

How to Apply Design Thinking to Meeting Strategy

In our last article we talked about the importance of applying design thinking to meeting strategy for mission-critical meetings. This article delves into the process, providing a high-level guide. But first, a quick refresher.

Paola Antonelli, the senior curator of the Museum of Modern Art says, “Design is not style. It’s not about giving shape to the shell and not giving a damn about the guts. Good design is a renaissance attitude that combines technology, cognitive sciences, human need and beauty.”

In other words, it’s not about creating a new PowerPoint template or finding a destination location. It’s about adopting an “attendee first” mentality for meetings. To apply design thinking to your high-stakes meeting strategy, follow these six steps:





1

DISCOVERY

Conduct “empathy interviews.”

Designing meetings from the attendee perspective begins with deep empathy. Seek to understand the emotions, motivations and unmet needs of your audience via email and phone interviews or workshops.



Record all interviews to capture the exact language of your audience. Use this language to create your meeting vocabulary.

3

IDEATION

Go wild!

The goal of this group session is to brainstorm as many creative solutions as possible. The best ideas will come if you include a divergent range of people. Explore creative possibilities for everything from the meeting announcement to attendee arrival, engagement, exiting and extending.



Strive for purposeful experiences, which culminate in memorable moments that are both intellectual and emotional.

2

INTERPRETATION

Look through their lens—not yours.

Use the key takeaways from the interviews to define the value story of your meeting. This high-level story should be told through the lens of your audience, which requires removing your lens first.



Include a broad group of stakeholders to interpret the interviews. Invite the business owner, content providers, meeting planners and marketing.

4

PROTOTYPE

Model your ideas.

Create experience blueprints for each interaction you’d like to explore. The blueprints should define the goal of the interaction, spatial requirements, specific actions that would take place and how the interaction would be facilitated.



Make interactions more tangible with storyboards and simple fabrications that depict different experiences.



5

EVALUATION

Share prototypes for feedback.

Share the best ideas with a select group of individuals and solicit their feedback. Refine the experiences to reflect their feedback. Then, put them together to create a cohesive “whole.” Make sure all interactions are meaningful and map back to the emotional and motivational needs of your audience.

MEETING
DESIGN
TIP

Strive for an immersive meeting experience that strikes a good balance between listening, active learning, dynamic discussion, reflecting, collaborating and sharing sessions.

6

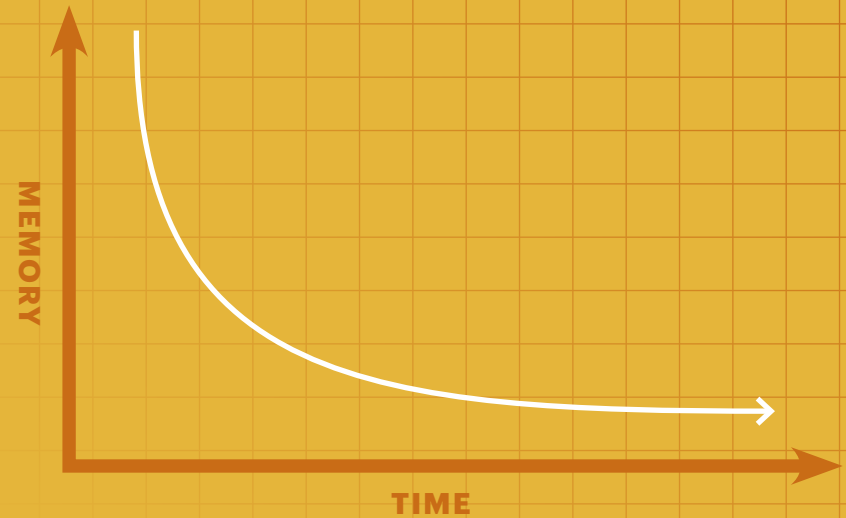
MONITOR & MEASURE

Look for personal transformations and organizational impacts.

Put someone in charge of monitoring the audience throughout the meeting. Make sure they take notes on the energy level of the audience during different experiences. Capture the highs and the lows. Then, when the meeting is over, formally evaluate the meeting to determine what was effective and what wasn't.

MEETING
DESIGN
TIP

Circle back to your value story to make sure you've truly moved the needle in terms of changed attitudes and behaviors.



Remember the “Forgetting Curve.”

The “Forgetting Curve” hypothesizes that we forget up to 90% of all new information within a few days when learning is “crammed” into one short period. When information is spaced and repeated over time, long-term retention improves by 200%.

Applying design thinking to meeting strategy is really about solving problems using a participative learning journey based on what you want attendees to know, feel, change and act on. This attendee-first mentality can help you make the most of your next mission-critical meeting and provide a model for other important meetings.

Get **Synchronicity**

CONTACT US

 getsynchronicity.com

 815.464.1252