



**Engage. Excite. Ignite. <sup>tm</sup>**  
2442 NW Market Street, Suite 93  
Seattle, WA 98107

[info@nomoreboringmeetings.com](mailto:info@nomoreboringmeetings.com)  
[www.NoMoreBoringMeetings.com](http://www.NoMoreBoringMeetings.com)

Phone: 206-783-6338 [783-MEET] Fax: 206-784-8038

## **Bust Boredom @ Meetings!** *11 ways to build audience engagement & buy-in*

By Andrea Driessen, Chief Boredom Buster

Would your VP of Marketing be checking her Blackberry at a Stones concert? Would you be listening to voicemail in the midst of your favorite team's playoff game?

We know how important full-on audience engagement and measurable outcomes are to your meetings. And with rising meeting and travel costs, there's more at stake than ever when you invest to bring your people together.

So, we give you this succinct, idea-rich report to help you **wring the most value and impact from every meeting you manage.**

Read on to **turn disconnecting snoozers into rip-roaring events...** that are as engaging as a rock concert...and as captivating as a division-winning baseball game.

### **1. Tap the wisdom in the room**



The days of talking heads delivering to passive audiences are *gone*. Everyone wants to be heard, counted, and recognized. Boost what people learn and what they *remember* by consistently eliciting **more participation**. To wit:

- Current meeting technology allows you to seamlessly and affordably use real time **text-ing from attendees**, who text their comments, feedback and questions directly to presenters. (Contact us for more information about proven vendors for this service.)

## 2. Disrupt your agenda.

Bust beyond typical meeting formats and add fresh, effective ways of communicating key information. In place of the same ol' boring keynote + breakout + meal + more breakouts + meal yadda yadda, integrate one or more of the following to **shake up a tired agenda**:

- Use an in-house or contracted **videographer** who roams the ballrooms and hallways of your event venue to interview participants on their thoughts about a key company initiative, or test their awareness around new product information, or their feedback on the event in general. Play video clips during meals or on your intranet.
- Since most events can be akin to drinking from a fire hose, establish a **quiet room** where attendees can chill out and integrate what they're learning.
- To alleviate information overload, insert **customized songs, game shows, and contests** before and after more "serious" material...and simultaneously add **surprise, energy and interaction** throughout the day. Contact us for a list of the best "Infotainment" resources.

## 3. Shake up your keynotes

By thinking more innovatively, you'll find that Keynotes or plenary sessions can be formatted and delivered with **more impact and interaction**.

- Immediately follow an executive or "outside" keynote speaker with a 30-minute Q&A, led by the speaker and/or executives who take *live* questions from the audience. You'll get a more authentic, relevant and participatory experience. **If you encounter resistance to allowing live, unscreened questions**, because leaders are concerned about a loss of control, you may wish to note that it can be best for such points to be made in *public* rather than when employees return to work and complain among selves, without a useful outlet.

## 4. Boost Event Intimacy

A room of a few hundred or a few thousand can overwhelm even the most extroverted. Create smaller, more personal experiences by:

- Committing "**Random Offers of Conference Kindness**" or ROCK. Profiled in *Convene Magazine*, this concept was a great success at a 22,000-person SHRM conference. The planners gave away low- or no-cost gifts in surprising, randomly scheduled ways throughout the event. They got highly engaged attendees *and* high buzz—for a small investment.
- Asking your first presenter to have participants turn to a person they don't know and discuss: "**What's one thing** you want to learn at this meeting? And who can I connect you with to get you this?" *Viola*: In just a few minutes, each person gets an **instant, relevant, more intimate connection** ...with a purpose extending beyond the walls of the room and the length of the meeting.



## 5. Move it—or lose it!

Keep the **pace** of your meeting moving—fast—for heightened engagement. That two-hour breakout—presented only via a talking head with his back to the audience and his eyeballs on his PowerPoint Slides—just isn't going to cut it. Here's why:

Dr. John Medina's ground-breaking research about how the brain works has a lot to tell us about **how to hold better, NON-Boring Meetings**. Among his findings:

It seems we all have some level of Attention Deficit Disorder. Dr. Medina's data show that after only about **9 minutes, our brains start losing their capacity to pay attention**. The antidote? Inject new material into your meeting every 10 minutes or so...to **connect information and facts to something more emotional or inspirational**. Perhaps in the form of story...or an interactive exercise...to re-invigorate dulling brains. But only if you want people to remember and be engaged.

## 6. Let's get physical

We've been focusing so far on audience participation and content ideas. What about your meeting **space**? Ending boredom begins with **first impressions**. Boost creative juices as soon as participants arrive. Instead of linear rows of chairs, what happens with a circle of **beanbags? Or exercise balls and pillows?** If you can't quite swing these... at least try **bistro tables** and high-back chairs in place of standard round tables—they generate **more energy and small group interaction**.

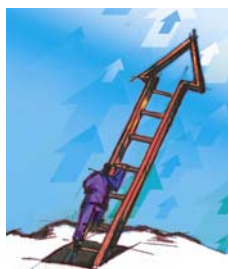
While you're at it, **get out of the hotel!** Nothing spells boredom and same ol' thing like a windowless hotel ballroom. What if you:

Have your innovation retreat in an art gallery, museum or aquarium?

- Hold the next product *launch* on a *boat*?
- Gather at a movie theater to present participant-produced YouTube-style videos illustrating real customer service interactions?
- Stage your KICK OFF meeting in a sports stadium or health club?
- Offer the annual *Summit* meeting at a *climbing wall* or RENT a climbing wall?
- Plan a future-focus strategy session at or near a LIGHT HOUSE?

## 7. And PLEASE purge PowerPoint abuse

PowerPoint is a great tool for transferring information to audiences. It can also be the best way to bring **disconnecting boredom** to any meeting. So, here are ways to **lessen data dumps and boost engagement**—with fewer slides and more creativity. |



- Have presenters tell participants they'll send them a report after the event that drills down into some key content. Learning increases, the audience avoids suffering through illegible slides with 10-point type...and the **impact of the education will continue well past the event date**.

- **Always ask presenters:** what can they integrate into their programs that could *never be sent via email*? After all, if you're relying too much on a computer-based slide program, why not just send everyone an attachment, and save them the time, effort and fuel of attending the meeting in person??

**When this provocative question is a key content filter**, you'll be inspired to invent a **range of powerful ways to engage your audience in ways that matter**—and compel them to *buy into and believe in your organization's most important ideas for the future*.