

WHAT
MAKES

TED

INSIDE ONE OF THE WORLD'S
MOST GAME-CHANGING
EVENT PLATFORMS

BY SANDRA O'LOUGHLIN

TICK

WELCOME TO AN EVENT format that turns the whole “meeting” concept on its head. One that limits speakers to 18 minutes instead of the usual 45. One that engages attendees in curated brand experiences rather than an exhibit booth. A meeting where dinner party conversation replaces the traditional panel discussion and attendees are encouraged to step up and teach the industry experts a thing or two. An event that has spawned spinoffs and grassroots initiatives where questions find answers, thoughts become action and social networking drives change.

Welcome to TED, the Technology, Entertainment and Design extravaganza where ideas reign and conversation abounds. Former president Bill Clinton has been a speaker, as has Bill Gates and Sir Richard Branson. Attendees generally include academics, entertainers, research and development people, venture capitalists, lawyers, architects, doctors and even the occasional starlet or two. Its \$7,500 ticket is the hottest thing in Long Beach, where the event takes place to sell-out crowds each year. A second annual flagship conference, TEDGlobal in Edinburgh, takes place during the summer and boasts a similar cachet. People come for the inspiration that results from sitting in the same room with artists, philosophers and scientists, or for their own personal reasons. Maybe even just to be able to say they were there.

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TED2012, held Feb. 27 to March 2 at the Long Beach Performing Arts Center, attracted more than 1,350 attendees from over 40 countries. Speakers included Michael Tilson Thomas, who summarized the history of music, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee who discussed the women's peace movement. Oil businessman T. Boone Pickens presented new ways to find and supply energy in the U.S. All in 18 minutes. It was a veritable panoply of main stage presentations, another 50 or so short talks, demos and informal TED U discussions. Live blog coverage was updated throughout each day at blog.ted.com.

Based on the theme “Full Spectrum,” the conference took a deep dive into how the environment impacts the spoken word, like how whether you are sitting by a campfire or in an office, you can potentially receive the same information differently. And what happens when you bring sight, sound, motion and sensory experience to the conversation.



IDEA WRANGLER:

Ronda Carnegie, head of global partnerships and a key strategist at TED, helps brands dream up unique sponsorship activations.



MICHAEL BRANDS



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JULIANA ROTICH



ROBERT LESLIE



ROBERT LESLIE



RYAN LASH



RYAN LASH



JAMES DUNCAN DAVIDSON

That theme is emblematic of the brainpower and critical thinking behind TED. If you're lucky, you've witnessed firsthand the energy, enthusiasm and ideas generated in this unique forum. But chances of that are pretty slim. So, put on your thinking cap, settle into your comfy beanbag chair and read on for an inside look at what makes TED tick, from best practices, to sponsor activations, to the TED culture, community building and spin-offs such as TEDActive, TEDx, the TED Prize and more. You'll surely find ways to TED-ify your next event.

CURATED PARTNERSHIPS

Ronda Carnegie, head of global partnerships and a key strategist at TED, describes the conference as an "ideas performance" where on-stage lecturers present topics, better known as the 18-minute "TEDTalks," in a theatrical way. This year, in keeping with the Full Spectrum theme, speakers incorporated images, music, animation and sensory experiences that involved the audience. Unlike most conferences that offer attendees a choice of tracks and sessions, TED is a single-track event. So everyone attends the same presentations. An in-house team of 38 people based in Vancouver handles conference logistics and production, including signage, scheduling and run of show.

The experience begins outside the venue on the huge frontage space of the Performing Arts Center. The area is transformed into a village where TED's corporate partners install "lounges," each targeting different interest groups, or "tribes," as Carnegie calls them. "We look at the lounges as a way to acknowledge that TED is a group of people from different tribes, and tribes represent their interests, whether technology, art, design or anything else," she says.

TOP ROW: TEDActive 2012 attendees relax and catch the action on video screens; Hand-raisers at TEDActive 2012; TED conference owner Chris Anderson; TED speaker and sexuality educator Al Vernacchio asks attendees to think of a new metaphor for sex. **MIDDLE ROW:** TEDxNairobi's Green City in the Sun; the Autodesk social space at TED2012; social spaces at TED2012; Target's Design Starts Here social space. **BOTTOM ROW:** Google's Garage at TED2012; At the Google Garage, TEDsters could watch the winners of this year's Ads Worth Spreading contest; Dancers from the American Ballet Theatre perform a duet by Twyla Tharp; Bill Nye, the Science Guy, speaks in praise of the sundial.

