Digital Event Strategist

Lesson 2: User Experience & Engagement

LEARNER OUTCOMES:

- **Define** desired attendee outcomes for attending your event.

- **Explore** engagement tools appropriate for your attendees.

- **Develop** an attendee experience path for your digital event.

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INTRODUCTION

Since many people planning virtual events come from planning physical events, a lot of the events that we are asked to design are crafted like their physical counterparts – a Keynote session, followed by multiple simultaneous breakouts. Is this the best way to present learning options for a purely virtual event?

Hybrid events:

- Keep the flow of the live, physical event.
- Ask yourself if you'd be better streamlining a Keynote session and limiting the number of breakout sessions that are streamed live, and capture the rest for on-demand viewing.
- At what point do we overwhelm the audience with session choices and content overload becomes counterproductive to a good user experience?

Virtual events:

- Feed content over time instead of within a strict timeframe offered by a physical event.
- Be conscious that you're not delivering the same length of content virtually that would be offered in a physical setting.

What may take 1 hour to deliver in a physical setting, can actually be delivered in 1/3rd of the time, if not less.

In this module we will teach you how to define your audience, understand them and know how to connect with them, after all the audience for a retirement planning event for Charles Schwab will be a totally different audience than a group of developers for Red Hat! We will discuss the desired attendee outcome and focus on how people learn online, as understanding your audiences learning needs will be key to your events success. We will focus on desired audience experience and how to leverage engagement using the tools you have available to you. We are going to map out the entire user journey that we want our participants to consume while attending our event.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Event owners often have a totally different reason for running an event, compared to the attendee's reason for registering and attending**,** and as Digital Strategists we need to learn how to take both the host's goals and the attendee's goals into account when we deliver the user experience.

To connect with your audience, you need to understand why your event is important to them.

- What do they expect to learn from the event?
- How much knowledge do they already have?
- What are their goals for attending?
- What do they already know? What is their level of understanding?
- What are their demographics, job function, and geography?
- What is the average age of an attendee?
- What is their digital readiness?
- What formats will support the message the best?
- What format or layout will appeal to the audience and support the message?
- How much time can they invest?

What are the 4 key focus points?

1. What are their goals for attending?
2. How much time can they invest?
3. How much knowledge do they already have?
4. What formats will support the message best?

WHAT ARE THEIR GOALS FOR ATTENDING?

The goal of any attendee is to LEARN.

It may be:

- An A-HA moment from a Keynote session.
- Attending breakout sessions on topics that are needed for continuing education credits.
- Learn about services or products offered by your event either from sponsors or from your own companies' Subject Matter Experts & sales personnel.

- Learn about a competitor.

How much time can they invest?

When you register for an event – how much time do you believe you can typically invest?

- People will carve out time in their daily schedule to attend your virtual event based on the agenda.
- Based on metrics - It's rare that participants have the time to attend a virtual event for its entire length.
- Make sure key content is scheduled in a timely fashion, at a time that is convenient for most.

In a survey carried out by Bulldog Solutions, the following days were the best to attend a virtual event in order of preference:

- Thursday afternoon
- Wednesday afternoon
- Wednesday midday
- Thursday midday
- Tuesday afternoon
- Tuesday midday

In this survey, when asked to pick the time that would best fit their schedule, results followed a time zone trend that matches conventional scheduling for the U.S.

- West Coast: picked times between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
- Central: picked midday.
- East Coast: picked times between 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

These timings also tie to when the brain is most active in a working day. Do you think scheduling your Keynotes and high profile programs at these times would be advantageous? Yes!

HOW MUCH KNOWLEDGE DO THEY ALREADY HAVE?

People are looking for NEW information when they attend events, remember, they're looking to LEARN! Enabling people to measure what they don't know, and providing them with guidance on the agenda of where their skillset will be most enhanced is a critical User Experience Strategy that I encourage you to explore!

What formats will support the message best?

