



# Digital Event Strategist

## Lesson 3: Content Strategy, Creation & Delivery

### LEARNER OUTCOMES:

- Define the desired action you want attendees to take during and after your event.
- Design a draft session agenda and a plan for how participants will engage with your content (determine the sequential actions they take for each activity).
- Develop a speaker training program to ensure quality control and attendee participation.

**Presented by** Sourabh Kothari

## DEVELOPING YOUR DIGITAL EVENT'S CONTENT STRATEGY

The role of content in event planning has changed dramatically and your relationship with your audience is now more dependent on your content than any other aspect of your event. Content strategy is now a critical element in the design of the live, archived or on-demand digital event and it affects every aspect of your experience, not just your agenda. The best content is recruited and curated from experts around the world to provide unique and original perspectives that drive engagement and increase your audience's retention.

Who is your audience?

What actions do you want them to take during or after your online event?

How will you measure against those actions?

What motivates your audience(s) to take these actions?

- Who are your primary, secondary and tertiary audiences?
  - Prioritize the top 3 desired actions for each of your audience segments
- Remember, you're prioritizing THEIR reasons, NOT yours

## DIGITAL EVENT AGENDA DESIGN

What content does your audience need to take their desired action? What's missing for them?

- Consult with key stakeholders, industry experts, internal teams and committees on topics that are most relevant to your audience

Is there a sequence for your content or can your audience engage with it in any order?

The Opening Session

- Helps the audience make sense of their current environment and creates a base so the audience is ready to learn more and go further
- Can provide a specific vision of their future including elements like "The Art of the Possible" or "The Unlikely Hero" backed by real-world evidence to motivate your audience
- Opening speaker is generally your headliner – someone who can draw your target audience to your event, live and on-demand
  - Judge the presentation quality of your opening speaker and if your organization's leader is not a strong speaker, consider having them simply provide an introduction to someone who can better excite and inspire
- Ensure your keynote has stunning visuals

## To Q&A or not to Q&A?

Generally speaking, keynotes and “locknotes”, or closing sessions, don't have Q&A. Your keynote should be designed to answer the most pressing questions for your audience and leave the audience with a broad base upon which you can build the rest of the day's agenda. If the audience does have questions lingering after the keynote they should hopefully be answered in following sessions before your event ends.

## Breakout Sessions

- Should be designed to tackle problem(s) and present solution(s).
- Help your audience get started down a certain path or go further with their knowledge
- Should be as specific to maximize impact and provide immediately useful information that is immediately useful to your audience
- Avoid topics, or speakers, who are too broad, too ambiguous or too vague

3 simple steps to designing any breakout session:

1. *Proposal.* Start with a clear, specific proposal that your speaker wants your audience to accept or believe by the end of the session.
2. *Evidence.* Organize everything you need to provide to convince the audience the proposal is sound and worth accepting. Real examples, stories and validated statistics will likely help you in this regard.
3. *Action.* What should your audience do, or do differently, if they have accepted your proposal by the end of the breakout session?

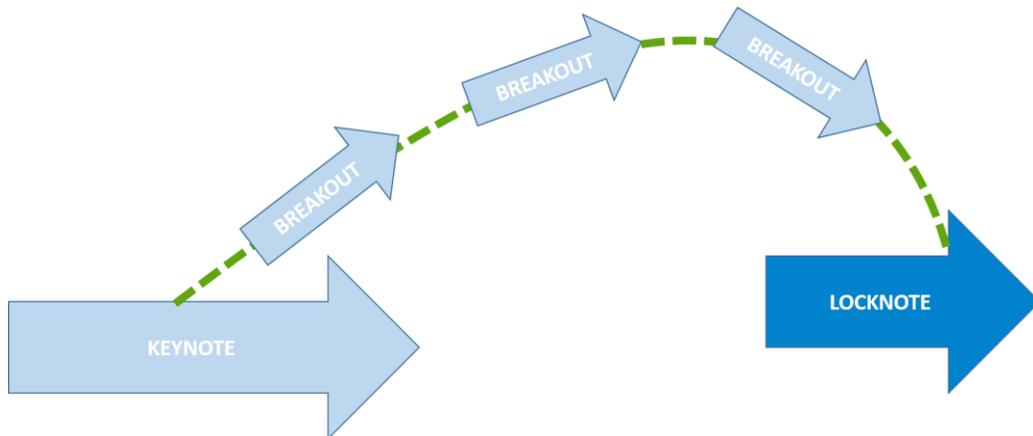


## The Closing Session

- Should help your audience make sense of why they do what they do, helping them identify as a community at the end of your digital event
- As last session, it's likely the one your audience will remember most –

what 3 things do you want to ensure your audience “feels” by the end of your event?

