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About the Author

Adrian Segar has designed, convened, and facilitated hundreds of conferences globally. He has been creating participant-led, participation-rich events, commonly known as unconferences, since 1992.

Adrian's book *Conferences That Work: Creating Events That People Love* (2009) has been described as "*the* how-to manual" on creating events that truly engage and capitalize on attendees' collective wisdom and experience. His 2015 book, *The Power of Participation: Creating Conferences That Deliver Learning, Connection, Engagement, and Action* — described by Paul Salinger, VP Marketing, Oracle, as a book that "should be *open* on every meeting planner's and event marketer's desk, and used every day"—is a compendium of participation techniques that meeting designers, facilitators, and presenters can use to significantly improve any meeting session.

Adrian is an acknowledged innovator and presenter on participant-led event design, and facilitates popular opening and closing plenaries such as *Three Questions*, *Solution Room*, *Personal Introspective* and *Group Spective*. He has presented at just about every major meetings industry event and been interviewed and profiled by many event industry magazines. Adrian was named as one of the most innovative event professionals by BizBash Magazine, one of MeetingsNet's most influential online personalities in meetings and travel, and has been quoted on the front page of the Wall Street Journal.

Adrian's diverse work experience includes: selling men's haberdashery, interning at the British Ministry of Transport, writing software at a trucking company in Los Angeles, conducting experimental high-energy particle physics research in Europe and the United States, owning and managing a solar energy manufacturing company, consulting on information technology, and teaching college-level computer science. He has founded and managed two non-profits, and has served for decades on numerous non-profit boards. Born in England, he now lives in beautiful Marlboro, Vermont, and loves to sing and dance anywhere.

Acknowledgments

My first two books were far harder to write than I expected. This one was easier.

I like this trend.

We stand on the shoulders of others and are blessed by their generosity. Contributions from the following folks made this work possible.

Thank you Celia for your love and support over the last forty years. As the years pass, I only appreciate you more. Thank you Jeannie Courtney for bringing me to a place where I was ready to do this work. Naomi Karten—I owe you special thanks. You emboldened me at a critical point to write my first book; without you I'm not sure I would ever have become an author. I also acknowledge a deep debt to the late Jerry Weinberg, who amplified the effectiveness of countless consultants like me.

I made a terrible mistake in my last book. Somehow, during the prepublication rush, I overlooked thanking the amazing editor of my first two books: Anne Lezak. Anne, I apologize for not acknowledging how much you improved my writing, and the kind and considerate way you worked with me. I'm also sorry that you left editing to pursue your many other interests, so I don't have the pleasure of working with you again.

Luckily, Danalynne Wheeler Menegus was available to jump into Anne's shoes. Thank you Danalynne for providing excellent, reliable editing for this book!

And thank you Tom Atlee, Esther Derby, Heidi Thorne, Ruud Janssen, Andrea Sullivan, Thiagi, and Mike van der Vijver for your contributions that made this book better.

Since my first book was published in 2009, I've presented and facilitated hundreds of conferences, sessions, and workshops around the world, and consulted with innumerable clients on improving their conference designs. I continue to learn from every experience I'm offered. Thank you everyone who gave me an opportunity to share what I do, who shared back, and who touched my life in the process.

Portions of this book are derived from my earlier books and blog posts on *conferencesthatwork.com*. Sometimes you say it right the first time.

How to use this book

This book has two parts.

- Part One covers what crowdsourcing is, and *why* you need to crowdsource at your event.
- Part Two is about the *how:* a practical compendium of crowdsourcing techniques that will greatly improve your sessions and meetings.

If you're skeptical (or have to convince a skeptical boss) about the need to crowdsource at meetings, read Part One.

If you don't have to be convinced of the value and importance of event crowdsourcing, feel free to skip Part One and dive right in to Part Two.

Part Two's opening overview chapter gives you a quick way to find crowdsourcing techniques appropriate for your needs—by goal, conference phase, group size, and time needed—and a helpful glossary. The techniques follow, one per chapter.

Each crowdsourcing technique chapter has the same four-part design:

- A descriptive overview of the technique.
- When to use it.
- The resources and pre-planning required.
- Step-by-step guidance on implementation.

