Event Camp Vancouver

White Paper: An Experiment in Innovative Meeting Design

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Introduction

In February 2010 the first Event Camp took place, an initiative led by Christina Coster, Jeff Hurt, Mike McAllen, Michael McCurry and Jessica Levin, five people involved in the #eventprofs Twitter stream. This hashtag as a way of collecting information relevant to the event industry is now three years strong, started in February 2009 under the leadership of Lara McCulloch. It started as a weekly Twitter chat and those involved soon recognized a need for a face-to-face event that truly explored social media, technology and innovation in events. There have now been eight Event Camps, with the ninth, Event Camp Down Under scheduled for February 2012. These have remained a place to transparently share information with industry peers and colleagues and to be a safe place to experiment with new technologies and ideas. This paper will explore how we built our own.

→ *More information on the origins and other Event Camps can be found at http://www.eventcamp.org*

In November 2010 I had the good fortune to attend Event Camp Twin Cities as a virtual attendee, shortly after to attend the Event Camp National Conference in Chicago. Both were so satisfying from a content and connection perspective that I asked when there would be one on the West Coast. I asked enough times, and talked about my positive experiences with enough people in Vancouver, that in April 2010 the committee that would collaborate and create Event Camp Vancouver was born.

In November 2011, Event Camp Vancouver (ECV) took on the challenge of creating an event that would address new technologies being incorporated into events combined with the all-important human element. We took traditional meeting design and inspected it from every angle, eventually using a variety of session formats to create an integrated whole experience that we felt would provide the most benefit both during and post event for the participants.

Event Camp Vancouver brought together 90 face-to-face participants and its hybrid component had 50 active remote participants engaged in the meeting on Saturday and Sunday, including our pod in Montreal. This is an ideal number to experiment with formats and meeting design, the basis for event camps, and to see what will work, how it can best work and to determine how formats that facilitate discussion can best be integrated into meetings of various sizes and scaled to suit. This paper will look at each element, and how it aided us in meeting our objectives.

→ *Event catalog http://hosted.mediasite.com/Mediasite/Catalog/catalogs/EventCampVancouver.aspx*

Objectives

- Experiment with tools to develop stronger collaborations
- Better understand the requirements for successful hybrid meetings
- Discover tools to increase event participation and visibility
- Explore how to use social media to maximize the event experience
- Use a mobile app and explore this as a tool for your events
- Incorporate a social gaming layer
- Review principles for great design and then explore how you can apply these to your own brands, businesses and events
- See how easy it can be to host events with an eye to sustainability practices
- Deepen relationships through shared experiences
- Have fun while learning!

Flow of the Days

It was critical to create a flow that layered information in a logical format that allowed time to listen, learn, share, process and assimilate the information in ways that would be applicable when the participants returned to work. The flow was designed to build progressively through the information and each day was designed with varying amount of what we referred to as touch and tech, the balance of human interaction supported by technology.

- Day 1: **Connect** – participants gain comfort and begin to build relationships (high touch, no tech)
- Day 2: **Collaborate** and bring in the virtual audience and presentations (high tech, high touch)
- Day 3: **Deconstruct** how content was shared with live and remote audiences and experiment with formats including Bizprov (high tech, medium touch)

Perspective

Through the process of designing ECV we went through many variations of the program and formats as we refined the objectives and determined the best way to achieve each. Through this process we opted to take more risks with the format and the content as we knew that we had an audience that would be open to it. This included the presence of Dr. Joshua Bender of Orgagami, and an expert in organizational behaviour and development but with no experience in the meeting industry. He participated and provided an alternate perspective on the information being developed, it was an innovation that was interesting to try and added context for the participants.

Venues

Meeting professionals know that the choice of venue is critical in preparing for your meeting's success. The venues were each chosen for specific reasons to serve the varied objectives of ECV as well as to showcase the available opportunities they each presented and their support made much of what we were able to do possible.

Friday was the beginning of the meeting, and we wanted to spend the time this day in a low-tech environment focused on open discussion, and building trust among participants that would lead to better discussion as we moved into our hybrid format on the second and third days. For those that had chosen to join us face-to-face it was critical to the organizers that they receive the best opportunities to have their voices heard and to share their ideas and opinions and we strove to facilitate and show the impact of contributions on this first day.