In this year's village, Google created a garage concept inspired by its heritage of innovation and the fact that it actually started out of a garage. Audi's lounge depicted a Full Spectrum view of the city of the future and urbanization. The retailer Target offered an area called The Studio that took its cue from the notion of the paper airplane. Syfy demonstrated Augmented Reality and connected the Full Spectrum concept to the entertainment industry. Living Home constructed an on-site home of the future. Genentech performed 24-hour DNA testing for four different gene types in a playful way looking at things like attendees' hair type or short-term memory, then delivered the results musically. "Attendees could hear their own DNA in music, and at the end of the conference we actually played an orchestra of the TED community in the Genentech lounge," Carnegie explains. No mere table-top displays here!

Dewar's Scotch Whisky sponsored the Dewar's Hub, an interactive experience that displayed all the tweets and conversation at TED in real time. Motion detection technology that captured attendees' hand movements allowed them to physically stir and manipulate the TED Twitter activity on the screen and bring for-



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ward topics of interest. People around the world could tweet requests to @dewarshub to receive automated Twitpics displaying the discussions around their chosen topic. In addition, Dewar's was served at the TED Fellows reception and other events throughout the week, and 80 attendees could participate in a "masterclass" with Dewar's senior global brand ambassadors. Others could access the session via a video version of the class.

Contrary to most conferences where everything from the exhibit hall space to lunch sponsorships and signage in the bathrooms is up for grabs, TED carefully curates partner activations to ensure they map back to the meeting's theme. "We really protect the ecosystem at TED, and work with partners as curators to create the right kind of experience that makes them a part of the TED community," Carnegie says. "In the case of Target, for example, it was far more interesting to engage the community in a conversation around design by creating an amazing space tied to paper airplanes. It was more memorable and people engaged on a higher level. Brands are not used to doing it,

but they find that TED helps them re-think how they are doing events in general."

This type of brand experience requires time and effort. Partners usually commit at the close of the conference to come back the following year. "That gives us a chance to focus over the next year on what the theme is and how that might connect back to the work they are doing," Carnegie says. "So it becomes a project in itself."

Prospective partners spend a day at TED to immerse themselves in the culture before being invited to participate. "We want it to be somewhat competitive, for brands to want to come because they want to do the work," Carnegie says. "There is a high level of engagement."

GROWING THE FRANCHISE: TEDACTIVE

That engagement extends beyond the Long Beach conference further now than ever before, thanks to new formats such as TEDActive, TEDx and other grassroots innovations introduced by the conference owner Chris Anderson. Anderson is a former publishing entrepreneur who in 2001 acquired TED from its founder Richard Saul and now operates it through his nonprofit The Sapling Foundation. TED actually began in 1984. Today, it is supported by conference tickets, patrons and sponsors, who pay dearly for the chance to get up close and personal with attendees.

Even with its elite speakers and A-list attendees, the TED franchise has become democratized as Anderson has brought the conference to the masses in myriad ways. TED content is distributed free on ted.com, iTunes and YouTube. More than 1,200 TEDTalks have been viewed upwards of 700 million times. TED's Open Translation Project volunteers have translated, sub-

titled and provided interactive transcripts of the talks into non-English languages. Through TEDx, just about anyone can obtain a free license to host a TED-style gathering, as long they don't use it to promote a commercial, religious or political agenda. TEDxLive events extend the reach via streaming webcasts.

But before there was TEDx, there was TEDActive, a more casual affair than the main conference that offers live broadcasts of the Long Beach sessions and additional on-site activities. TEDActive was born of a desire to reach more people but still maintain the specific experience that is TED. "We focused on how you experience TED content outside of the conference itself," Carnegie says. "We started seeing that it was a really interesting lab." Organizers in 2008 presented the first TEDActive conference in Aspen, then moved it to Palm Springs, so it would be closer to TED's present home in Long Beach.

If, as its mantra goes, TED is about ideas worth spreading, TEDActive is where its "superspreaders," a younger group into social media, gather. If TED is heavily planned and orchestrated, TEDActive is more laid back. In 2012, it cost \$3,750, a bargain compared to TED's pricey admission ticket. Carnegie describes TEDActive as what happens when TED meets South by Southwest and Burning Man. "It is very experiential and incredibly improvisational," Carnegie says. "And we want it to be that way." It's also home to TEDx organizers who come for workshops on best practices.

Besides watching the live-hosted TEDTalks from Long Beach, attendees participate in pre-conference experiences, picnic lunch discussions, interactive dinner parties and a final toast in the Showlounge. And, of course, they blog and tweet and all that good stuff.

