

Meetings 2.0 – The future is here, are you ready?

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Experts tell us that we should pay close attention to Web 2.0 and related web themes like social networking, collaboration, and measurement because they are impacting how we work, learn and play . But how can an online movement relate to face-to-face events and the meetings industry? The answer becomes more obvious when we compare and contrast online and onsite experiences.

Online: Come up with an interest in anything – a book, a song, a restaurant – and you can instantly connect with a group of other people who share that interest and want to talk about it.

Onsite at an event: Come up with an interest in anything - an industry, a product, a methodology - and you'll spend the rest of the event trying to identify and meet up with the right group of people to discuss it with.

Online: Website owners get a steady stream of real time feedback about online user behavior that they can use to measure performance against objectives, and to modify the system to improve customer experience and overall performance.

Onsite: Event owners rarely get any comprehensive real time feedback about where their attendees are going, how they're networking, or what they're thinking. Some data may be collected, but is available in a useful format weeks after the event has ended.

Online: Users from many different backgrounds and experiences share knowledge and recommendations.

Onsite: Information is generally available to attendees as a lecture given by one or a few "experts" on stage.

Our attendees, increasingly accustomed to a Web 2.0 experience, will have less and less tolerance for traditional style meetings. We can and should offer them something better – the combination of the intimacy and immediacy of face-to-face that we all seek, with the ease of networking, measurement and personalization we've come to expect in the online world. Enter Meetings 2.0.

What is Meetings 2.0?

Meetings 2.0 is the concept of bringing Web 2.0 capabilities to face-to-face meetings. Here are some examples of Meetings 2.0 in action:

Social Networking: By applying social networking capabilities at face-to-face meetings, event professionals can make it much easier for all attendees, even the more introverted individuals, to make new

connections. Attendees identify their networking goals through online matchmaking tools and interactive name badges, and they are automatically matched up with others who have similar interests.

Collaboration and Participation: Educators are promoting active and cooperative learning experiences that result in increased knowledge gain and retention. For example, including an audience response system at your event will keep attendees engaged, help the presenter learn more about the audience and allows the presenter to fine tune his or her presentation to the interest or knowledge level of the audience as revealed by their responses.

Personalization: At nTAG, we've collected millions of survey responses. There's one attendee comment that we see over and over again: "your sessions provide basic knowledge but don't have the information that relates to my industry/function/challenge." By providing more choices, narrowly focused break out sessions, and even the opportunity to set up impromptu "birds of a feather" sessions, attendees get the information they are seeking, and feel ownership of the event.

Measurement: Since data - including survey responses, messages, assessment scores, session attendance, expo booth visits and audience response - is continually captured using Meetings 2.0 technologies, it can be fed back to meeting organizers for immediate analysis and action. The meeting organizer gets complete visibility into what's going on at the meeting and can compare event performance to objectives set during event planning. Critical strategic goals such as connecting customers with each other, educating them, and learning more about their needs can be tracked and driven forward starting on Day One of the event.

The articles in this and upcoming editions of the Meetings 2.0 Newsletter will provide you with insights, recommendations and ideas from different authors and perspectives. We hope you'll also contribute questions and experiences on Meetings 2.0. Together we'll discover how to better align our meetings with attendees' new expectations, while still providing a timeless need – face-to-face human interaction.