Westin Bayshore Vancouver was the host hotel and the host of the event on Friday. We began the event in the Stanley Park Ballroom, large enough to accommodate our circle of 90 guests as we did open introductions of the mobile app, the sustainability initiatives, and ultimately of each participant. The hotel worked with us to look at out of the box meeting spaces for our breakout "Sparks" sessions, and we used two alcove spaces within public lobbies, the Starbucks which was normally closed during the time we needed it, and the Sunset Bay II, a floating meeting space on a private yacht, available to the hotel when not out on regular charters. **The opportunity to break out of traditional function space was integral in the design as it changed the normal parameters of convention conversation and created more relaxed and open dialogue about the inherent challenges we face in the topics being discussed.**

The Vancouver Convention Centre hosted Event Camp Vancouver on the second and third days, and with their in-house partners Bell and Centerplate showed the possibilities of where meetings are going with technology, healthy food and unique meeting environments. The Summit Level is their executive meeting level and while in a large centre, it offered us privacy with its location within the Centre, and the combination of its well thought out usable space and incredible views that overlook Coal Harbour and the mountains behind was ideally suited to the objectives set out by the organizing committee in exploring how environment impacts experience. This worked perfectly for ECV as it divided into two perfectly sized spaces for the meeting and the lunch, and fantastic foyers facilitated hallway conversations.

We had determined we would not have traditional general session / break out formats but would have one collaborative room and when we broke into smaller groups we wanted participants to have the freedom to move between groups and offer their knowledge or hear different viewpoints as they felt worked best for their own learning. The one intentional large meeting space included

- soft seating
- a stage with projection that gave great sight lines for the hybrid recordings
- places both formal (tables) and informal (lounge groupings) were available for discussion and small group work
- space for all day healthy snacks to be unobtrusively available (foyer)
- a separate room for lunch on Saturday

Underground Circus Rehearsal Studio – Day 2 Reception "Pushing Boundaries, Opening Borders"

As we move through the philosophy of the meeting design outlined below the fit for this venue will become more obvious. From a location perspective, this space was 20 minutes from the hotel, and for local participants there was ample parking and it was not too far out of the way. The size of the space works well for groups from 30 to 100 and we knew we would not exceed this. The most important element though was creating something of a surprise for the participants, and for this, Underground Circus went above and beyond. This very safe practice space was set with various circus apparatus the guests could try, with acrobats and trainers available to show people how and to encourage boundary breaking. For those that were not inclined to try the equipment, there was comfortable seating on sofas and stools, and floating platforms and swings! This was a space that surprised and delighted guests, no matter what their level of activity was. All in all, a venue that worked.

Day 1

The first sessions took place at the Westin Bayshore Vancouver and we used three formats which are outlined below.

1. Roundtable / Introduction of the App and Game

A time at the beginning of a program when you involve the participants in short self introductions designed to give the entire group the opportunity to introduce themselves, and what they want to learn or can contribute. It also allows individuals to learn who is in the room to connect with.

Often when you attend a conference you know very few of the people in attendance and unless you are close enough to read a name badge it can be challenging to meet others. Then when you meet them you are embroiled in mundane small talk, covering the basics of who you are, where you work or why you are attending. Often you attend a meeting and find out later that you were there with someone you may have wanted to meet, or have connected with on-line but not face-to-face, and a roundtable gives you an opportunity to connect faces with names. It also allows people to say what they hope to learn or gain and what they can offer, and this short introduction is a great tool to use, and ideal in a group of less than 100 guests, who will be spending multiple days together. Note that with larger groups you could create sub-groups, based on region, specialty or criteria you believe will be important to the groups and still utilize this format.

The opening took place in one room with one giant "camp fire" circle of chairs all facing in, creating a sense of balance and equality in the room. We began with our MC Glenn Thayer thanking guests for attending and introducing them to the Event Camp format, where everyone's input is encouraged. We then provided an introduction to the Event Camp Vancouver app created with QuickMobile. This was available as an iTunes download for iPhones and iPads, and mobile web enabled for other smartphone and laptop users. This allowed access across the majority of platforms and for both the face-to-face and remote participants and the integration on the back end with our registration provider etouches allowed us to collect correct registrant information to easily connect both remote and face-to-face participants.

While this was enabled pre-conference we knew that the majority would not yet have this downloaded and that introducing this at the beginning made sense. This app included a social game layer, and to keep the tone light all around, Shawna McKinley and Judy Kucharuk introduced the game with a short skit about event sustainability, which was the overriding theme of the game and shared the collective goals we would be working towards.

The Roundtable accomplished what it should, which is to get a sense of who is in the room, whose name you know and now have a face to connect with, and getting a sense of commonalities among the participants before you move into the main program. It set the tone for an informal and collaborative environment that was woven through the entire program.

Innovation that worked: the participants have the stage

Improv Improves Fun Factor

When we consider brain-friendly education, there are many suggested guidelines, including chunking learning into ten minute blocks of time, and introducing short activity bursts that have the blood flowing through both body and brain. These do not need to be long or onerous, and introducing either can be quite effective. For Event Camp Vancouver, our collaborator Roger Haskett of Actors Unlimited led the group in a short round of S-exercise, where we got to move our hips and shake it up a little. His humorous take on this combined with a delivery that also explained what he was doing definitely delivered the message that we were going to mix it up a little at Camp, and that it is more than okay to have fun at your meetings.

