



The 2014 Panel Report

By Kristin Arnold

In the largest survey ever conducted (at least as far as I can tell!) about panel discussions, 539 executives, thought leaders and meeting planners shared their frustrations about the panel format. “The Panel Report: A 2014 Snapshot on the Effectiveness of Panel Discussions at Meetings, Conferences and Conventions” looks at the effectiveness of the format, the moderator and panelists – what drives the audience crazy – as well as recommendations to enhance the panel session.

Some of the key findings include:

Panels are Pervasive. The panel format is widely used at meetings. 99% of respondents have seen a panel format during a meeting in

the past 12 months.

Panels are a Lazy Format. The panel format is considered to be a relatively easy format to produce: the meeting planner picks the topic, finds a moderator, selects the panelists and then moves on to engage and entertain today’s audiences.

Skilled Facilitation is Key to Panel Success. There is a high degree of correlation between the effectiveness of the moderator and the effectiveness of the panel in achieving outcomes.

Having a skilled facilitator as the moderator is your best insurance policy to creating a successful panel session.

Moderators Bring Out the Best in Panelists. The biggest “pet peeve” is having a poor *(cont’d on p. 2)*



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June 12 Webinar

5 Sizzling Ways to Spice Up Your Panel Discussion

The 2014 Panel Report found that audiences want a more interactive and entertaining format rather than the traditional, boring panel format at meetings, conferences and conventions.

In this webinar, professional panel moderator, Kristin Arnold, will share five specific techniques that will transform boring panels into lively, educational experiences for audiences.

Register on our website for this *free* 45-minute webinar being held on Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 12 noon Eastern or register online at <http://bit.ly/zeQbIY>



What’s Your Expiry Date? *By Joseph Sherren, CSP HoF*

When I was growing up in a family of ten kids, we never paid much attention to expiry dates, since food would never last very long in our house. I am not even sure if there were “best before” labels on most products back then.

Now everything has an expiry date: food, batteries, licenses, vehicles, store coupons and the list goes on. As a management consultant and recruitment advisor, I have discovered that the skills and knowledge of employees and managers also have an expiry date.

That best before date is determined mainly by how much the individual is willing to invest in his or her own personal development. For people who have not participated in a professional development program in the last 12 months, their expiration is coming soon. For those who have not read a book in the last six **1** *(cont’d on p. 2)*

The 2014 Panel Report

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A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to help your teams to be extraordinary.

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The Extraordinary Team newsletter is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc. Ethos Enterprises, Inc. Gateway Leadership, Inc.

Articles are welcome and encouraged. We would sincerely like to know what you are doing.

The Extraordinary Team makes meetings more engaging, interactive and collaborative.

- ◆ High Stakes Meeting Facilitation
- ◆ Team Training & Consulting
- ◆ Main Stage Conversationalist
- ◆ Author & Expert on Teams
- ◆ Expert on Critical Thinking

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moderator with out-of-control panelists following close behind. This makes perfect sense; when you have a skilled moderator, the panelists will be less likely to get out of control. Yet when you have a lousy moderator, even brilliant panelists can get out of control or miss the mark.

When you decide to have a panel format, be deliberate and intentional in your choices. Choose an intriguing topic, pick a skilled facilitator to moderate, select interesting and articulate panelists, create a lively format, and engage the audience early and often.

You can watch the video of these findings first presented at the FRESH14 Conference in Copenhagen or view the slideshow presentation at www.PowerfulPanels.com/report.

What's Your Expiry Date?

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months, it will come even faster. Individuals who do not constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills or learn some new technology will pass their "best before" date much sooner.

The corporation where I worked many years ago had a policy that all professionals were required to participate in two weeks of education and skills development each year. Each supervisor and leader had to attend 40 hours of people-management training every year.

The ability to extend people's "best before date" begins during the hiring process. According to a groundbreaking study by Leadership IQ, 46% of newly hired employees fail within 18 months. Contrary to popular belief, job skills are not the primary reason; instead, poor interpersonal skills and lack of cultural fit dominate the list.

