



HOSTING A POTLUCK EVENT

Traditional potluck sessions are gatherings for like-minded individuals to share ideas over good food. We've put a bit of a spin on this, and although we always make sure there is good food, our potluck's are all about inviting a diverse range of people from different backgrounds and getting them to make unusual connections.

Here are a few tips for planning an Innovation Edge-style potluck event.

Come up with a plan

The Why: Decide what you want to achieve by hosting the potluck. What is the purpose and what outcome are you hoping for?

The Who: Decide whom to invite. Getting the right mix of people in the room is critical and is probably the most important ingredient to your recipe for success. Think cross-culture, cross-country, multi-layered, multi-disciplined.

The Where & When: Decide on a date and a venue. Choose a place that stimulates creativity. Look for venues with a lot of natural light, the right temperature, lots of space and a lack of noise. Make sure you choose a time convenient to your audience.

The How: Choose a GREAT facilitator. Great facilitators keep a stream of ideas flowing, while simultaneously directing a conversation. Set aside time to co-design the agenda with the facilitator well ahead of time.

Show Time: Run the event

Set the scene: Start the session by explaining the reason for the event and what the house rules are. Think of a way to present the house rules in a fun and creative way that sets the mood for open, creative discussions. Make sure participants know that the crazier the idea is, the better and that there are no right or wrong answers. The most important thing is to create a safe space for people to throw out any idea and to fuel the creative juices.

Make it personal: Find a creative way for people to introduce themselves and share something that makes them feel heard.

Avoid traditional brainstorming: Encourage lateral thinking by introducing different idea generation exercises. There are many updated techniques out there that encourage letting go of old patterns of thought in order to deliver new ideas.

Make it physical: Instead of just thinking and talking, get people moving, hearing, seeing and sensing things in different ways. This helps people ideate in new ways.

Balance structure and flow: Make sure that the agenda has a good balance between free-flowing engagement and more structured elements. Take enough breaks to keep people alert and re-energised.

Curate connections: Facilitate group and individual connections throughout the session. Keep it interesting and continually remix the composition of groups.

Have Fun

Nothing stimulates innovation like having fun!

Wrap it up

Recap: Reflect on the process, the connections made and the ideas the group has come up with.

Celebrate success: It's important for participants to feel that they played a key role in the event's success. Find a way to acknowledge the contribution of each participant.

Take things forward: Identify actions and find a creative way to sign a physical or virtual contract outlining who will do what going forward.

After the event

Send a thank you note: Design something that reminds participants of a shared experience they had. Photos of the participants on the day are great. Include an overview of the agreed actions points and remind participants of their commitments. Include a survey to find out what the participants thought about the event. Don't leave participants wondering, tell them what's next.

For more about us and how we work, please visit www.innovationedge.org.za