They can also engage in one or all of six brand-sponsored TEDActive projects, a central part of the experience. Brands can come to TED with a question, as TOMS posed this year in the TEDActive Giving Project. TOMS, a footwear brand that donates a pair of shoes to a needy child for every pair its customers purchase, wanted to know how to get individuals, businesses and communities more engaged in the act of giving. Additional projects dealt with health, urbanization, progressive ideas, color and community+commerce. "TEDActive has become an incubator for ideas where people come not only because they want to think about how they can be active in the brand and actively push content forward, but also to shape ideas and provide people with feedback," Carnegie says.

Every project has an amplifier who spreads what is happening at TEDActive to the larger TED community outside of the conference. The back-and-forth dialogue that results moves the project forward. "It becomes a social media opportunity to help shape an answer to a question that a brand may have," Carnegie explains. (For more on this year's TEDActive, see pg. 59, where EM community editor Ken Briodagh relates his experience there.)

LETTING GO: TEDX

TEDx, on the other hand, extends TED's "ideas worth spreading" mission to independent, locally organized events held in small towns, major cities and remote locales like Nairobi, where organizers put a sheet over corrugated metal and villagers and farmers gave the TEDxTalks. TED licenses communities, organ-



izations or individuals to host these TED-style gatherings, where just like TED, speakers are limited to 18 minutes.

There are more than 12,000 TEDx Talks on the TEDx YouTube Channel, youtube.com/user/tedxtalks, and more than 100 TEDx Talks made it onto ted.com, giving people on the local level a global stage for their ideas. TED provides no financial support, but supplies information on how to design a TEDx event, promote it and work with sponsors on its website and through a manual, workshops and videos (for a deeper dive into the TEDx platform, see “The TEDx Factor” on pg. 61).

The arrangement benefits both sides of the equation—TEDx organizers who wouldn't have had access to that information before and TED itself, which gets to see how those groups are innovating. “TEDx organizers function almost like a developer group, connecting with each other and sharing best ideas and practices,” Carnegie says. “By the nature of the web and our providing accessibility to these frameworks, we learn so much about how ideas are moving around the world and what happens in the power of sharing them.”

Case in point: After a 14-year-old child prodigy named Adora Svitak took to the stage with the thought that the world needs the “childish” thinking that comes from wild creativity and optimism, the TEDx community created TEDx Youth, a chance for kids around the world to create their own TEDx events.

“This is something we never would have foreseen, and is one of the things that is so wonderful from the TEDx community,” Carnegie says. “Their rate of innovation is huge and it's really giving it a chance to have an open mind to new formats and ideas, and that is exciting for us.”

SEEKING NEW TEDS

TED itself is constantly on the hunt for people, ideas and innovations that it can bring to the conference and onto the world stage. Three curators at TED and a small research team scour the media and other sources for potential presenters. “We may hear a speaker speak, and ask them to create a TEDTalk, which is different from the one they just gave,” Carnegie says. “It's different from people going around and giving their stump speech.”

TED's culture of ideas worth spreading has given rise to initiatives that broaden its reach far beyond Long Beach and Edinburgh. TEDBooks are short e-books by speakers that elaborate on a single idea originally presented on TED's stage. TEDFellows brings young innovators into the TED fold in order to further their projects and activities. The annual TED Prize bestows \$100,000 to realize the winner's “One Wish to Change the World.” This year's prize went to an idea, “The City 2.0,” and is sponsored by software developer Autodesk, which is providing content development, free software and other resources. The

LEFT TO RIGHT: Playing with the fog projector at Syfy's social space; TED Fellow Jean-Baptiste Michel listens to his “genetic symphony”; Technoillusionist Marco Tempest at TED2012.

prize gives citizens and communities a platform for developing a new city concept based on sustainability and in July will award 10 micro grants of \$10,000 to 10 local projects.

And the innovation continues. Between April and June this year, TED is hosting a global audition series to unearth speakers for its 2013 conference, which will be themed “The Young. The Wise. The Undiscovered.” Audition events will take place in 14 cities on six continents. Local TEDx organizers in each city will produce the events.

Applicants submit online auditions, including short videos, two months prior to the audition. From those submissions, TED will invite 30 of the best to each audition, where speakers will have three to six minutes to deliver a proposed talk in English. TED will post video of the candidates' talks on ted.com, where the public will vote on its top choices. Many of the 50 most popular selections will be invited to speak or perform at TED2013.

TED's second annual Ads Worth Spreading program provided a rich opportunity for brands as well. In this effort, TED from October to December 2011 accepted submissions that exemplified a clever, compelling or infectious idea from agencies, brands, producers and individuals. Six teams of two, consisting of one TED speaker and one rising star from the advertising industry, sought out entries from specific areas of interest. Entries ranged from 30-second spots to five-minute mini-documentaries. Winners were vetted by industry experts and an internal TED team, and the winning work was showcased at TED2012, ted.com and YouTube. Among the winners: Canal+, Chipotle, L'Oréal Paris and Mazda.