2. "Sparks" Small Group sessions

The Roundtable was designed to set the stage for Camp and introduce the participants. The next block of time that came between Camp starting and the reception could have been used in any number of ways, and what we chose to do were sessions we called Sparks, which were essentially small themed breakouts. The objective of these was to bring small groups together to offer their point of view in facilitated discussion on big topics – to literally spark discussion.

The topics and facilitators were:

- Mariela McIlwraith of MeetingChange on Ethics
- Glenn Thayer and Erica St. Angel of Sonic Foundry on The Future of Hybrid
- Shawna McKinley and Judy Kucharuk on Fair Trade and Sustainability for Events
- Elizabeth Henderson of MeetingChange on Corporate Social Responsibility

3. Connection Reception

The first reception in any conference is a time to find your friends, to meet new colleagues and to enjoy food and beverage in an environment with a nice ambience. We designed the entire first afternoon to facilitate conversation at this first reception, and begin to develop stronger connections before we began with intensive content at the conference the next day.

The objectives for the reception were to

- Have a space that inspired further discussion
- Have enough food that there was no imperative to leave the reception to get dinner

We addressed this challenge with a combination of components. The Westin suggested a room that was the right size for this group and had a view so we didn't feel "trapped" in a function room. BLD Décor and Scenery and Epic Production Technologies collaborated with us to provide great lighting and small details with whimsical décor that added pops of color and energy to the space. The Cantrav production team put together playlists for each segment of the day that would add to the ambient experience and not overwhelm, just providing a nice groove. These elements along with the food and beverage combined to create the environment that allowed the discussions that had been "sparked" to continue.

The Westin Bayshore provided a buffet with enough selection and hearty, healthy choices that it was easy to feel satisfied, with choices for special diets accounted for. We provided very limited seating so that if people really wanted to sit they could, but that primarily we wanted to have people moving around and creating conversations. By touching all the senses the environment was very comfortable and this was a great start, but any reception can have a nice environment, we needed the human element to be integrated for this to be successful.

With the combination of the Roundtable allowing you to know who was participating, and the lively discussions in the Sparks sessions that gave participants an understanding of others' points of view – shared or controversial – meant that once they had a drink in hand, the discussions continued in a lively and interesting vein, and nobody was left out of conversations, or felt awkward joining a group. Connection accomplished!

4a. **The App and "Gamification" aka the Social Gaming Layer**

QuickMobile developed the mobile app which included a game developed to run throughout Event Camp Vancouver. Rather than having a session on sustainability we built this to showcase how we can contribute as individuals and collectively "level up". We wanted to show how event professionals can include it in their events without feeling overwhelmed that is it one more task to be added to the list of meeting to-do's.

The objectives were multiple and included

- create an app that provided a platform for community, sponsors, program and a game to be shared
- share and show with those that had not yet used mobile apps for their events some of the steps involved in building an app and the potential benefits
- create a game that enhanced learning but did not overwhelm the meeting or participants but allowed them to experience and experiment with this technology
- create a space via the app that could be accessed by remote and face-to-face participants
- cut down on paper use
- achieve 1,000 collective acts of green over the course of Event Camp
- be transparent about the steps so others could do it too
- create it all in less than nine weeks

4b. Get Your Green On

Developed by Shawna McKinley and Judy Kucharuk with QuickMobile

Shawna and Judy used their knowledge of measurable sustainability elements for events, and their understanding of our objectives to thoughtfully create a game that would meet these. While both are trainers for the Convention Industry Council's Standards for Event Sustainability, we all recognize that for busy event professionals having one more seemingly onerous measurement to add to your meetings and events can be daunting. We wanted to show that by engaging participants in your sustainability goals they become easily more achievable.

They first reached out to all the ECV collaborators to collect information on how they would each include sustainable elements in their contributions, ranging from power, to paper to food selected, décor choices made and so much more. With this information, they worked with QuickMobile to build out the structure, and developed the challenges, questions and checkpoints that highlighted how we can together create more sustainable meetings, one act of green at a time.

The game was engaged in on a voluntary basis, and the leaderboard allowed points to be collected individually through a combination of checkpoints, gallery uploads, timed challenges and push messages that drove engagement, all designed to happen at times that did not directly compete for time or attention with other scheduled learning. They were also all designed to be short, so for example if they happened at the beginning of a break, it could be done quickly and you could continue conversations. While there was an individual leaderboard there was also a collective goal to achieve and the progress was tracked continuously.

The initial results and feedback were positive, and the goal of showing the event professionals participating that by working with your suppliers, and by making sensible small decisions you can have an impact that quickly adds up to a greener meeting.