- Your closing speaker should be a good representation of what your organization stands for and provide your audience with a summary of what matters most from everything they've heard at your event
- Leave your audience with clear actions to take when they leave your digital event
- Tie the beginning and end of your agenda together



Use your event's overall theme as a guide for your opening and closing sessions and to help with speaker selection.

If you want different groups within your audience to take different actions you will need to segment your audience, and the content for them. You can do this by creating separate tracks within your agenda though certain key sessions will remain common.

Do you need to establish separate tracks within your agenda for your digital event?

- Once you've segmented your audience, prioritize the top 3 motivations for each segment – what are the 3 things they really want to do with the knowledge you're providing to them?
- If any segments share the same priorities, in the same order, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, then they should be grouped together, and not separated into tracks.

Audiences remember the last thing they saw or heard and thus you want to be absolutely clear on what action you want them to take after each session.

- What are the three things the audience should walk away with after this session?

## NOTES:

Or what three questions does the audience have that will be answered by this session?

- How will those three things help them?
- What should they do next? (after the session)

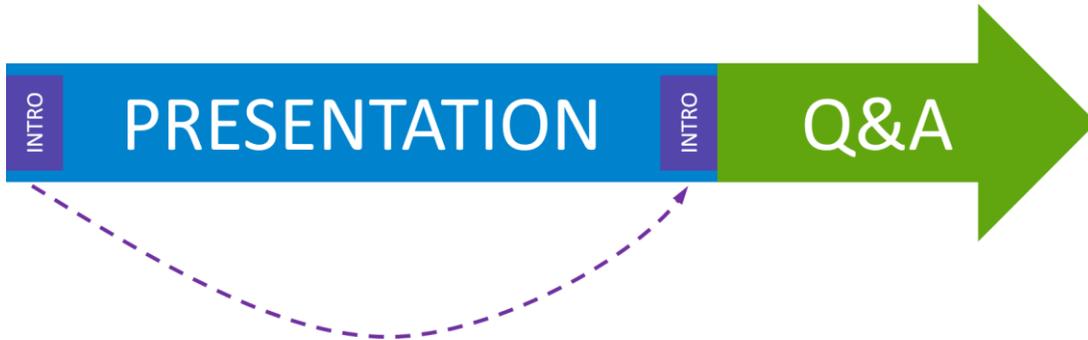
Decide how long you think your audience will spend on a certain topic and then ask your speakers to design their content accordingly. Keep yourself open to recommendations from strong speakers as they probably have experience with what will or won't work for your audience.

## ENGAGEMENT, INTERACTIVITY & STORYTELLING

How can you get your audience to engage with your content during your digital event?

- Get a good start. People decide whether they will watch a session or not within the first minute and then they'll give you a couple more minutes before they either click away or mentally check out. It's closer to 15 seconds for on-demand audiences!

- Avoid spending your first 3 minutes on housekeeping and introductions - sprinkle details about who you are and what you do throughout your session
- Try skipping the speaker introduction at the beginning of your session and instead have your speakers introduce themselves briefly before Q&A



