

# VALUE FOR TIME CONFERENCES



## CONFERENCE OF CONSEQUENCES - *our antidote to 'Death byPowerPoint'*

***"I like company conferences, they are great habitual events where the really important things are said over cocktails and are never done"*** - Peter F Drucker, writer, management guru and 'social ecologist'.

We tend to agree with this perspective and have built an outstanding reputation for helping our clients co-create and deliver memorable and effective conferences that deliver valuable outcomes. This is not just down to the fancy location or the wit and insights delivered by our keynote speakers - although both can help - but because we deliver substantial, tangible benefits that are appreciated both by the participants and our client organisations.

All too often company conferences can cost the earth - quite literally if you measure the carbon footprint of many global organisations - and, as Peter Drucker so eloquently points out, results are really only generated when the corporate jargon stops and participants are released to talk freely, in their own time and in their own way.



Our view is that conferences present a rare opportunity to engage people in the organisation's strategic journey. Like all great journeys there needs to be a sense of anticipation and excitement beforehand; a clear roadmap to guide progress along the way; space for adventure and discovery built into the trip; and a desired destination that makes all the effort and expense worthwhile. The outcomes we aim to deliver are uniquely tailored to suit each client. Recent conferences have enabled Sensei clients to:

- Address a prevailing corporate mindset and re-align this to future strategic intent.
- Develop new ideas and insights on how best to tackle a current or impending challenge.
- Build commitment to change and engage participants to ensure they have a say in future success.
- Listen, learn and deepen relationships between diverse cultures, across geographic and functional boundaries and among levels in the hierarchy.
- Create a powerful network and sense of community to deliver improved performance long after the conference.

The facilitation tools and interactive designs we deploy to achieve these outcomes are drawn from our experience as global consultants, world class facilitators, trainers and keynote speakers. Our clients benefit from our creativity and knowledge as specialists in improving human performance and a conference design that will deliver meaningful and impactful outcomes.

So, if you ask us to work with you on your conference what will you get and what will we actually do?



**#1 Why bother?** We start by helping you clarify the mandate for the conference. The key questions we ask are: *'Why are you organising this conference and what do you want to achieve from the investment of time and energy?'* Simple enough questions you'd think, but they can be fiendishly difficult to answer with clarity and consensus.

Unfortunately, too many executives see a conference as an ideal opportunity to 'transmit' messages from the top, simply because they have a captive audience all in the same place at the same time. Frequently the top team members have different and usually divergent objectives that can never comfortably be reconciled into a single event, no matter how hard they try! The resulting compromise can only leave everyone disappointed. Our starting point is therefore designed to help avoid these issues. The aim is to gain agreement, 'buy-in' and commitment from the entire executive team to the objectives of the conference; and this will ensure the event delivers value worthy of the investment.

**#2 Design.** Once the destination and starting point are clear, we co-create a design that will take the participants from their initial state to the desired state through a number of 'moments of truth'. These are 'aha' moments that change participants' perceptions of the world. Our role is to develop interactions and tailored exercises that ensure engagement of both the head and the heart throughout the conference experience.



As part of our support we will prime the key players participating in the conference to ensure they are 'good to go' and realise the vital role they are playing in the conference experience. This may involve coaching and training, as it is important they are confident and comfortable to deliver what is required at the event. This also helps to prevent them from falling back on the same old dull and boring 'tell and transmit' sessions so common in conferences around the world.

**#3 Facilitate.** Our role during the conference is to help you create and manage the process and to develop the emotional and physical environment required to achieve the desired outputs. We will facilitate key discussions, provide short skill share sessions and create tailored interactive exercises that enable authentic, action-orientated discussions to take place. We also work hard to ensure that new ideas and new thinking get some 'airtime' and everyone gets a chance to listen and be listened to.

Of course we will also provide keynote speeches, which are designed to inject new thinking into the proceedings, but we will resist the traditional 'motivational conference speech' as we find they have little or no impact on the business in the long term. Once the sugar high from these speeches dies down, they are remembered more for their entertainment value than for anything else; this is not our philosophy. Our interventions have to make a difference to the organisation and we leave pure entertaining to the entertainers!

**#4 Deliver.** All our conferences have a 'lock down and deliver' follow up step built into the design. The value delivered here is to ensure the ideas, energy and insights generated at the conference do not die on the conference floor, but actually get embedded into your organisation. Without this step

the conference, no matter how well designed, executed or highly rated, is simply a 'talking shop'; it is not going to change anything.

The support we offer in this final step varies a lot, depending on the purpose of the conference itself and your ongoing requirements. At the very least we will always interview a representative cross-section of participants a week or so after the conference, to let the warm afterglow subside and check the value they got from the event was as envisaged in the design. We also work with you to ensure the actions and next steps agreed at the conference are actually implemented, delivering the results that justify the investment. In our experience, the follow up needs at least as much attention as the preparation for the event itself - a reality that is rarely found in most organisations...

## Our Experience

We have helped clients such as Unilever, Reckitt Benckiser, DuPont, Danone and Firmenich to create conferences that are genuinely engaging and deliver 'outcomes' - not just talk. These outcomes can never be achieved through the traditional 'transmission-heavy' designs used by far too many organisations these days.



Sensei is an international consulting firm that helps their clients deliver business results by improving human performance and optimising the value of team and leadership interactions.

We focus on areas where companies can raise the bar on performance, productivity and profit. We ensure that any work we do has clear line of sight to specific business outcomes of value to the organisation, so that a solid return on time, energy and investment is realised.

We are experts in the process of unlocking potential and focusing this in the right ways on the right aims; and we excel at emotionally engaging leaders and teams to own the change, take accountability for it and deliver it. In short ...  
**'We do the really hard part of the soft stuff.'**

## Testimonial

*"Our leadership team had only been together for around 6 months and the global supply chain conference had lots of people from different countries coming together for the first time. I think the conference was a very important first step in building our supply chain community. We wanted to create a community where people could contribute, add, as well as take from the community; contribute, as well as be told what to do. So the conference was an important part of setting that scene, it set the tone for how we wanted that community to work in the future. At the end of the day we did the conference to achieve a result. We have very clear cost objectives and service objectives as an operations community. In order to achieve those, we have to cooperate. We have to cooperate across functions, across countries, across technical areas. We have had a very successful year and a lot of that can be traced back to our ability to effectively operate as an integrated whole."*

**Bob Woodburn - Global Supply Chain Director, Danone Medical Division.**