

HOW TO WORK OUT LOUD AT YOUR NEXT CONFERENCE

BY HELEN BLUNDEN



“Can you work out loud outside of work?” someone asked me during a webinar recently. It was a good question. I understood how working out loud could be misinterpreted for the times when we are in the work flow - at our place of work - however, it doesn't have to be.

Working out loud can happen anywhere and anytime. It happens during times of learning and reflection. This could happen to be at a conference, training event or a workshop.

I have attended many conferences in my life. I have listened to presentations by keynote speakers and been inspired by their personal stories. I have scribbled notes in my notepad and spoke with people from different industries. I have learned their ideas and tips on how they solve problems and put those ideas into

action when I returned to work.

Now, imagine if all those insights, ideas, tips and stories were in the one place.

Conferences are great places to work out loud because they have an engaged audience interested in the themes presented. It is not about sitting and listening to presenters on stage anymore. It is about actively participating in the conference experience. After all, the presenter is there to inspire us to think, take action and maybe ruffle a few feathers!

Conferences also have various social media channels that encourage participants to share their thoughts. People can have conversations with others whether they happen to be at the conference in person or not.

Here are some tips for you to “work or learn out loud” at your next conference.

Share your Notes

Many of us take down notes when we listen to conference presenters. These notes can take many formats. They may be lists, sketchnotes or mind maps.

Often a presenter may make a point and it resonates with us. We highlight it in our notepad, or like me, draw exclamation marks and stars around it. These notes alert us to review, revisit and take some form of action. Our scribbled notes inspire ideas in us that we want to explore but too often, these ideas stay in our heads.

At your next conference, when you write your notes include why this highlighted note or point is important for you and provide some context around it. You may want to answer the following questions:

- Will it solve a particular work problem you have and how?
- Is it a new method you haven't tried and why not?
- Will the idea work with that team project you're currently working on?

Take a photo of your notes and your ideas then share it on the conference social media channels. Invite others to comment on your ideas or offer suggestions or recommendations for improvement.

Record a short video of your thoughts on the topic presented

If you're not one to write notes, consider recording a short video instead. During a break, take a few minutes to reflect on the topic. Rather than providing a run through of what the presenter talked about, pick one key point that resonated with you and reflect on why this recommendation, suggestion or action will help you with your work.

- What different actions will you undertake?
- How does this action vary from those you have currently been working on?
- How will this action mentioned help you in your work project?

Then, use your mobile device to record a short reflection video of 30 seconds to 1 minute in duration and

share that via the social media channels.

Alternatively, you may invite others to share their thoughts on your video too. That way, you can capture different observations and perspectives. Invite people to comment on your video and start a conversation.

Use conference hashtags and Twitter handles

Using the relevant conference hashtag in your tweets can help you to connect to people at and after the conference. The hashtag will help people outside your network and those not attending the conference to see your tweets and interact. Using the Twitter handle of the speaker is another way for your tweet to be seen by a wider audience, especially if the speaker retweets you.

Share links to references mentioned

Presenters and delegates at conferences share great tips, resources and references. These can be in the form of presentations, videos, documents, books and links to helpful information on the internet.

One way to make your thinking and learning visible is to document and curate these references into one place (for example, you can create a Google Document, blog, wiki or use a curating site such as ScoopIt). You can also include any of your own additional resources about the same topic and then share these.

Invite others to add their own resources to your document to create a crowdsourced reference that you and your colleagues can use back at work after the conference.

Don't just show us a photo of who you met, tell us their story

A picture says a thousand words. Too often we see photos of people having a great time at conferences. With their drinks and conference programs in their hands, they smile for the camera and the moment is captured in time. But who are these people?

- Where are they from?
- What role do they play in their organisation?
- What challenges do they face?
- What are they working on?
- What do they hope to learn at the conference?

Take a photo of the people you met and share their story (with their approval of course). This helps in a few ways. Not only does it personalise the experience and breaks down the awkwardness of first introductions, but also allows others to introduce themselves if they share similar backgrounds, challenges or industries.

These are just some ways you can make your thinking, learning and working visible at your next conference. If you would like to learn more about ways to transform your conference experience from a passive to an active one, refer to the Free Resources section in the Activate Learning Solutions website (activatelearning.com.au) to download the free infographic 10 Ways to Learn Out Loud at Your Next Conference.

Helen Blunden (@ActivateLearn) is passionate about helping business activate the way their people work, learn and connect through networks to tap into their collective brainpower and create value for their customers. Contact via activatelearning.com.au