The full details of the game and its overall impact will be the focus of a case study currently under development by Shawna McKinley of MeetGreen and Judy Kucharuk of Manage your Footprint.

→ *the plan http://eventcampvancouver.wordpress.com/2011/11/05/ecv11-update-the-game-is-afoot/*

→ *initial results http://eventcampvancouver.wordpress.com/2011/11/07/1715-acts-of-green-wow/*

Day 2 – Vancouver Convention Centre (meeting) and Underground Circus (reception)

1. Content

"All of us are smarter than any of us." Glenn Thayer, professional host

The program on Day 2 had four thematic areas that were chosen to appeal to and provide relevant information to a cross section of meeting and event professionals. These were designed to deliver interactive content and inspire conversation amongst the participants and the speakers were selected based on their expertise in the areas. The hybrid element removed borders and travel from the equation as we could skype in presenters and share content over a variety of mediums. With the group size, environment and room setup and a meeting design that focused on group collaboration we chose to have all sessions as plenary sessions with breakout groups to deep dive into topic areas, vs the more traditional breakout rooms with pre-determined topics.

Collaboration was chosen as we work in an industry that requires an incredible amount of teamwork to deliver any given program, often bringing together what we would typically consider competitors. For this topic we had **Ruud Janssen of The New Objective Collective and Glenn Thayer** work together to address this from two perspectives and to draw information also from the pod and the remote participants. For this session we used the free software called Pirate Pad to collect ideas from the remote audience that could be seen immediately both on their laptops as well as in the room where we posted it on the screens.

→*http://t.co/UDLWuZEY*

Challenges and Solutions followed the Collaboration session, so we were immediately able to use the lessons learned in the prior session to address crowd sourced challenges with solutions developed by the collective knowledge in the room and in the remote audience. Once we crowd sourced the challenges we then had the group break out into the areas where they felt they had the most to contribute. They each had to come up with a list of key challenges and key solutions in their topic areas which included technology, small business and event marketing. Details of the results can also be found on the ECV blog site.

All day breaks and Lunch featured the Brain Friendly food above and Chef Blair Rasmussen's explanation put this initiative into context for the guests, with Andrea Sullivan of BrainStrength joining us via Skype to share her expertise. She was able to do this on her own break from the experience happening at the simultaneous Event Camp East Coast.

→ *http://eventcampvancouver.wordpress.com/2011/12/18/vcc-brain-friendly-food-and-more/*

Event Design looked at how design evolves from 2D such as logo development, to 3D including interactive exhibit environments and finally to meeting design principles. **Ivana Cappalletto** of Cappalletto Design spoke to the 2D, **Tom Stulberg** of Fireworks Productions and LoungeWorks shared his unique perspective and a case study of the Bell Ice Cube during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, and **Mary Boone** of Mary Boone Design joined us via Skype to share her story and viewpoint on meeting design and an excellent case study of her own.

We knew that event design was far too big of a topic to leave with just three short presentations, so at the suggestion of Mary Boone during the planning phase we evolved into an hour of **Genius Bars**, where each of the presenters were set up in an area of the meeting space and the participants could join the areas with topics and presenters they wanted to delve into further. In addition we added two genius bars on design to take advantage of the expertise in the room. Brock Lumsden of BLD Design and Corinne Kessel of Greenscape Design led a Genius Bar on Event Environments, and Marc Smith of Amuse Consulting, Erica St. Angel of Sonic Foundry and Trevor Roald of QuickMobile answered many questions at the Technology Genius Bar. This format allowed participants to engage in discussions that allowed them to assimilate the information that was most critical to their own situations.

Defining Yourself and Your Brand in the Age of Social Media

Kiki L'Italien of Delcor's Social Media Sweet Spot led this session that looked at the various social media tools and how you can use them to develop brand from both a personal and an organizational perspective. "Pink Deb" Roth skyped in to share her story, as we felt her recent brand evolution experience was valid and added value for the audience. This session was delivered in a traditional stage based format, but what Kiki added was first an interactive element as she compared building layers of social media to how as women we apply makeup to face the world, and did a full makeup on one of our participants, Lea Romanowski. She had also pre-scheduled tweets to support her message that came out for those following the hashtag throughout her session, layering in how to use social media.