Naturally, you'll find all the endnote references and specific resources at the back of the book.

Last but not least, if you've enjoyed this book please consider any or all (preferably all) of the following:

- Writing a review on Amazon.com.
- Letting others know about this book on your blog or favorite online services.

- Recommending this book to anyone who might find it useful.
- Checking out my website *www.conferencesthatwork.com* where I blog mightily on all kinds of interesting topics. It's also the place where digital updates to this book will be posted for you to download for free. Email me <adrian@segar.com> and I'll let you know when new updates become available.

Thank you!

Introduction

I've always been curious. I've always wanted to understand the world I found myself living in.

As a child growing up in England, I was driven to study physics, the most fundamental science, a way of looking at the world that perhaps had the greatest chance of explaining the mysteries of the universe to me. By the age of twenty-five I had worked on a key neutrino experiment at CERN, the European particle accelerator, and received a Ph.D. for my efforts.

But a funny thing happened along the way. I became increasingly curious about *people*. The neutrino research was a collaboration of eighty scientists and hundreds of support personnel from five different countries, and I was fascinated by the social and cultural differences that shaped our frequent meetings. Heated discussions about how we should proceed and whose names should go on our journal articles flared and sputtered, and I marveled at the energy scientists poured into the politics of their work. Their passions frequently distracted and detracted from the science we were exploring.

Understanding people better became important to me. I immigrated to the United States after falling in love with Vermont, a rural state with no opportunity to continue the big-lab science path I'd been traveling. I embarked on a series of careers that increasingly integrated my technical background and working with people: owning and managing a solar energy business, teaching computer science at a liberal arts college, and consulting in information technology.

As a consultant I worked with hundreds of organizations, discovering that the "technical" problems they had asked me to solve were fundamentally *people* problems. Over and over again I found myself talking with senior executives on managerial issues, which was a far cry from what I had been ostensibly hired to do.

I also found myself drawn to creating conferences about everything I was doing, both professionally and in my community, and I founded a couple of non-profits along the way.

I loved this work. (Still do.) In 1992, I developed a new conference format where no experts are invited in advance to speak, and where the value of the event grows from effectively tapping the shared expertise and experience of everyone present.

During the ensuing years I wrote two books[1] to share what I'd learned from designing and facilitating hundreds of conferences:

- *Conferences That Work: Creating Events That People Love* (2009) detailed my reinvention of conferences using the participant-driven event process I'd developed for over fifteen years. Since publication, I've released important free updates[2] that improve and extend the book's peer conference model.
- *The Power of Participation: Creating Conferences That Deliver Learning, Connection, Engagement, and Action* (2015) offered an extensive tool chest of processes that further improve significant learning by supporting fruitful connection, meaningful participation, concrete outcomes, and building community at meetings.

Even as *The Power of Participation* was published, I was noticing interest growing in designing meetings that included topics and issues chosen by attendees at the event. Meeting owners were discovering that predetermined sessions weren't adequately meeting attendee needs. They wanted to know how to make their conference programs include the most valuable in-the-moment topics, rather than the best guesses of a program committee.

So I wrote this book.

It's a guide to ***designing conferences and sessions that become what attendees actually want and need them to be.***

I call this ***event crowdsourcing,*** and as you'll see, it includes much more than simply picking good topics to discuss.

Event crowdsourcing, done right, ensures that attendees will be enthusiastic about the content and value of your events and sessions. Whether you're a presenter who knows the importance of meeting the actual wants and needs of your audience, or a conference stakeholder eager to grow your event by making it the very best it can be, event crowdsourcing is an essential ingredient of an effective and successful session and conference.

What I share in this book is not rocket science. It doesn't require any expensive technology. I've designed and facilitated hundreds of events using nothing more than standard A/V, pens, paper, and index cards. Typically, my clients hire me to "show them how it's done" the first time, and then incorporate what they've learned into future events themselves.

I'm excited about the potential for event crowdsourcing to fundamentally improve just about any meeting. This book is my attempt to convince you to try it, and to support your effort every step of the way.

And remember, reading is only the beginning. If what you read stays in your head, it will benefit no one. If you're serious about significantly improving your meetings, you'll need to *put into action* what you read here. When you do, you and your attendees will reap the benefits!