

CREATE YOUR OWN unCONFERENCE!

EXCERPT FROM: [IS.GD/PLANYOURUNCONFERENCE](https://is.gd/planyourunconference) BY OPEN SPACE TRAINER & FACILITATOR **DEBORAH PREUSS**, CPCC

In 2008 I created AgileCoachCamp with my colleague Naresh Jain, with the idea to make it easy to copy, so it could spread everywhere. Now, 60 events later, the agilecoachcamp.org formula is still creating joyful community-building experiences on 4 continents. Here's what I've learned about making these events work... and it may not be what you'd expect! This guide will help you get started, too.

-- *Deborah Hartmann Preuss, cpcc. Karlsruhe, March 2016.*

JUST DO IT

don't wait for the date/venue/committee/sponsor/facilitator/price to be perfect. You have a gift of connection, dialogue, collaboration to give to your community, and they need it now – so get on with it!

PARTICIPANTS ORGANISE IT

it's **not** about you, so find a partner, or four, from day one. Model the value of 'shared leadership' and get the satisfaction, support and learning of great teamwork. Be sure to let participants help you, too!

RELY ON THE POWER OF GETTING 'THE RIGHT PEOPLE'

...*they* know who they are! This is the art of invitation: pick your niche, serve it well, ask for help, be transparent and generous. Then let them self-select – ask them how they fit in, with 'position papers' that you share on your registration site (see position papers examples, below). They will come!

MAKE EVERY PARTICIPANT A MARKETER

offer hints to participants on how to use social media to extend your reach. Their motivation: a richer, more fun event if their "right people" show up! Make your event easy to find, easy to use, easy to share.

SIMPLIFY PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATION

so it's easy for people to talk to you and to each other. Make your "who's interested" page public-editable, without a registration barrier. List participants on your registration page to spark curiosity.

CREATE 'CONTAINERS'

these are the structures that 'hold the space' for self-organisation. Build trust and safety, offer some simple rules, and care for the spirit of the event, both before and during. Open Space, World Café, LeanCoffee™ and Lightning Talks formats can help you create these inviting, enabling 'containers'.

SIMPLIFY FINANCES

there is no need to handle cash – even hotels will let guests pay directly. And ask the printer and the caterer to bill your sponsors directly! Don't fear that you must create a non-profit company, or tie yourselves to a corporate sponsor. Become a "sponsorship in kind" matchmaker instead.

SIMPLIFY REGISTRATION

some teams make this much more labor intensive than it needs to be. Mercilessly apply the principle of pull – get your participants engaged, so they pull in their friends! Ask engaging questions at registration so people know why they want to attend, and share their answers on your site as conversation starters.

A PLACE FOR THE COMMITTEE TO MEET

let a team member - or, better, a pair - care for your meetings: invitations, facilitation, technical aspects. This maintains good communication & morale, and frees the others to work on the event.

ALL IN ONE EASY-TO-FIND-PLACE

don't be an admin bottleneck – use gdocs, dropbox or a wiki to make information assets accessible and easy to use for organisers, sponsors and participants, so they can help themselves and each other.

ASYNCHRONOUS COMMITTEE WORK

teams are fun, but also work apart or in pairs, to use different gifts and allow for different schedules. Report back on status asynchronously (ex: on Slack) or when the whole group meets live on the phone.

FEED BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

make this is an act of servant leadership: offer your guests simple things that say "we care about your whole person." A warm welcome, fruit, water, a sofa, a book table, a kind gesture, a good night's sleep.

PAUSE TO REFLECT

you will be tired, but this is the eat-your-own-dogfood step. Before participants leave, find out what they loved, or would change. Do the same with the organisers, right after or later. Learn, grow, repeat!

RESOURCES

AgileCoachCamp Italy – a classic example
accitaly.wordpress.com/position-papers

Using 'position papers' before your event:
agilecoachcamp.org/tiki-index.php?page=PositionPapers2008

Deb's free Open Space resources & articles
abiggerga.me/blog/tag/openspace

Deb's Open Space Workshop – online or in-person
coachingcocktails.com/osworkshop