→ *Full Catalog of the sessions is available here, we encourage you to explore*

→*http://hosted.mediasite.com/Mediasite/Catalog/catalogs/EventCampVancouver.aspx*

2. Technology – the Hybrid Meeting Partnership

This was an important component of the overall meeting design as it required integration across multiple platforms to be effective for both the face-to-face and remote audiences. We determined at the beginning of the planning process that we would not offer the content through the entire event, but would offer it only on Saturday morning and Sunday, leaving Friday and Saturday afternoon's content available live only to the face-to-face audience. This was decided for a number of reasons including:

- A virtual event should ideally entice remote attendees to want to attend so you want to offer great content at key times
- There is typically no cost for remote attendance, often with this in mind, but there is less imperative to provide all the content in real time
- Specific to the complexities of Saturday afternoon's sessions, we wanted to be able to focus the majority of the energy on the face-to-face attendees and the collaborations in the room, with a particular emphasis on conversation and content as it took place (these were cataloged for later viewing)

It requires the right technology, and with the support of Bell, Sonic Foundry and AV Strategies we were able to have both the right equipment and the operators available to make this a success.

Technology – the Human Touch

There will be a separate white paper developed on the components of a successful hybrid meeting that will describe this complex area in greater detail.

The most successful of hybrids allows for live chat between remote participants within both their own group as well as with the face-to-face participants and presenters via a question and response system. This requires moderators to be successful and for ECV we had four.

Glenn Thayer was the host and MC who kept us on track and brought together the two audiences.

Marc Smith (@Amuse_events) was our Social Media concierge, monitoring the #ECV11 hashtag and sharing comments and questions with the live audience and answering questions many had about the use of social media

Liz King (@LizKingEvents) was in New York monitoring the hashtag along with Marc, and guiding the remote audience through forum-like chats that were their small group work while the live audience was broken into smaller groups, such as during the challenges session. Liz then captured that content and made it accessible via her blog.

Erica St. Angel (@EricaStAngel) of Sonic Foundry was responsible for the MediaSite that hosted the web feed making it possible for the remote audience to see the sessions both live and later. She also monitored the live chat available as part of this platform and like Marc was able to share comments and questions from the remote audience.

It was this depth of social media sharing that allowed the hybrid portion to be its most successful and allowed us to better share knowledge and ideas.

Technology - WiFi

Integration with the VCC's in-house provider Bell more than exceeded our needs and expectations as they were comfortably able to support the bandwidth needs of the hybrid meeting as well as the mobile users in the room. With the MediaSite feed, live chat, Montreal pod, Twitter stream, skyped in presenters, Get Your Green On game, and community building via the app, the group may have been small but the usage was high and the support provided ensured the feeds were fast and uninterrupted through the weekend.

Technology "Bonuses"

ECV was also able to take advantage of the digital signage located throughout the VCC as their system allows them to segregate the monitors by group, and we could use those located on the way to and in the immediate vicinity of our meeting only. This allowed us to nearly eliminate paper signage and programs as we were able to include the following information on the monitors:

- Recognition of our collaborators
- Program information for the day
- Program information specific to the time and room
- Twitter stream via the hashtag
- Game leaderboard

BONUS – Bell set up a QR code on the screen that uploaded an EventCamp Vancouver postcard that could be sent from any smartphone with a scanner app – really how cool is that!?

The team at Bell was both thoughtful and proactive throughout the process, offering suggestions on the best way to use the technology to enhance the guest experience, which is a step you need to take early in the planning process in order to maximize the opportunities.

Day 2 - Venues and Environment

The Vancouver Convention Centre

Event Camp Vancouver was very fortunate to have the support of the Vancouver Convention Centre and we found their forward looking approach to events and clear understanding of meeting design was an excellent match for ECV objectives. Below are the ways that hosting Day 2 and 3 at the VCC supported the Event Camp Vancouver philosophies and initiatives along with links to more information.

- Sustainability - The VCC is a LEED Platinum building and their internal systems are stellar from water use for heating and cooling, on-site treatment, recycling, waste management, and more

→ *http://www.vancouverconventioncentre.com/thefacilities/environment/*

- The food and beverage team developed and delivered a menu that delivered on the brain friendly eating while meeting principles
- Technology infrastructure that allowed us to support all the wifi and hard wired needs to run a full hybrid meeting with mobile app and game integration
- Technology screens built into each room and in the public spaces allowed us to eliminate traditional signage, run the leaderboard and more

→ *more on the technology support available http://eventcampvancouver.wordpress.com/?s=bell*

Partnership with the Venue

What was obvious in designing the meeting at the VCC that all team members from the sales to the operations team are invested in the success of the meetings they have the opportunity to be the host venue for. We had numerous collaborators, many innovations to include and required a high degree of integration at every touchpoint to ensure an overall successful event. The facility team not only embraced the many unusual elements, they offered suggestions that improved the experience. This has been my consistent experience over nearly twenty years of bringing meetings into the VCC with this team, and while ECV was a small meeting it was high needs, and their positive and realistic responses to the many requests were a key part of the overall experience created.

We had a very short load in time and many elements to bring in, including all the audio visual elements and soft seating, and the foyer / room for thought environment to be created. The team at the VCC partnered with us to ensure the smoothest possible access to make this happen. **We began loading in at 4am on Saturday, and we went live at 8:15am**. Important note: we do not recommend a four hour window before a hybrid event, but if it happens make sure you have the right team!