Of all the decisions a leader has to make, hiring is the most critical. A company's future is in the hands of the people they hire and how much they invest in staff development. Therefore, you should hire for attitude and talent, and constantly train for skill and

knowledge.

How do you identify, hire and develop the right people?

Begin by doing an assessment of current employees. Identify the best performers and develop a benchmark profile. Use this as a guideline to compare all future hires.

Look for a values match. Shared values should be non-negotiable. You want independent thinking and a diversity of ideas in the business, while sharing the basic principles of the culture. An old boss of mine used to say, "We need wild ducks in this company – as long as they fly in formation."

When hiring or promoting managers, assess their emotional strength. Leaders need mental toughness to endure criticism and overcome disappointments. However, they must maintain a compassion for people and look for the best for their staff.

It is far less expensive to hire than to fire, so take the time up-front to ensure that you employ the right people who have a personal commitment to learning. This way you can extend their expiry date and ensure long-term success of your people.

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What's New at QPC, Inc. – The Extraordinary Team

Since we moved from Toronto and Washington DC to Arizona six years ago, our blood has noticeably thinned out. Whenever we travelled east this winter, we bundled up like never before! (Whatever happened to “global warming?”) This has truly been a brutal winter for most on the Eastern seaboard and we're glad we missed most of it.

Needless to say, we (and most of North America) are delighted that spring is here with business humming along and the beautiful cardinals alighting the tree in our backyard.

Kristin and Joe spent most of February working together – which is a rare treat indeed! We partnered with the Strativity Group to facilitate the rollout of the Kia K900 customer experience. If you haven't seen the K900, it's worth a peek. Comparable to a Mercedes-Benz S550, a BMW 740i or Lexus LS460, the K900 is Kia's bold entry into the U.S. luxury sedan market. The car is so quiet and luxurious that Kristin has been salivating over it since she first saw it at the Kia Design Center in Irvine, California!

Kristin has been busy facilitating and speaking at several company retreats: TGS Western Hemisphere, Kroger Columbus Bakery and Lockheed Martin CIOs, among others. She also jetted over to Copenhagen for a few days to present the findings of the 2014 Panel Report (see page 1) at the Fresh 14 Conference – a conference dedicated to improving the meeting experience.

Joe has been busy this quarter working on his “Commitment to Coaching” and “Employee Commitment to Excellence” program and product which is a dynamic replacement to the obsolete dinosaur called the “Annual Performance Review.” Companies who implement this process are experiencing higher morale, increased productivity and more engagement between managers and employees.

Enjoy the spring and the beautiful weather!

Kristin & Joe

Where are We?

Kristin & Joe can be seen at the following public events:

April

Phoenix, AZ: Chief Executive Network

Toronto, ON: York University: Sales Leadership

Washington, DC: Mid-Atlantic Facilitators Network

Toronto, ON: York University: Critical Thinking

May

Toronto, ON: York University: The Senior Leaders' Course

Peoria, IL: Smart Manufacturing Summit

Toronto, ON: York University: Successfully Managing People

June

Scottsdale, AZ: Sizzling Panels Webinar

San Diego, CA: NSA National Convention

Toronto, ON: York University: Executive Sales

July

Toronto, ON: York University: Management 2

August

Tehran, Iran: Tehran University: EMBA

Toronto, ON:
York University:
Successfully
Managing
People



Practical Team Activities: Is it “On-Brand” or “Off-Brand”



One of my favorite books about creating the ultimate customer experience is Janelle Barlow and Paul Stewart's book *Branded Customer Service*. In this book they talk about service delivery that is consistent with the intended brand promise as being “on-brand” and those things that are not consistent with the brand are “off-brand.”

In this team activity, ask the team to either bring in their ideas, go on a scavenger hunt or go “stem to stern” looking for on-brand and off-brand experiences.