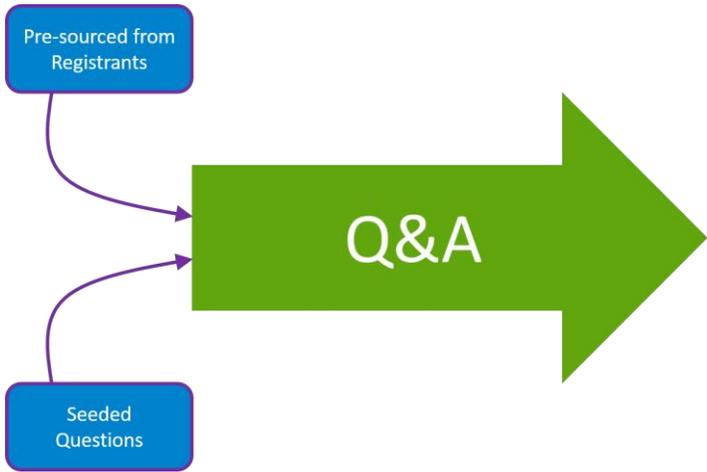
- Break your 30 min session in to a series of 3-5 min segments alternating between informative 3-5 min segments and inspirational or entertaining 3-5 min anecdotes or examples
- Leave a little content out of your presentation for Q&A
- Leave your audience wanting a little more so they are leaning forward at the end of your session, this is the best way to get folks to take the Call To Action



- Design breakout sessions with one third of the session time dedicated to Q&A
- Start your Q&A with questions sourced from your audience beforehand

**NOTES:**

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**WORKING WITH CONTENT CREATORS**

Who does your audience trust to provide the content they so desperately seek? Where do you start when it comes to identifying and securing the best speakers for your digital event?

- Consult with key stakeholders, industry experts, internal teams and committees on their favorite speakers, authors and experts for the topics most relevant to your audience
- Crowd source your audience's opinion on their favorite speakers
- Brands and awards or industry-wide achievements are recognized more broadly than individual names or titles
- Consider each speaker's ability to engage an online audience – this can differ greatly from their ability to write or present to an in-person audience
  - Ask your speakers for videos or webinar recordings of previous sessions they've delivered to gauge their online audience engagement skills
- A speaker's public profile can help you raise awareness for their session, and your digital event overall – evaluate their social media presence when vetting

## CONTENT COLLABORATION

Once you've found the speaker you want, how will you best collaborate to create content for your digital event that will work well live and on-demand?

- Share your content strategy, goals and your audience's goals
- Don't stifle your content creators' creativity or originality



- Ask speakers to include real examples, brief stories and the element of surprise
- Ensure speakers won't "read their slides"
- Allow time (1/3 of presentation length) for Q&A

Your speaker's voice is arguably the most important aspect of their digital presentation. Consider all factors of their voice carefully like accent, projection, inflection and clarity. If they are presenting remotely, which many of your speakers may be doing, make every effort to ensure they are in an environment where they can hear and be heard clearly with good connectivity.

Never ask a speaker to repeat a session at your digital event that they have delivered somewhere else. Your event needs to feature original content, especially if you have well-known speakers who your audience may have read, seen or heard before

### TRAINING & PREPARING SPEAKERS

For speakers who are onsite at a hybrid event or one where you're recording them for on-demand content distribution:

- Single speakers should stand
- Multiple speakers for a session speaking one at a time should also stand
- Multiple speakers on stage for a conversation that flows back and forth should be seated
- Provide speakers on stage with a monitor of their slides so they don't have to turn and face the screen behind them
- Speakers should all have scripts that they have practiced – have a copy on the lectern or podium for back-up

If your speakers are remote they will all likely be seated and whenever possible you'll want them to use their webcams to provide their video.

- Advise them to have their webcam at eye level so they're not looking down at the audience and the audience is not looking up their nose

#### NOTES:

- If you have more than one remote speaker presenting in your session, try to have everyone maintain the same distance from their webcam so they look like they're all zoomed to the same distance
- All remote speakers should have their scripts printed out in front of them to glance at, not for them to read while staring down at their desk

## CONTENT LOGISTICS

As a digital event strategist you need to take responsibility for your digital event's content development and preparation, even if others are helping you with these tasks.