Soft Seating Meeting Environment

When we determined that we wanted an innovative environment that celebrated collaboration and that we would be doing it on the spectacular Summit Level at the VCC, soft seating seemed the natural alternative. We were fortunate to have LoungeWorks support this initiative as they understood the objectives, and how they could support them.

As stated by LoungeWorks President Tom Stulberg

"Soft furniture in a meeting context is an amenity that participants will view positively much like they appreciate the amenities they'd find in a VIP lounge in an airport. For the event organizer, furniture can be an easy way for them to state clearly the importance of the audience and the value the host/organizer places on the audience's comfort.

In many ways, the addition of comfortable, well-designed conversation areas will also aid in learning. Any change that creates an environment that is different than what people are expecting will put them in a different learning space perceptually. Additionally, the more comfortable people are, the happier they are in the space, and the more likely they are to interact positively. By providing a variety of seating options you allow for different kinds of dialogue and group interaction. In a context that is generally focused on a stage, by adding furniture groupings you can add another dimension that encourages collaboration amongst members of each seating grouping."

Soft and combination seating has been used for a number of meetings, and for the reasons stated above it does have a positive impact on the learning, and especially collaborative learning. You will see below that as

we worked through the program there were many opportunities for small group interactions and this was enhanced by the environment, allowing for discussions to be both meaningful and productive.

Room for Thought (aka White Space)

Often key takeaways from any conference come from the hallway conversations, no matter the level of education. It is these conversations that allow us to better assimilate the information we are gaining from the sessions attended, and allowing this to happen organically is beneficial for the participants. Rather than ignore this we chose to embrace it and working with Greenscape Design & Décor an incredible Camp – friendly space was created. Building on the fantastic view, natural elements were embraced, and small seating areas inside and out under the covered patio facilitated conversations.

While a focus of Event Camp Vancouver was on tools for collaboration we do realize that for many a weekend of this can be overwhelming, and that everyone processes information in different ways. This space allowed both comfortable conversation and was ideal for quiet solo reflection. This time and space is needed for many to put learning in context, or simply to take a mental re-energizing break.

Brain Friendly Food

While relatively new to the meeting industry, considering how we are providing nutrition for meeting attendees has become a hot button in the recent past, as evidence we have had sessions at leading conferences and articles in recent magazines, and have seen hotels respond to the lifestyle requests of guests, and several chains in both North America and Europe have stepped up with revised menus. The principles are simple and we were fortunate to have the Vancouver Convention Centre's Chef Blair Rasmussen take these principles to heart – and with his Centerplate team to develop menus that met these principles. More importantly though, the food was accessible, delicious and the energy of the participants was solid through the day, without the normal sugar rushes, and inevitable crashes we often experience during meetings.

The basics include

- remove items whose primary ingredients are refined or based on white flour and white sugar
- limit processed food
- high protein, lower carb options available throughout
- fresh ingredients – smoothies, fruit, vegetables available
- lower fat dips ie. Hummus vs. cream based dips offered with whole wheat chips
- lunch with smaller portion sizes, more protein and complex carbs, lower simple carbs
- limited salt (something that often requires a discussion with the kitchen)
- hydrate!
- Coffee and chocolate – they are both ok!

This was an element of design that elevated the experience, especially when we invited Chef Blair in to talk to all the participants about the menu design. Planned for just after a lunch that was presented "bento" style, with multi-grain rolls and bite-size desserts, Chef Blair took the stage to talk about the approach which put into

context the meal and the food available through the rest of the day and Sunday morning. Also, because the lunch had been planned to maintain energy, everyone was more easily engaged by the presentation!

→http://hosted.mediasite.com/mediasite/SilverlightPlayer/Default.aspx?peid=314f972959b74575a076f6123c72a58d1d

Circus Camp – "Pushing Boundaries, Opening Borders"

Goal: Create a sensory experience in a unique venue that built on the themes of innovation and experimentation

Underground Circus is a long-time collaborator in the local event community, (although they also perform around the world) and when we asked if they would like to be part of this, they not only said YES, they came back with fantastic ideas and created a very special interactive experience. The experiences ranged from swinging to playing in the shadow box, and for those who wanted more (safe) risk, they could climb the skyladder, try the triceau or practice falling into a soft mat. They interspersed the evening with short performances from contortion to light dances and even invited guests to try their hand at hand-to-hand performances.

With adventurous and delicious catering provided by Culinary Capers Catering and served by staff from food carts in costume embracing and adding to the experience, we were able to truly create a fully sensory environment where one element fed another. Deb Lykkemark, President of Culinary Capers along with Chef Billy Kawaja of CC Beijing joined us via Skype from Beijing, finding out later we had them projected high on the wall for everyone to enjoy their antics, including champagne and masks!

