Jonathan MacDonald – Workshop Formats

Every workshop Jonathan does is tailored specifically to client needs. He has run workshops lasting throughout a week, 9 hours a day, or formats of 45mins that happen after a talk. The key is what the client would like the outcome to be so the below is simply a modular guide that can be tailored at every stage.

The uses of workshops are commonly for:

• Creative Ideation

• Team Building

• Strategic Planning

...but any objective is able to be achieved in a workshop.

The timings of workshops are commonly:

• 45mins (low interaction)

• 90mins (medium interaction)

• 120mins (higher interaction)

• 3-6hrs (highest interaction)

These can be over one or more days.

Jonathan runs workshops for teams of 2 to 400.

The format adjusts depending on the volume of participants and the level of interaction required. Commonly, organising the room into round tables encourages interaction. Here is an overview, in his own words:

I usually start my workshops with a short talk to set the scene.

Depending on the timeframe this can be a short TED style immersion, or a fuller keynote.

Here are some approaches that have proven super popular:

Open Space Technology - great for generating innovative product/service ideas

Open Space Technology is an excellent method to involve a wide range of stakeholders in solving a complex problem in a fascinating self-organising manner: participants create the agenda themselves around the focus topic of the event. I facilitate this in the centre of a circle, enabling people to organically bring forward their ideas. The ideas with the most traction then create breakout topics that smaller groups can work on. I often use 'Mess Finding' as an approach, enabling people to share which areas they think are in a 'mess' that can be fixed.

The Ultimate Press Release - great for working out a roadmap to success

The group start at their separate tables by writing a press release that's set some time in the future, illustrating what they have absolutely nailed in terms of success. Groups present their press release to each other and I judge who has 'won' by how loud the cheering or clapping is at the end (as a vote). Alternatively, votes can be cast by putting a written dot on a group's presentation paper. Once the winners have been found, everyone works on 'Five Brave Steps' to detail how they can get from here to there, starting backwards through time from the press release.

Barriers Vs Enablers - great for strategy creation

The group sit and write on post it notes:

- what is holding me/us back
- what is accelerating me/us forward
Optional extras for tech-focused clients:
- what technology could disrupt us
- what technology could empower us

These post it notes go on different walls of the room.

Nobody discusses them yet, because I first to a short talk which focusses very much on mindset around barrier and enablers (or, if required, what modern technology is capable of).

Then, all the groups can write their second attempt at the answers and go back to the walls, replacing the original post it notes with their newer ones. Then, I facilitate each participant to share why they wrote what they did. I then ask them to group the post it notes into themes and we agree a priority on which themes need to be worked through for the rest of the workshop.

Reflection Time

At the beginning (if it's a multi-day workshop) and end of each workshop, I include reflection time. This enables people to share their experience with others. It's very powerful and bonds the group together.

"We brought Jonathan in to help our senior team understand how we were going to achieve more relevance in our customers' lives going forward. Primarily, he helped us to understand the business that we are today and the business that we're going to be in the future. I would absolutely recommend Jonathan to any company in any industry. His insight is invaluable."

Jonathan Earle
CMO - O2 Telefónica