Initiatives announced earlier this year take TED even further afield. In partnership with NPR, TED in April will launch “TED Radio Hour” based on its 18-minute TEDtalks. In mid-March, TED launched TED-Ed, an initiative that offers original video content by teachers on a new education channel on YouTube. And finally, TED is launching a TED Institute where corporations can work to translate TED into a business strategy. Unilever has signed on as a founding partner.

For those looking to emulate TED's success at their own events, Carnegie offers three strategies: innovate, collaborate and be creative. “Partners want creativity, and they are enthusiastic when it comes to getting a better understanding of how to engage with the TED community,” she says. “That is not necessarily about walking into an area and letting people scan your badge.”

Now, that's a full spectrum of possibilities to imagine **EM**.



ACTIVE SPACE: TED-sters could pull up a beanbag or grab a cozy couch to watch remote talks from TED Long Beach.

GETTING EXCITED

AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TEDACTIVE 2012: FULL SPECTRUM

THE TECHNOLOGY AND design worlds have been all aflutter about TED since its inception in 1984, but in the last few years, it has grown exponentially, both in awareness and in thought leadership. The platform is anchored in the main events, TEDGlobal in Edinburgh every summer, and TED in Long Beach and TEDActive in Palm Springs, CA, in February. As media attention for the events has grown, so has brand interest, but TED doesn't make it easy. The organizers are über sensitive to the interests of attendees, so they keep sponsors away from overt marketing in order to insulate the TED-goers from sales-y pitches that might taint the experience for them. EM sent Ken Briodagh to TEDActive this February to get a sense of how brands like American Express, AT&T, Lincoln, Google and Walmart get in front of this group of smart, affluent and trend-setting consumers, without crossing the line.

The TEDActive event in California is interesting in that it shares content on two campuses simultaneously. The biggest speakers and keynotes are live in Long Beach, and then simulcast to several the-

aters and seating zones in Palm Springs, while Palm Springs also has unique live content for the more than 600 attendees from 53 different countries who attend there. Each day is filled with the 18-minute TEDTalks, either live or virtual, and the people flock to hear the top minds in many fields speak about the future of technology, engineering and design, and how those fields will make lasting changes in the world. Meanwhile, for the

Palm Springs attendees, where EM was embedded, sponsors worked with TED organizers to get creative about how to reach the audience in a meaningful way.

The most obvious and first interaction most attendees had with sponsors was through the gift bag. And what a gift bag. Radio Flyer gave attendees a scooter. Roku, the internet television streaming device, gave out a \$100 Roku box. Each attendee got a Jawbone Bluetooth headset. And that's not to mention the dozens of smaller gifts like the one from shoe maker KEEN, which donated a pair of shoes to someone in need through its HybridLife project in the name of each



URBAN OUTFITTER: An all-cardboard cityscape crafted by TED attendee Kiel Johnson.



UPPER LEFT: No stuffy ballroom seating here. TEDActive attendees chill on beanbags as they catch the day's content. **LOWER LEFT:** Live streams from TED Long Beach supply the presentations for TEDActive. **UPPER RIGHT:** Lincoln's design studio gave TEDActive participants a shot at sculpting the car of the future.

attendee. Or help, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help those in need become and remain self-reliant, which gave each TED-ster a first aid kit that doubled as a bone marrow donor test. Just send in the sample and join the donor registry. Attendees were talking about that one all week.

The most immersive brand experiences came through attendee-driven content creation in the form of the TEDActive Projects. They are a key element of the attendee experience at the event, and are designed to allow the TED-sters to dream up, plan and execute six projects covering various hot global issues with a goal of creating a concrete solution. Each project is sponsored by, and aided by a key sponsor. This year, they were: The Health Project, hosted by Pfizer, which set out to answer the question, "How can collective wisdom around health and longevity improve every stage of life?"; the Color Project, hosted by HP, which looked at ways to use color as an effective tool; the Progressive Ideas Project, hosted by Johnnie Walker that looked at ways to bring great ideas into full-scale execution; the Urbanization Project, hosted by Shell and examining how to manage energy consumption in future urban environments; the Community & Commerce Project, hosted by American Express, asking how to keep community values in our networked society; and the Giving Project, hosted by TOMS, which looked for ways to get individuals and businesses more engaged in the act of giving.

Each attendee was assigned to one of the projects, but was free

to graze and help with them all or switch to one that interested them more. The goal was for the TED community in Palm Springs to come together around the specific topics and ideas and use the ideas and energy of the group to spark initiatives that can take real action. Sponsors provided topic experts to help advise and move teams toward the goals they set together and helped them work together to turn those ideas into action. At the end of the week, each project team presented their findings and plan for further work at a gala banquet. And though they were sponsors, and clearly so, the brands and their representatives were smart enough to become part of the teams, and really chipped in to make each project a success.

