. It doesn't work because they're already full. We need to give them more time to digest the content.

Most conference organizers know that the easiest way to do this is to reduce the amount of content available and increase the time allocated for breaks. But they may be overruled by event owners who are tied to the status quo or are afraid that less content will make the event less attractive.



## Invite participants to engage with content before, during and after the event

**What's the solution? Invite participants to engage with content before the conference happens.**

- > Have presenters record short “teaser” videos you can distribute and promote via email and social media.
- > When participants arrive, highlight core concepts on signage in the pre-function area or via short videos playing before the presentations begin.
- > During the presentation, dig a little deeper into the content.
- > Before the presentation ends, share how participants can continue the conversation.

**Examples include:**

- > Post-presentation Q&A
  - > Post-presentation discussion/brainstorming/laboratory session
  - > Online forums or activities
  - > Post-event webinar or online discussion
  - > Video archives
- > Engage a team to develop content for you. The [Encore Creative Team](#) can develop video stingers, walk-on and B-roll sizzle reels, short or long-form video or animated content, as well as graphic elements to keep in-room and virtual audiences engaged.

## Give learners engagement options

People learn in diverse ways and may have diverse responses to the same environment. That's why you can increase engagement by tailoring the educational experience to your audience's preferences. If you don't know your participants well or can't do a pre-show survey, run content experiments during the conference. For example, offer the same session in two different formats: an introvert-friendly version at 10 a.m. and an extrovert-friendly version at 11 a.m. By comparing the data and talking to people who attended both sessions, you'll learn a lot about how your participants want to engage with content.

### Here are some examples of ways you can customize content:

- > Sessions for introverts vs. extroverts
- > Sessions for kinesthetic vs. visual vs. auditory learners
- > Walk and talk sessions (where you solve problems as you move with a partner)
- > Group work sessions
- > Simulations/escape rooms
- > User-generated content sessions
- > Chunked content delivery (for example a presenter may be scheduled to talk on a topic and do differently timed versions, e.g., 15-min., 30-min., 60-min. and 90-min. People can opt to attend as many or as few as they want.)

You can also play with having a designated quiet area or whitespace room that is open during educational hours. These quiet spaces can help people to digest what they've learned and recharge, and retreat to if they're feeling overwhelmed.



## Increase engagement with event technology

Not everyone is comfortable stepping up to a microphone and voicing their thoughts. That's why having an event app or digital event platform, like [Chime Go](#), [Chime Live](#) or [Cvent Connect](#), that allows audiences to submit and upvote questions is so valuable. It gives everyone at your event a voice.

Second-screen technology, like Chime Live-enabled iPads, put the presentation in participants hands. Using the iPad allows them to take notes, rewind presentations and zoom in on valuable information. Activities that keep them engaged and off their phones.

When there is a hybrid element to your event, it's so important to have an event platform that facilitates communication and connection between your in-person and remote audiences. Encore offers a [variety of solutions](#) and [free consultations](#).



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