NOTES:

- Timely bite sized chunks of knowledge is best.
- Video supported with audio that can be accessed from a mobile device is key.
- Think beyond the format of 'presentations' and focus more on various ways of delivering those 3 actionable items or 3 a-ha points you want to deliver.
- Fun ways of doing this:
  - Gamification, simple text based scheduled Q&A with Subject Matter Experts, quizzes with remedial guidance available.
  - Video case studies with a summary.
  - Simulations with scenarios that ask the consumer to make a choice and therefore be involved in the decision making of a topic.
  - Video case study comparisons – which video met your case study needs? Vote A or B
  - Create a 'Treasure Hunt' allowing people to collect key items of information throughout the virtual event that will allow them to enter into a competition or leaderboard once they have 'x' number of items or facts collected.

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HOW DO ADULTS LEARN?

Adults have a wealth of experience to draw on, and like to do so. They connect with stories so leveraging story telling is really important.

There ALWAYS need to be opportunities for **adults to connect learning to their own unique personal or work situations**, and opportunities for them to personalize the learning in this regard. Asking them to think about their own work dynamic or a business scenario that relates to them that they can frame with the knowledge you are imparting will enhance their experience of the event.

Adults need to be told what they're doing and why so they can connect the desired learning outcomes to their own goals – call them out to do that action!

- Adults need specific opportunities to self-reflect and internalize their learning, so give them time to do so.
- Adults have preconceived notions about education, learning styles and subject matter.
    - They prefer to learn a certain way.
    - To overcome the learning barrier, we need to appeal to many different learning styles and present information in a variety of ways.
- Adults are often afraid to fail.
    - Never call them out as wrong, ask them to think through the question differently or say something like "Yes, and…" and then fill in the knowledge gap.
- Adults love interaction and feedback.
    - If the presenter is leveraging a chat room or polling questions, the audience will stay focused and engaged.
    - Train your virtual event speakers on how to leverage these tools in their LIVE presentations, to drive the conversation and engagement.
    - Trainings are typically available via the Virtual Platform that you are leveraging.

Which leads to Gamification. The model of content consumed = instant gratification is a very compelling task within virtual events that offer gamification.

- Creating virtual treasure hunts consuming content with a theme.
- Rewarding people for logging in multiple times per day.
- Receiving a high score for each Knowledge Game that is played.

ENGAGEMENT QUOTIENT

As discussed, what the host perceives as successful and an attendee perceives as successful are often on two different paths.

The attendee is all about:

- Minimal marketing
- Agenda & Content
- Minimum Time Investment to Maximum Value
- Engagement and an easy navigational journey

The event organizers is all about:

- High registration to attendance conversion
- ROI to Sponsors, resulting in revenue
- High attendance
- Opportunities to promote

The content while important, is often the last item to swing through your door with 24 hours until the live event. As a result, the delivery and compelling nature of that content can often lack luster, resulting in minimum time in the event as the content delivered does not meet the value or level of content promoted.

Focus needs to be:

- On the content structure and delivery, with deadlines that are confirmed and met by your Subject Matter Expert.
- Highlight the importance, and drive the value of the event.

USER EXPERIENCE WITHIN A WEBCAST

Techniques used to help you understand the best practices for creating a great user experience within a webcast:

- Introduce yourself and the topic.
- Welcome and encourage interactivity.
- Welcome 1:1 Q&A.
- Make people familiar with the tool and guide them on how to use it.
- Upload handouts. Many people want to download content to follow along at their own pace.
- Seed a question in the chat room. "Where are you today?" This demonstrates that you are connecting with your audience.
- Play off your fellow presenter(s). Interact with them and make the audience feel comfortable.
- Use polling questions to understand your audiences knowledge and/or reason for being in your presentation.
  - By discussing the results of the polling question as they come in, you create a connection with the audience.
  - Encourage all participants to respond to your questions, it will help you meet their needs.
  - Sharing results, shows trust and builds a connection as you discuss the groups opinions.
- React to comments not only from the chat room but also from your fellow presenter(s).