The one "traditional" activation was situated well away from the main events, and though it was easy to know that Ford sub-brand Lincoln was the creator of the tented design gallery, it was so understated it felt like just another experience. (Are we listening, yet?) It was a clean, white, two-room tent with a "brain bar" full of energy-rich healthy snacks on one side and a design studio on the other. The studio was made up of four sculpting stations, each with tools and a block of modeling clay. A professional sculptor was on hand to help, and guests were free to go ahead and design a car, creating the shape by hand. Talk about a tactile and endemic, but subtle way to get in touch with a brand.

For those brands out there looking for a quick lead capture, a mass sampling platform or a fast way to fill a contact database, TEDActive probably isn't for you. But for those looking for a meaningful way to align their products and services with people who are passionate about sharing new ideas, TEDActive's tribe might just be the crowd worth sourcing. **EM** —*Kenneth Briodagh*



MAKING THE GRADE: TEDxYale was just one of thousands of TEDx events chosen to carry the TED logo this year.

THE TEDx FACTOR

OPEN SOURCING DRIVES TED'S CONSUMER-GENERATED GLOBAL EVENT PLATFORM

GLOBAL EVENT PORTFOLIOS can be a blessing and a curse. On the plus side, they give event and conference producers the ability to reach worldwide audiences on a local level by deploying fully-branded and turnkey “events in a box.” On the downside, global marketers, despite their best efforts, still struggle to make

always based on whatever we did being free to people who were willing to participate,” Stein says. “But if we were giving away the TED brand, what type of framework did we need to put in place to protect it? What kind of guidelines? And how many rules did we need versus how much do we open source?”

each live experience consistent with the messaging that’s being shared at the year’s anchor events. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t ensure that thousands of small international events are in step with the home office’s brand rules and guidelines.

TED solved this problem three years ago when it activated its first series of consumer-generated “events in a box” called TEDx. As the TEDTalks conference series began gaining momentum in 2008 and 2009, the organization’s leadership team began fielding an overwhelming number of requests from people around the world who wanted more TED events, more often. The team decided that any more than its three signature events was too many, but that there could be an alternative model that allowed eager and passionate TED fans to fuel the fire in their own communities.

“We asked, how do we create a framework that we could take all this enthusiasm for TED and frame it in a way that people could actually do something with on their own,” says Lara Stein, director of TEDx. “So the idea of open sourcing TED and allowing people in some way to host their own TED-like events was born.”

The open sourced event, in which everyday people could host TED-branded events without hands-on management by the TED corporate team, was a step into uncharted territory for a brand that was well known and highly regarded around the world. So Stein and her team took several months to develop a set of guidelines that would enable consumers to execute an “independently organized TED event” while still retaining the TED DNA. And they weighed many of the same issues global event marketers do when trying to find the right balance between brand rules and freedom of interpretation.

“The fundamental premise of TED is transparency and that great ideas should be free, so the framework was



OPEN MINDED: TEDx director Lara Stein shares video clips from the TEDx global community at a TEDTalk.

fellow TEDx organizers together for meetups. An “Innovations” newsletter goes out once a month to all organizers highlighting cool TEDx ideas that are being brought to fruition in the community. And finally, a local ambassador program for areas of the world that are growing quickly helps the TED corporate team identify local cultural differences that they may not understand or may need to be taken into account. “It really helps across the board in managing the program from a local perspective so we can do it in a way that is intelligent to the local community,” says Stein.

Even with all the open doors and access, the program today is still much more transparent than it was three years ago, which Stein admits felt risky at first. “There were a

The answer came in the form of a manual, called the TEDx Toolkit, that is a collection of guidelines and rules that cover everything from venue selection and hosting tips to p.r., media and sponsorship, and still serves as the backbone of the program today.

All prospective TEDx organizers fill out an online form outlining the spirit and purpose of their event. (They are asked to review free webinars and a series of collateral on the website before even beginning the application.) Then, the TED team reviews each application. It doesn’t necessarily look for a detailed agenda or high-profile speaker names to catch their eye. Instead, they vet every application based on a feel for the fit of the organizer.

“We’re looking to make sure that their agenda is based on our TED philosophy which is that they’re passionate beings who care deeply about ideas and our underlying philosophy that ideas should be free,” says Stein. “They’re curious souls—that’s probably the best description of what we look for in an application. It’s not agenda driven. It’s driven by a curiosity and a need to share this curiosity in a positive way with the rest of the world.”