What we wanted to achieve was something that they could not experience on their own, in a venue they had never seen, and to allow guests to try things they normally could not. In this we succeeded.

Get Your Green On – Day 2

Throughout Day 2 the game continued with a combination of checkpoints, pictures added to the gallery and push messages inspiring thought and acts around sustainability that had both the face-to-face and remote attendees engaged in adding to the cumulative acts of green. By the end of Day 2 we had over our original goal of 1,000 achieved!

View from the Pod

Our Montreal pod members found their experience to be very remote attendee-friendly, with technology that eased frustrations felt in some hybrid events. They told us when we were in the interactive session times that included their perspectives that "We loved to be included by being projected on a side screen. It was much easier for us to follow on skype than through the media site as we could follow in real time, which was essential to be able to engage at appropriate times." On using the mobile app and game, they found in their remote environment it was a distraction rather than contributing to their experience. "Of course this is all

about experimentation, and I think a stronger integration with mobile technologies could really push forward the concept on linking live with virtual with mobile." These are good lessons for all of us.

Day 3 – Deconstruct

Goal: To transparently share information and knowledge on the thought process that had gone into the design of the various elements, and how we had applied the tools to the tasks at hand.

Pecha Kucha Style Presentations

This is a format that intrigues many, as presentations are done with 20 seconds per slide for 20 slides total – no variation to this format is allowed and we wanted to showcase this format. The four presentations were very broad in scope and did show both how a variety of topics can be addressed as well as introduced the format for those not familiar with it.

The four presentations offered a variety of topics and a thought provoking way to begin the day.

a. Shawn Cheng, Program Coordinator, Global Village Multicultural Arts Society presented on a new event
b. Elizabeth Henderson, Chief Sustainability Strategist, Meeting Change whose entire presentation on Gamification was done in rhyming couplets!
c. Paul Salinger, Vice-President, Marketing, Oracle on Missing the Forest for the Trees - The Most Amazing, Incredible, Innovative Communication Technology in Existence really showed us the importance of humans meeting technology
d. Tahira Endean, CMP Director, Team Creative & Production, Cantrav Services presented on what it took to put together Event Camp Vancouver – in six minutes and 40 seconds

→http://hosted.mediasite.com/mediasite/SilverlightPlayer/Default.aspx?peid=d4cc8f0116e947b59503c516a6d55eb11d

Challenges and Solutions

We chose to present the solutions to the challenges that had been worked on the day before intentionally as we wanted to give time to the groups to assimilate the information and collect all of the thoughts, as well as to choose the highlights to share with the group and add any new ideas that might evolve over the duration between. The initial brainstorming in an exercise like this can be, and was in this case was very beneficial, and the ability to have time to organize these added to the depth.

The solutions are shared on the http://EventCampVancouver.wordpress.com blog

Improv / Bizprov for Events

"Use improv to brighten up events and techniques to improve sales while thinking on your feet" was the title, and it can only help all of us to have some skills with this.

Roger Haskett and the Improvisers of Actors Unlimited led us in a great exploration of communication. Play is often in a meeting setting considered a four-letter word and that telling people it is okay to include play to enhance learning can be a challenge, so we included this piece to show that when you bring laughter into a setting you can indeed enhance learning. While attempting improv is not everyone's comfort zone, the facilitators worked with us in smaller groups to show us each a simple exercise that could increase trust and creativity in communication worked well overall. The bravest among us, and with some surprises as to those who volunteered, got up on stage and did a short presentation of their new skills, all which had us laughing as a group.

Sustainability Report Card

As previously mentioned, the final results of what we achieved at ECV will be presented in full at the Green Meetings Industry Council Conference in Montreal in April 2012 by **Shawna McKinley and Judy Kucharuk.** What we wanted to primarily achieve at ECV was to

- Work with suppliers who all had a sustainability story to share
- be sustainable at every possible touchpoint
- show each participant how not only they as event professionals could incorporate pieces into their own events
- show tangible ways we can engage each and every person in taking small steps to overall sustainability

We had the imperative to do this without any detriment to the overall experience. In this we succeeded beyond our own expectations!

→ *http://www.gmicglobal.org/*

We were also able to incorporate a final remote presenter as Heidi Thorne presented a copy of her book SWAG: How to Use and Choose Promotional Products to Market your Business to both our individual winners, one in the face-to-face audience and one in the remote audience who had individually achieved the most acts of green over the duration of the conference.

This initiative was also supported by Vancouver's **Patterson Brands** who provided a 33mile stainless steel water bottle to every attendee, which could be filled with plain or fruit enhanced water at both venues.

Mobile Apps and Hybrid Events

The integration between the remote and live participants was exceptional and it was an integration of partners that allowed us to build community between the various audiences and presenters.