- Be Real, Be Transparent, and Be Accessible.
- Seek clarification. If you show interest in the audience, the audience will stay connected.
- Creating notes and/or a script to guide you is a GREAT idea.
- Avoid dead air! If there is dead air, remove it after.
- Awesome content can be lost with a stale presenter.
- Some content can be dry. A dynamic presenter can make it consumable.
- After talking for 2-3 minutes, ask the audience to interact with you. It will refocus them.
- Ask people to reflect on their own experiences. This is how adults connect the dots between theory and their own experiences.
- Always have in mind, The Radio Show Experience.
- Switching out media types, REALLY keeps the audience engaged.
- What works:
    o Accents.
    o Male and Female co-presenters.
    o Presenters who interact with each other.
- Agreeing with chat comments when applicable is instant recognition.
- Storytelling is incredibly important and powerful, people are far more likely to retell a story they can relate to.
- Your Subject Matter Expert may not have the personality to shine in a presentation, find somebody who will and use them to support the SME.
- Keep using the chat room to drive the presentation. It's not all about pushing slides.
- Asking a fun, sociable question to drive home a point lifts the mood of a presentation.
- Always try, whenever possible, to present with others.
- Having an interviewer can create a very interesting dynamic – you can seed questions ahead of time or leverage the audience.
- If you enjoy yourself presenting, you will naturally want to repeat the experience.
- Never shy away from asking a question twice, maybe in a different way to seek clarification.
- Practice makes perfect.
- Listen to feedback and switch your delivery method if people aren't having a great user experience.
    o Never be afraid to ask for LIVE feedback during the presentation, you're taking a risk but your vulnerability shows you care about the user experience.
- Paying attention to the audience is the best driver for user engagement and a great user experience.
- Being confident in the content being delivered underlines the role of the Subject Matter Expert.
- Communication is key. If there is a chat room present, share with the audience "I'm going to take a minute in the chat room" so they're aware and not unknown silence.
- Giving people the time to respond to polling questions can feel long but it's important so that you can get feedback – embrace the silence.
- Promote the next session at the end, stay connected!

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DELIVERY MECHANISM

Live Stream of a Physical Event known as a hybrid

Offering a Live Stream does not mean that you don't consider the user experience for the virtual participants (sadly if often does… but it shouldn't).

Live streaming should not be:
- Clicking on a link and watching a live stream.

Live streaming should be:
- Giving that person who is connecting to the live stream the ability to interact with the speakers and the audience.
  - Consider using Mobile Polling, Second Screen Technology, Virtual & Physical Audience Response tools to connect these groups and leverage the metrics from the demographics of the participants to drive your ability in future events to "Know your Audience".

365 Perpetual Communities

365 Perpetual Communities, need to have a content drip fed to them to keep it alive.

- Schedule content and promote content on a weekly basis.
- Tie the content on a weekly basis to a fixed time – for example, every Wednesday at 11:00 a.m.
- Schedule content like you would a television show so they know when to connect and consume.
- Organize "Office Hours" when Subject Matter Experts are available in an event. To offer help, support and guidance, answering audience questions, etc.

A recent, Digital Content Strategist, asked a conference what they prefer – binge watching or the ability to drink content from a fire hose. 87% response was, binge watching.

If your video content is time-sensitive:

DO:

- Take a cue from Netflix.
- Segment your content.
- Give your viewers a chance to binge watch content.
- Give viewers the option to consume at their own pace and fit their personal schedules.

DON'T:

- Deliver 8 hours of video in one consumption.

For a Live Physical Event to On Demand Replay

- Offering on demand content in combination with some additional live content – such as what was learned at the physical event.
- Offering breakout tracks, as a series and release them each week. This draws people back into your event for further consumption.
- Offering gamification and knowledge quizzes to evaluate knowledge and understand skill gaps.

Mapping your desired user experience will meet the goals of the event owner.

- Leverage pre-event opportunities for surveys and knowledge checks and take time to analyze the data these interactions bring you, and such knowledge can help you craft the event.
- Monitor the user experience during the event – send surveys and ask for feedback.
- Review chat rooms and conversation data in discussion rooms or forums in your event, they can be open and provide honest feedback about their experience.

The power of the user experience comes down to three key things:

- Content.
- Engagement.
- Interactivity.

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