Once the application is approved (about two-thirds of all applications get the green light), the organizer gets a license and then can begin planning the event. In addition to the Toolkit, TED has taken the planning process and outsourced it further by throwing an open call for ideas out to the broader TEDx community. A TED wiki enables organizers to upload and share documentation with one another. A Google group acts as a forum for information sharing and networking once the organizer’s license is approved. A local workshop program brings

lot of questions and pushback from marketers and branding gurus and people who thought what we were doing was a big risk on many fronts—giving away the TED brand for free,” Stein says. “But it was definitely an experiment and I think we approached it that way.” Even with the opensourcing policy, she says that 99.9 percent of the time, each event goes off problem-free and very few licenses have to be revoked.

“Generally, it’s an amazing community that does self police and does incredibly innovative stuff,” she says. “I say all the time that we’re learning so much from them. They come up with all these new ideas around the brand and around creative implementation and activation that we would never, ever have dreamed of when we launched TEDx.”

Since the first official TEDx event in March 2009 at the University of Southern California (USC), the program has since gone on to enable more than 3,200 local organizers all over the globe the opportunity to host their own TED event (for an in-depth look at two recent TEDx events, see “School Spirit” and “Desire to Inspire” on pgs. 63 and 65).

What can corporate marketers learn from the TEDx open source model? Is the occasional “unconference” enough to spark the passion, or should you give up more of your stringent brand guidelines at your next mid-sized global event? “You’ve really got to get used to living in a world where you are not in control,” Stein says. “When you’re managing a global community, there are surprises every day you would never have dreamt of and most of them are amazing but there are those that are more challenging, so you’ve got to be comfortable getting to the point where you can manage in that space.”

Or, *un-manage*, as the case may be. **EM** —Jessica Heasley

TED TUNES: An a capella musical performance by Baker's Dozen concluded one part of the day's presentations.



SCHOOL SPIRIT

INSIDE YALE UNIVERSITY'S INAUGURAL TEDx EVENT

ON A BRISK WINTER day this February, 400 students, faculty, alumni and local community members converged on Yale University's neo-gothic campus to experience the school's first-ever TEDx event. Yale had been host to other TED-affiliated events, including a livestream of a TEDxWomen conference from the TEDGlobal event in Edinburgh, Scotland, and a Salon with a guest curator from TEDGlobal. But TEDxYale 2012 was the first official TEDx event on campus wholly planned and organized by two of its students, Diana Enriquez and Miles Grimshaw, both of the class of 2013. Here's a play-by-play of the day, as captured by executive editor Jessica Heasley.

THE PRE-SHOW

The one-day event kicked off at 9 a.m. when attendees were welcomed through the massive wooden doors of Sheffield-Sterling-Strathcona Hall (one of the oldest buildings on campus) and into a small hallway where they could check in and pick up their name badges. Each badge was a bright shade of "TED red" and included the attendee's name, designation (press, alumnus, student) and two bits of personal information each attendee had submitted online when they applied to attend the event. Under the words "Talk to me about..." organizers printed the topics each attendee was interested in so other attendees could break the ice

and network, and at the bottom of the badge were the words "I want to meet..." where TED organizers listed the names of two fellow attendees whose interests, based on their applications, aligned with yours. On the back of each badge was a short program overview.

Colorful posters lined the hallway leading into the main auditorium and featured fun factoids about the event's attendees, like, "Number of people who want to talk about Music: 30" and "Percentage of our audience who uses Twitter: 23." Large dots, dashes and lines were glued to the floors leading into the auditorium. We would later find out that this was a tie-in to TEDxYale's video trailer, which was played at the beginning of the event, and paid homage to Samuel Morse, a Yale graduate and the inventor of the Morse Code.

Inside, attendees found their seats while staffers in TEDx and GANT co-branded t-shirts raced around snapping photos, chatting with fellow students and testing the A/V equipment. Clothing retailer GANT served as the "official event partner" and in exchange for its support, received a subtle display space to the left of the stage that featured antique trunks, stacks of neatly folded button down shirts and old trophies (TEDx rules prevent any sponsor from being on stage).

The stage featured a projection screen, simple stage lighting, some color effects to wash the backdrop in TED's signature red hue and a homespun backlit TEDxYale sign that looked like it had been spray





COMMUNITY-DRIVEN: Yale students Diana Enriquez and Miles Grimshaw (top) planned and executed TEDxYale, which featured a partnership with national retailer GANT, and attracted a diverse mix of student, locals and Yale alumni.

painted in a dorm room, but in a good way—it reinforced the consumer-generated spirit of the event.

THE CONTENT

The theme of the event was “A Twist of Fate” because, according to a statement by one of the event’s co-founders, in times of change, each speaker is “embracing new opportunities and developing groundbreaking work.” All of the speakers were Yale students, faculty or alumni and each spoke for the requisite 18 minutes.

