

Disrupting the world of networking conferences

With 2020 not being like any other year (hello global pandemic), a lot of things in our personal and professional lives have shifted. And that means that conferences have to shift as well. Offline events have been a no-go during the last couple of months and it looks like they will be for a while.

Many conference leaders have changed their focus to online events. But I have attended some of these new online conferences, like TechCrunch and Collision, and I have to say - they're not disrupting anything. These online events are a copy and paste of their offline ones and that's not how it works. So here we are with LUCS, making that disruption ourselves.

Stepping away from the traditional idea

In a traditional setting, the idea is to give your audience lots of content, insights, numbers and just in general flood their brains with information. The focus of conferences was on presentations given by big names in the industry, new products and releases. Content was key. But during this pandemic, we were flooded with content in the form of YouTube videos, podcasts,... that were available free of charge. We received lots of information in an organic way and people don't want to pay for content anymore that's not unique. And that's where I saw the first opportunity for LUCS. We shift the focus from pure content to a healthy mix of networking and interesting speakers. Definitely needed in a

world where we now miss the human interaction.

Our audience is our main focus

At LUCS, we do everything with our audience in mind. I started this idea because I was missing the networking part in many of the conferences I have attended during my career. We want to build relationships with our participants, but also between them. So the key is that 70% of your time during LUCS is spent in dedicated networking sessions with 19 other people, 1 LinkUp Manager and one technical support person. We've finally eliminated schedule conflicts (you don't have to neurotically flash between panel discussions, keynote speeches and networking!).

And to make it definitely worth your while, we invited special guests to fill in the other 30% with exciting and insightful interviews.

Comedy and humour will switch it up

We decided to change our approach to keynote speeches and panel discussions with Special Guests. Our goal was to find a way to make it more attractive and tasteful. So what better way than to spice things up with comedy? We invited professional comedians to be our MCs who can better translate complex information into more understandable human language. They will add positive energy to the seriousness of networking and discussions. Even more so, since we spend almost 90% of our lives online now, our brains and minds can get tired quite easily. So we hope that a pinch of fun and comedy will keep you fresh and focused all day.

Networking needs to be facilitated

There are no written rules or guidebooks about digital networking (yet!). We're still trying to understand how to do this properly and effectively. And that's why we need professional support. Our Networking Moderators (we call them LinkUp Managers) study the profiles of our attendees so they can introduce each participant in their networking sessions. They make sure timing is respected and keep structure during the sessions. This is completely different than what I personally experienced recently during the online versions of two well-known and respected tech conferences (TechCrunch and Collision). There were no separate networking times that didn't conflict with other content or stages. Conversations were not facilitated, and people were introducing themselves in Q&A chats during speaker events. Moderators responded emotionally or deleted those messages. This is an understandable response, but it is also

understandable that attendees would like more opportunities to connect.

Who you see is who you get

Another thing I experienced during Collision and TechCrunch, is that I scheduled a meeting with someone I wanted to connect with and someone completely different showed up, which means 2 people were using the same ticket. This isn't an issue when it comes to viewing content, but it is when it comes to networking. It catches you off guard and is also misleading. At LUCS, we want to make sure you meet the person whose name is on the ticket. This is also the job of our LinkUp Managers, they know the group and will know when a face doesn't match the name on the ticket.

This is really our key differentiator. We have limited and exclusive groups in our networking sessions, which is more productive for participants and avoids surprises like seeing someone completely unexpected.

We do our homework

You won't get randomly put in a networking session with other people. That's what our application form is for. We want to know your goals, needs and expertise so that we can match you with the people that will make valuable connections for you. We organise a group of contacts and a personalised schedule so you can save time and join the networking sessions without worrying.

So no 3 or 4 parallel sessions where you have to choose which one to join or which speaker to watch (I'm looking at you TechCrunch and Websummit).

Your engagement is important

As I said before, our audience is our main focus. This also means that we want to involve you in the conference as much as we can. At LUCS, you're not a number behind a screen just watching speakers give their presentations.

After networking sessions and interviews with our Special Guests, we will ask for your feedback. We want to give you the conference you need and deserve, so your feedback is extremely important to us.

In addition to all of the things listed above, we record the sessions so you can re-watch them whenever you want. We also keep the database with the attendees available for 4 months after the conference, not 3 - 4 days.

I think this clearly shows that online conferences need to be dramatically different. There will be new players introducing new formats and offering effective networking opportunities. LUCS just happens to be the first. Check it out [here](#)!

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