With the combined back-end integrations between

- etouches (website and registration)
- QuickMobile (app including the game)
- Pathable (event community)

we were able to create more opportunity **for Community Engagement,** which is what will extend the life of any event.

Behind the Hybrid Event

During this session, Erica St. Angel of Sonic Foundry demystified the process of what transpires during a hybrid meeting and all of the moving parts working simultaneously to bring the remote and live audiences to a collective experience. To have a live event, a pod in Montreal, a virtual audience and remote presenters all co-existing successfully took planning and the right partners. For the hybrid portion including the live-stream with MediaSite, and the integration between Bell, AV Strategies and Sonic Foundry we were able to create an experience that broke down borders and allowed anyone, anywhere with an internet connection to be part of this event.

Like all technology though, it requires the human connections to make it meaningful and create the connections and having our hosts and social media liaisons in Glenn, Erica, Marc and Liz, along with those participating with us on-line create an accessible environment to collaborate globally is what made this successful.

We are only in the infancy of how these will impact events and meetings in the future, and the ways we enable technology to improve the human experiences, “wow” and “a-ha” moments, relevant takeaways and applicable transformations in behaviour. We were able to use the technology to support the objectives and achieve the successful results we did. In the days, and now months following the event we have had positive traction, new collaborations and have heard stories of lessons being applied across sectors.

Takeaways

At the end of each segment our outside perspective, Dr. Josh Bender was able to weigh in and offer a thought provoking questions and succinct summary of our discussions, adding a layer of contextual analysis that added depth and resonated with many participants.

→ *Innovation in practice: You may choose to try bringing in an external viewpoint from someone with a unique perspective who can provide a relevant overlay*

As we came to the end of our time together, and important if you are able to do this at any meeting, is **to take a few minutes to reflect on what participants have learned and how they can apply it**. This can be done in a variety of ways, and Glenn offered a few minutes for quiet reflection, asked the remote participants to weigh in with their thoughts and we captured a few highlights and saw that we had made a difference for people.

In conclusion, Event Camp Vancouver was planned from start to finish to experiment, take risks, innovate with technology, environment and design, and to do it all from a guest-centric view. Every decision was made to benefit the participants and to create levels of experience that would leave them with positive impressions and ideas they could apply to their workplace or life. We on the organizing committee remain grateful to the collaborators who stepped up and embraced the experience and who brought the whole of Event Camp Vancouver to a higher level. We encourage all event professionals to collaborate with trusted partners to achieve the greatest successes for your meetings and events.

"The experience of attending EventCamp Vancouver was, for me, an exceptional one. The weekend helped me become both a more knowledgeable and more empathetic planner and attendee. Looking back, I believe that's because the structure of Camp allowed us as meeting planners to effortlessly shift throughout the weekend from being learners and contributors. We simultaneously co-created and experienced a wide range of meeting formats. We had the opportunity to be in the audience's shoes—and then step away as participants to periodically examine what made each particular format successful or unsuccessful. A rare, important and terrifically fun laboratory in a knee-buckling beautiful city.

I help clients design meetings with distinct and more engaging formats such as genius bars, hybrid components, "room for thought," talk show elements, pecha kucha, and more. EventCamp Vancouver expanded my thinking and resources to integrate these formats—and others. We even got to eat s'mores. ;)"

Andrea Driessen, Chief Boredom Buster, No More Boring Meetings, Seattle, WA.

Appendix A – The people and organizations that collaborated to create a successful Event Camp Vancouver

The organizing committee

Tahira Endean, CMP
Cantrav Services

Judy Kucharuk
Manage Your Footprint

Claire Smith
Vancouver Convention Centre

Elizabeth Henderson
MeetingChange

Jinny Wu
Vancouver Convention Centre

Marc Smith
Amuse Consulting

Tom Corbeth
Sea Eighteen

Michael Nathanson
Dekora

Octavio Silva
Vancouver Parks Board

Barbara Hill
Sales Professional

Katrina Tu
Vancouver Economic Commission

Mitchell Fawcett
Westin Bayshore Vancouver

Trevor Roald
QuickMobile

Kelly Clarke
Cantrav Services

Shawna McKinley
MeetGreen

Laura Tetzlaff
Sandbox Consulting

For a full list of both the collaborators who made Event Camp Vancouver the success it was with their many contributions and a complete program featuring our excellent presenters please see
http://www.eventcampvancouver.com
http://eventcampvancouver.wordpress.com

Throughout this document we have tried to give you a sense of what we were able to accomplish through collaboration, and it was truly a sum of its parts, where the whole was greater than any one piece, but where every piece added to the experience.

A heartfelt thank you is extended to all who contributed to this very successful Event Camp Vancouver.