The program was broken into four parts: Spark, Provoke,

Redefine and Pioneer. Each of the segments featured between six and seven speakers who presented one after another, some with brief introductions or segues by the student organizers. The content was as wildly diverse as the student body. One Yale alumnus spoke about her personal experience of bucking the norm and home schooling her 11 children, several of whom went on to become Yale students. Next, a professor of astronomy and physics discussed her passion for dark matter and black holes. A current student then eloquently and movingly shared her life experiences growing up in Afghanistan. And another upbeat, and at times funny, presentation by two young alumni discussed the upside of watching their first business fail. Each presenter jumped right into their speech and instantly immersed attendees in the topic—no lengthy setups or boring slides. And each wove a heavy thread of personal insight and experience into the presentation, transforming a one-way PowerPoint deck into something more personal and accessible, and therefore, much more memorable.

A student speaker competition held earlier in the year invited students to vie for a speaking slot at the event and then gave all Yale students a chance to vote online for their favorites. The vetting process seemed to work because each of the student presentations were well practiced and in keeping with the more seasoned faculty and professional speakers on the roster.

THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Just like Morse’s dots and lines, TEDxYale 2012 delivered a clearly marked path back to TED’s simple mantra, “Ideas worth spreading,” and TED’s overarching vision for its TEDx platform—to be inspiring, reflective and inclusive of its local community. It drew its content, sponsors and speakers from the Yale community; shared a wide variety of interesting ideas that were not all academic or bookish, despite the venue; kept to the 18-minute format, for the most part (you know who you are, Business School guy who talked way too long); and kept things lively and engaging even when stomachs were grumbling for lunch. The format required your brain to always be in the “on” position and kept the crowd highly engaged. One session even wrapped up with a skit that turned into a glee club-style musical performance.

And at every step, the event gave a nod to local and school-affiliated innovators, like Samuel Morse. Even the event’s sponsor, GANT, was a New Haven-based entrepreneur who started in 1949 with one shop on campus and then went on to found a successful national retail brand.

I also appreciated the pre-event email that detailed how to get most out of the event. It reminded attendees to come early to network, stick around until the end, ignore your email for awhile and talk to strangers. As the organizers said at the beginning of the event, the most interesting person at the event may be sitting right beside you. **EM**

—Jessica Heasley



RIVERSIDE RENAISSANCE: Team Epiphany founder Coltrane Curtis hosted one of four “movements” at TEDxHarlem.

DESIRE TO INSPIRE

HARLEM HOSTS ITS FIRST-EVER TEDx EVENT

IT WAS ONLY FITTING that TEDx would make its way to Harlem, a community in upper Manhattan that has a rich history of ideas and innovation that started in the 1920s with the Harlem Renaissance. During that period, Harlem’s community became a hotbed for theater, literature, art and music that has since become an indelible part of America’s cultural identity. And today, Harlem is seeing a rebirth once again with the renovation of entire blocks of multi-million-dollar brownstones and the constant presence of former President Bill Clinton whose William J. Clinton Foundation operates just a few blocks from the iconic Apollo Theater.

On March 27, TEDxHarlem brought together Harlem’s past, present and made a promise for its future at the neighborhood’s iconic Riverside Church—the same place where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967 delivered his famous anti-war speech. Fittingly, “Create Waves” was the theme of the event. It spoke to the notion that ideas have the ability to spread and make an impact, no matter where they are conceived. That message inspired more than 700 attendees to come out to the event, including Brodie Enoch, a public transit rider campaign manager at Transportation Alternatives. “I feel like a kid in a candy shop,” he said. “I’m hoping to connect with other people, not just telling them what I’m working on but listening to what other people are doing.” And there was plenty to listen to.

The theme was embodied in each of the 20 speakers that took to the stage that day to talk about subjects that spanned mobility and connectivity, health and wellness, technology, science and engineering, art and math, built environments and civic

engagement. There were also remarkable performers and a variety of videos shared with the audience, which included local business owners, leaders, school children and the community at large. EM associate

editor Sonia Andresson-Nolasco takes us inside Riverside Church to bring you more of her day at TEDxHarlem.

THE SETUP

Originally, TEDxHarlem had been scheduled for the Apollo Theater, but the organizers moved it to Riverside Church. They emailed registered attendees with the change of venue and posted it on tedxharlem.com, explaining that the new venue would allow them to offer a reduced general admission of \$20 (at the Apollo it was \$100). It was a good move as there were many folks coming in off the street and buying their tickets on-site. Just through the main doors, there was a cafeteria stocked with light snacks and water, and tables where attendees could pick up tickets, grab a downloadable app and pick up press information. Public relations agency Edelman, an event sponsor, had staff on-hand to answer questions and help guide attendees throughout the day.

