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Designing knowledge intensive events

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Abstract

Nowadays a huge number of events are offered worldwide that aim at exchanging and generating knowledge. They come in many different formats and sizes: conferences, conventions, and other forms of meetings try to meet the expectations of their target audiences. While they all differ in detail and scope, on a deeper level they also share specific core activities like presenting, exchanging, or generating knowledge. In essence, it is these activities that sum up what participants really want and expect if they attend a knowledge-intensive event.

Usually, it is left to organizers to design events that really matter for their specific target groups to exchange knowledge. In this workshop we will demonstrate a new approach to design knowledge-intensive events and conferences, using the next ICKM conference as a case for demonstration.

1. Introduction

Over the course of a three-year applied research project, we analyzed the expectations and needs of event participants[1]. By event, we are referring to professional, *knowledge-intensive events* like conferences, conventions, large-scale meetings or congresses where people generate and share knowledge. For the purposes of our research, we interviewed a large number of different stakeholders (participants, organizers, service providers, etc.), attended,

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observed, and organized various kinds of events, and tested new technological solutions.

Based on our results, we developed an approach to designing knowledge-intensive events[2]. We identified nine main expectations and needs (so called "core activities") why participants attend conferences. By applying these core activities to an event, we provide recommendations how to design it from an *architectural*, *social*, and *technological* point of view.

2. Three steps of designing innovative events

To collectively design an innovative event, we developed a deck of playing cards (see Fig. 1). In this demonstration we will show how to use the Event.Cards to design the next ICKM Conference in three steps.

Fig. 1. A deck of Event.Cards to collectively design knowledge-intensive conferences[2]

2.1. First step: Identify the core activities

We will first identify the most important core activities of participants who will attend the next ICKM conference (e.g. presenting, connecting, inspiring). These activities represent the very essence of what should happen at this specific conference from the perspective of the target group. This step is crucial, since it establishes the foundation for all following steps. After we have identified the core activities, we will move on to the recommended solutions.

2.2. Second step: Choose solutions

Every knowledge-intensive event takes place in a specific and concrete setting realized by the event's organizers, which we refer to as a design solution. Our research revealed that every event is made up of *architectural*, *social*, and *technological* solutions. Hence, we group the solutions according to these dimensions that enable and support the required knowledge- and social processes in the sense of an Enabling Space[3]:

- *Architectural design solutions*: This covers the physical and architectural configurations that enable the core activities

- *Social design solutions*: Formats that facilitate specific social interactions between participants

- *Technological design solutions*: The key features of a software tool or physical materials which augment the goals of the core activities

These cards should inspire the participants and provide them with a pool of appropriate and empirical evaluated solutions to support them in realizing the defined goals of the conference.

2.3. Third step: Compose an integrated event design

The last step starts by bringing together and integrating the solutions selected in step two. Essentially, the main goal of this phase is to adjust, sort out, and integrate the multiple solutions into a coherent event design that supports the core activities (see Fig. 2). At the end of the workshop, the solutions developed by the participants will be handed over to the ICKM organizers.
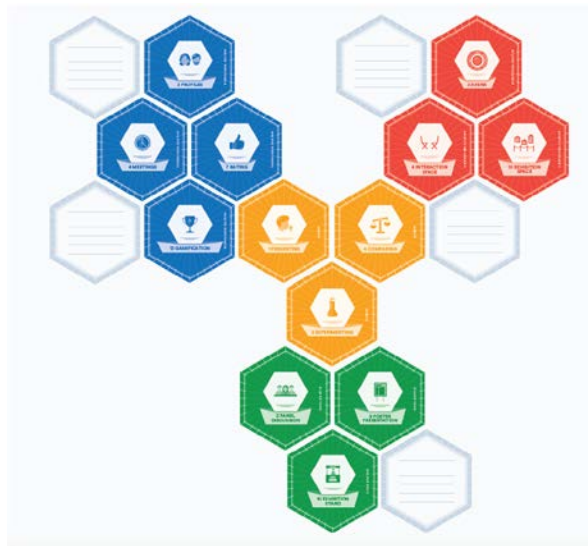

Fig. 2. Example of an integrated event design

3. Insights and empirical application evidence

The Event.Cards were already used and evaluated in different workshop and conference settings with knowledge and event managers to collectively design various events. Due to a lean knowledge process, the cards facilitate different stakeholders (e.g. conference organizers, clients, scientists and technicians) to be on the same page during the planning stage. By following a clear procedure, all the persons involved develop a shared mental model and a common understanding of the event using the same cards and terms. In this interactive session, cognitive and social processes will be reflected and insights for collaborative settings in teams, based on knowledge artifacts, will be discussed from a scientific as well as a practical perspective.

References

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