- Manage internal and external resources and timelines proactively
- Schedule speaker introductions, check-ins and rehearsal calls to ensure content readiness
- Send reminders and inform all content developers of upcoming deadlines *before* they miss them
- Be clear about how you'd like the content to be developed and shared with you and other stakeholders, if necessary
- Clearly identify all presentation materials for each session
  - PowerPoint, videos, audio files or any other format
- Provide your speakers with a session outline or guide and, if you feel it's necessary, a presentation template
- Ensure you have a signed release from every speaker that allows you to use all aspects of the content they're presenting at your event
- Ensure all session speakers know they are expected to interact with the online audience - encourage them to include polls and to answer as many Q&A questions as swiftly as possible
- Get access to your online event platform for your speakers so they can use it during the rehearsal and be fully prepared for the live session
- Remind your speakers that their content will be available on-demand and thus whenever possible they should limit references to other sessions during the event

## CREATING DYNAMIC SUPPORTING VISUALS

- Ask speakers to limit each slide to ONE clear idea or topic
- Encourage speakers to use a variety of visual elements in their slides like pictures, graphs, or quotes
  - Remind them to be clear on copyright and licensing restrictions for any materials they're referencing from other sources
- When possible, pre-record all elements that do not need to be presented live, like demonstrations
  - If your speakers do plan to do a live demo, ask them for backup slides in case the demo fails during the live event

Consider the remote attendee's experience for each session. Is there something changing visually, like a slide, every minute or so? If not, can you blame your remote attendees for switching from watching your event's video to simply listening to it?

Maintain your audience's full attention by following a few simple rules:

1. Provide a new visual every 30 to 60 seconds
2. Change up the type of visuals throughout your presentation
3. Your visuals are not alone
  - o The entire time your session is playing your audience is listening to your speaker so don't put any text in your slide or demo that you're going to say...with these few exceptions:
    - i. If you're quoting someone, you should generally show the quote visually and name its owner in writing
    - ii. If you're discussing a proprietary product or solution name or if you've created terminology that only your company uses, you need to show this visually as the audience may not catch what you're saying the first time
    - iii. You can use text to emphasize something you're saying, but this should be a word or phrase, not a sentence, bullet point or paragraph

While your digital event content is likely in a rich media format like a video, webinar, PowerPoint slides, animations or graphics you can significantly amplify your event's content ROI by re-formatting this content to other mediums like blog posts, articles, infographics, slideshares and even pictures from the event or presentation for social media.

Plan to edit your session as needed for on-demand viewing to maintain engagement:

- Cut out things like housekeeping and delays at the start of the session or breaks during the session
- Edit out anything you were unable to capture
- Delete irrelevant elements from the end of the session like Q&A instructions or upcoming session housekeeping

Remember, whenever your digital event audience drops out or begins multi-tasking there's a good chance you won't get them back.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR HYBRID EVENTS

- Determine beforehand if the face-to-face or in-person event can accommodate live Q&A you're your online audience

### NOTES:

- If you will have live Q&A with your online audience, designate the host or moderator for the session to help facilitate questions from the online audience
- Have your speakers acknowledge the online audience at the start of their session
- Reserve the first and last Q&A question for the online audience which you may have collected in advance or for which you can have a few seeded questions ready
- If a mic isn't available for your in-person audience, be sure your speakers repeat all questions in their own words before they begin answering
- Fill any content gaps that exist in your in-person event agenda so you don't lose your hybrid audience
  - Consider an onsite "reporter" at your in-person event who can host short interviews with popular speakers, industry experts or even interesting attendees

- Pre-record short segments that can be played back to just your hybrid audience during breaks in the in-person event agenda
- You can even ask your online audience and your event sponsors to submit short video clips in advance so you can select the best ones to feature in-between sessions

If you host a digital event repeatedly on a monthly, quarterly or even annual basis you should consider recording opinions, recommendations and feedback from your attendees. These can be great for promoting your event's content on-demand and you should use them in your promotions for your next event.

For hybrid events with tracks or where sessions compete with each other for the same time slot, how do you decide which sessions are right for your online audience?

- Sessions may be worth capturing for on-demand promotion even if you don't plan to broadcast them live
- But...if you don't plan to promote your content on-demand, don't invest in capturing it from your in-person event
- Choose sessions that will resonate with your broader online audience, not those that are very specialized, restricted or cater to only certain segments of your audience
- Determine what audio video equipment is available in your session room and piggyback on anything already installed
  - Sound is extremely important as visuals can always be improved later but poor audio cannot be remedied and could result in the permanent loss of a great session from your event