The church also offered a multi-level space and good proximity to other nearby venues that allowed TEDxHarlem to offer experiences beyond the stage. For example, Syracuse University held its WIGIT conference a few floors above the main stage. During the lunch break, there was an Innovation Playground pop-up organized by the Rockwell Group, speaker Kevin Carroll of Active Play and NBA Cares in Secura Park, a block up from the church. Children at the event got to hang out and do exercises with NBA player Felipe Lopez, which tied to A Partnership for a Healthier America’s Play Streets initiative. There were also informal luncheons where attendees could chat with



the speakers. Those who couldn't attend could watch the event streamed live on livestream.com/tedx or visit the event's Facebook page. On-site, attendees were encouraged to tweet using the hashtag #TEDxHarlem.

THE CONTENT

The programming started off with an introduction by Marcus Glover, TEDxHarlem organizer, who made everyone in the audience stand up and greet the person next to them. Then, in the tradition in the African-American community of asking an elder before you speak, he asked his grandmother in the audience if he could speak. He then took attendees on a brief journey through the Harlem Renaissance explaining that TEDxHarlem had as its goal to make the day a transformational moment that will drive ideas and change well into the future.

Glover then introduced Majora Carter, radio personality and environmentalist, and the host of the first of four "Movements" scheduled for the day: Global Future, The Application of Ideas, Innovation and Triumph and Actionable Moments. Carter talked about how gentrification is often perceived as a negative for deeply-rooted cultural communities like Harlem, but that it's like the wind—if you harness it, it can be a force for good. With that, Carter set the stage for the rest of the day. She introduced the speakers in her group, which included BINA-48, the world's most advanced social robots, and Bruce Duncan, managing director of the Terasem Movement Foundation Inc. and project leader for the LifeNaut Project.

Movement Two was hosted by Carlos Dominguez, svp at Cisco and included talks by Scott Belsky, ceo at Behance Network, a leading online platform for creative professionals, as well as a performance by Kris Bowers, the 22-year-old winner of the 2011 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition Award. The host of Movement Three was Coltrane Curtis, owner, founder and creative director of Team Epiphany, and a former MTV VJ. There were many excellent speakers and performers in this movement, which ranged from a talk by student Ana Henriquez, a Mexican immigrant detailing how she was smuggled into the U.S. at five years of age and her current fight for citizenship, to an exciting singing and saxophone performance.

Movement Four was hosted by best-selling author and nationally syndicated advice columnist Harriette Cole. She wrapped up



HEALTH BITES: Outside, students stretch their legs at a pop-up playground hosted by A Partnership for a Healthier America and NBA player Felipe Lopez. Inside, Chef Marcus Samuelsson speaks about the importance of farmer's markets.

the programming with more inspirational talks, including Dr. Alim Muhammad who called Harlem a "food desert" and urged people to create "hoop houses" atop their buildings to grow fresh produce and fruits. There were performances by the cast of the off Broadway hit, "Mama I Want to Sing." The big finale was a performance by Ghana-based singer and his band Blitz The Ambassador, which got everyone on their feet. We swayed our hips to the mixed sounds of Hip-Hop, Soul and African beats. In Harlem, it couldn't have concluded any other way.

THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE

To say I was inspired couldn't begin to capture the emotion that TEDxHarlem generated for its audience (or, at least for me) that day. What it will mean for the community, only time will tell. But the formula that TEDx brought to its first Harlem event offered not only motivational speakers and excellent entertainment, it mixed in speakers who offered resources and ideas for initiating change in the local community.

Like Robin Chase, co-founder and former ceo at Zipcar and GoLoco (the first company to combine ridesharing, social networks, and easy payment), who put her money where her mouth is. The next stop for her businesses? Harlem. Then there was Jake Barton, founder and principal of Local Projects, an award-winning media design firm for museums and public spaces, who has done wonders for Detroit and had ideas about how to do the same in Harlem. And there were those that have been doing the hard work in the community for years, like Thelma Golden, director and chief curator at The Studio Museum in Harlem. Or Chef Marcus Samuelsson, who opened The Red Rooster in 2010, which not only celebrates the roots of American cuisine but provides jobs. And there's no greater responsibility than creating the leaders of tomorrow. Like Seth Andrew, superintendent at Democracy Prep Public Schools, a network of "no-excuses schools" in Harlem.

Most events and their keynote speakers are great at delivering inspirational messages. TEDxHarlem turned those messages into actionable ideas. If the energy can be sustained, and I hope it can, I say, get ready for another Harlem Renaissance. **EM** —S.N.