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From Attendee to Contributor: The ROI of Real Connection

Christine Renaud
Co-Founder & CEO at Braindate

Vanessa Lovatt
Founder at Event Tech World

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Summary

The session emphasised the importance of transforming attendees into contributors at events, highlighting the strategic significance of meaningful connections and participation. Christine Renaud from Braintree stressed that human growth and deep learning stem from experiences, which are facilitated by active engagement at events. She argued that events should focus on creating spaces where attendees feel a sense of belonging and are encouraged to contribute, thereby addressing the intimidating and often lonely nature of large gatherings. Vanessa Lovatt concurred, noting that participative events tend to yield higher satisfaction scores, as attendees feel they are driving their own experiences.

Christine and Vanessa discussed the challenges in making attendees active participants. Christine pointed out that some attendees are eager to engage, while others may resist change due to perceived risks. She underscored the importance of patience and clear, intentional messaging to help attendees understand their role in contributing. Vanessa shared her experiences with interactive networking events, illustrating that even risky and unconventional ideas can succeed with the right approach and pressure.

The conversation shifted to the practical aspects of fostering participation and the pitfalls to avoid. Christine highlighted the misconception that cramming events with content equates to value. Instead, she advocated for creating spaces for collaborative learning and innovation, which require time and openness.





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Wednesday, 12 November 2025

Event organisers should prototype these experiences and gradually amplify successful elements to build a culture of participation over several years.

The strategic impact of participative events on business outcomes was also discussed. Christine noted that such events enhance retention and are crucial for peer-led sales and account growth, especially at product-focused gatherings. Attendees primarily come to events for meaningful connections rather than content, and fostering these connections is key to ensuring they return. Vanessa echoed this sentiment, stating that creating a sense of community and belonging is fundamental to event success.

Christine provided practical advice on overcoming attendees' reluctance to share valuable knowledge. She suggested helping attendees recognise the worth of their unique experiences and perspectives, which can lead to engaging and transformative conversations. She stressed the importance of creating safe spaces where attendees feel valid and seen, thereby encouraging participation.

The session concluded with recommendations for building a participative event culture and fostering community. Christine advised defining clear intentions for participants and creating micro-environments within events where attendees can develop a sense of belonging. Vanessa added that training staff to welcome attendees warmly and creating smaller, intimate spaces within larger events can significantly enhance psychological safety and community feeling.

Takeaways

Transforming attendees into contributors enhances event value

Christine Renaud stressed that creating spaces where attendees feel a sense of belonging and are encouraged to contribute is crucial. This transformation addresses the intimidating and often lonely nature of events and leads to higher satisfaction scores as attendees feel they are driving their own experiences.

Patience and clear messaging are key to fostering participation

Christine highlighted that some attendees are eager to engage, while others may resist due to perceived risks. Event organisers need to be patient and provide clear, intentional messaging to help attendees understand their role in contributing, thereby fostering a culture of participation over time.

Creating collaborative learning spaces enhances business outcomes

Both speakers emphasised that attendees primarily come to events for meaningful connections rather than content. Christine noted that fostering these connections enhances retention and peer-led sales growth, making participative events strategically valuable for businesses.



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