- 1) Ask the team to bring in physical representations or pictures of things they have seen in the organization that are on-brand or off-brand and be prepared to tell the team why. OR
- 2) After the team has assembled, ask them to take a 10-15 minute scavenger hunt in search of real-time events and things that are “on-brand” as well as “off-brand.” Descriptions are required and pictures are optional. This is more chaotic and disruptive, but a whole lot of fun! OR
- 3) Do a “stem to stern” walk-through of the office, plant, store, etc. Walk through the entire location with clipboard in hand and have the team spot the things that are “on-brand” and “off-brand.”

Regardless of which method you choose, the debriefing discussion is insightful as people get their heads around the organization's brand promise – through the customer touch points (customer interactions with the organization) and the way they treat each other *inside* the organization. People start generating ideas to make “on-brand” things even stronger and transform the “off-brand” items to be consistent with the promise.

From the Bookshelf



This quarter I'd like to point you in the direction of your virtual bookshelf located on your iPad, smart phone or tablet. Periodically I find myself trapped without a book or magazine to read, but I always have my trusty iPhone.

Business executive, author and colleague, Kelly Isley, suggested that I try a new app called "Blinkist." (Yes, it is an odd name, but it makes sense once you hear the story below.)

Blinkist is a book summary service – just enough to get the gist of the book and to whet your appetite for more – or not.

Blinkist takes "the world's outstanding works of non-fiction from past and present and distills them into a beautiful, concise and eminently useful format – **blinks.**"

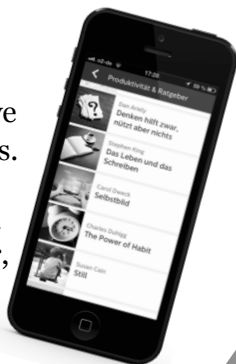
A blink is a short chapter that contains a key insight from a book. It is readable in less than two minutes, so you can read one blink whenever you have a few minutes to spare. It's written so well that you can easily think about it and apply the idea after reading – or decide to buy the book and read more about it.

Here is just a sampling of categories to choose from: Business and Careers, Health and Happiness, Politics and History, Popular Science, Productivity and Self-Help, Society, etc.

In fact, many of the books I have reviewed in this column have been blinkist-ized! Check these out:

- *Decisive* by Chip & Dan Heath
- *Thinking Fast & Slow* by Daniel Kahneman
- *Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs* by Carmine Gallo
- *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni

I am currently "blinking" the book *Abundance* by Steve Kotler and Peter Diamandis because I have heard about that book several times. I'm curious, but not so much to go to the bookstore, find the book and peruse a few pages. I will, however, read it on my iPhone – and I'll let you know if I want more and buy the book!



What Were You Thinking?

One of the ways teams get into trouble when making a decision is when the team has a preconceived answer, idea or notion and all the incoming information seems to support that idea.

It's called "confirmation bias" and it is insidiously strong, especially in a group dynamic. The team might be discussing what the problem or opportunity is, what the solution is, what the root cause is, etc. During the discussion, facts that support the team's direction seem to get airtime; whereas facts that knock down the favored idea get dismissed or marginalized.

Especially in the team dynamic, who wants to be the one to rock the boat or say that the emperor has no clothes? (Love that children's story!) Oftentimes, one might feel that challenging the group may be perceived as not being a team player.

The best way to make sure you and your team don't fall prey to confirmation bias is to give someone the role of "devil's advocate" or "the skeptic" – someone who has been given permission to challenge the team. The team expects them to ask the tough questions – the stupid questions. The what if question. The "why are we doing this?" question. They are to challenge assumptions and look for any potential flaws in the idea.

You may already have people on your team who quite naturally assume the role of devil's advocate and that's good – to a point. Human nature being what it is, if you have one person who keeps rocking the boat and asking the tough questions, that person will quickly get a "non-team player" label.

Rotate the role of devil's advocate – just like you do with timekeeper or recorder. Tell this person to challenge assumptions, ask for facts, point out risks, flaws and alternatives. By doing so, the team will be engaged in testing the idea, identifying the weaknesses and typically improving or even abandoning the idea.

Keep your team honest with a devil's advocate – and they don't have to be as nasty as the devil while they do it!

Quote of the Quarter

"When someone does something good, applaud!
You will make two people happy."

Samuel Goldwyn
American Film Producer