

FROM THE CHAIR

Thanks to all of you who were able to make February's monthly meeting at the National Press Club, where Melinda Kendall, SVP at Freeman, spoke about how we can re-energize events with behavior science. By giving our members the tools to understand how people think and respond, she gave us the ability to know how to influence and engage our own meeting attendees. Another fun aspect of February's meeting was the presentation of Xbytes, where we were all able to sample their video fitness break, which got us all up and moving. As a planner, I think what Xbytes is offering is a great way to incorporate a unique feature that not only stands out to conference attendees, but provides potential sponsorship placement opportunities, as well as doubles as a way to keep attendees energized, entertained and stimulated. It was fun to see and experience the Xbyte fitness video in action, but it got me thinking about what other types of unique break ideas are now available to planners. There are hundreds of ideas floating around the industry, but I came across a few that were new to me, and hopefully they can give you guys some new ideas as well.

For those of you that missed the Xbytes presentation, Xbytes (<http://xbytes.com/>) are on-demand video fitness breaks that keep attendees alert, energized and entertained at conferences, meetings and training events. Their series of 5 and 6.5-minute, sweat-free videos integrates easily into your conference agenda to combat sitting and learning fatigue.

Another get up and get moving idea that are becoming more popular are yoga breaks. Not just for those advanced yogis in the room, these classes are geared toward attendees without any yoga background and are a great way to introduce the rejuvenating benefits of yoga into a daily schedule. Yoga postures promote balance, deep breathing invigorates or calms the mind and body, and the physical movement provides release from tensions and increases mobility. You can host these breaks into the conference room, or better yet, if available, take the break outdoors, and you can build them into the agenda for an early morning wake-up break, or an afternoon wind down and rejuvenation.

Play breaks have been around for a while, but with so many new gadgets and toys available, they continue to be a hit at conferences. Whether it's

billiards, basketball or scavenger hunts, planners and suppliers advocate play breaks as a great tool to keep people motivated and provide stress relief. One idea that caught my eye was from the Chattanooga Hotel and Conference Center that brought in remote control cars and had attendees race each other down the conference wing's hallways. Make sure to check out The Fun Dept. (www.thefundept.com), a team-building group that provides companies and planners alike various play packages for their workplace, conference, meeting, or even happy hour!

Finally, if you want to focus more on the learning aspect of your conference, you can build in various ice-breaker/team-building breaks, where according to Bonnie Walsh, a meetings educator and chief strategist at Bonnie Walsh Associates, you can give your attendees a change to grab coffee and then sit down in small groups to talk about what has inspired them

and what they are motivated to do as a result of what they just heard in the session. "Make it part of the learning process to get people to think out of the box. This style is especially good for younger people who don't want to sit around and listen to a speaker—you really have to engage them."

One idea Walsh promotes is to have a scribe write down the ideas and comments that come out of the conversation during breaks. Lists can be compiled for attendees to take with them, either electronically or in print form displayed on session room or break area walls. Other entertaining ideas include organizing team-building groups to construct a building of Tinker Toys or doing a scavenger hunt around the conference facility. You can also incorporate technology by sending attendees to their computers to find specific information on various websites, perhaps even the sponsoring organization's site or use social media like LinkedIn or Facebook to find out information about customers, sponsors, and competitors.

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