

## PRESS RELEASE

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**Meeting and conferences: Participatory event design**

### **Pareto principles support value of new SpeedShop formats**

**EventExtra, the conference communication and participative event design people, have introduced a new dynamic for meetings and conferences. Called SpeedShops, they are highly intense group workshop sessions lasting a maximum of 30 minutes for each topic.**

Unlike other condensed workshop formats, SpeedShops incorporate EventExtra's successful hundred percent participant buy-in techniques, meaning that any outcomes must gain the full support of all participants in order to go forward for presentation to higher management. This considerably increases both the authority of, and the commitment to, resulting ideas and proposals.

Maximising realistic inputs and outcomes from workshop activities at meetings and conferences is a real challenge. Too many of us have sat through facilitated workshops with forced agendas, ill-prepared participants and - more often than not - ignored outcomes.

Now apply Pareto's 80/20 rule and say that if 20% of workshop time will achieve 80% of the results, why not distil your workshop activities to just 20% of the time? It's crude but it actually works to produce some amazingly productive results in a highly dynamic and rewarding environment. That's because most workshops are able to single out the key issues and recommendations in the first 10% and last 10% of the time available in a typical one or two day event.

#### **Full commitment to outcomes**

EventExtra, who specialise in managed conference communication hubs and participative event design, has always embraced the 100% buy-in principle to workshop outcomes. However, the proven success of these rely on three critical factors: that participants arrive well prepared and with sufficient notice of topics to have gained input from colleagues, that the boss, or bosses, are not present during any part of the workshop sessions and thirdly, that only proposals that enjoy full (yes, that means 100%) agreement by participant groups actually go forward for presentation to the boss or bosses on their return.

What EventExtra has achieved with SpeedShops is to combine that formula within its own tried and tested 100% buy-in rule, resulting in a dynamic, engaging and powerful new workshop format that delivers a meaningful result. And it does not end there. Using open space techniques, participant groups are free to join which groups they like. By voting with their feet they are better able to contribute on those topics that they regard as most important to their own work and responsibilities.

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In a recent SpeedShop held at Mazars' London HQ, EventExtra presented five pre-set project groups and two 'choose your own' topic groups that allowed participants to attend three, half hour sessions over a two hour period. A professional facilitator applied the EventExtra format rules to guide each participant group to a total buy-in result.

EventExtra involved invited guests with communications and events interests from across private and public sectors to explore the problems and opportunities for successful conferencing. "The results fully endorse the strategy, with most groups independently reaching similar or related criticisms and outcomes within each half hour framework", confirmed Matt O'Neill, a director at EventExtra. "The time restriction produced its own dynamic and some real gems came out of the ideas generated".

SpeedShop facilitators were active in ensuring that quieter voices were also heard. At the end of the sessions the overall reaction of groups was that they felt very stimulated without any of the inhibitions often associated with traditional workshops as people take time to understand their fellow participants.

David Paul, who heads up event format design with EventExtra, said, "Speedshops work exceptionally well as both an icebreaker and as an issue-distiller. They are perfect for providing a pre-cursor for deeper investigation within a subsequent one, two or three day workshop format."

*EventExtra Ltd is a joint venture company of Cordovan Branding Ltd, the internal brand alignment consultancy and part of the Cordovan Group, and Modcomms Ltd, the market communication and new media consultancy.*

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*One of five parallel 30 minute SpeedShop work groups in full session, hosted by EventExtra at Mazars HQ, London*

*Photos available on request*