erova

UX Show and Tell

Organizing, marketing, and facilitating workshops to share
user experience design documentation and deliverables.

An Introduction to UX Show and Tell

Thank you for considering organizing a UX Show and Tell workshop.

These events have been extremely successful since seven people met to share what we were working on at a DC-area design agency in September 2009.

With your support and interest, these workshops will continue attracting user experience designers, information architects, web developers, content strategists, graphic designers and others who are willing to share their work with each other to either get useful, implementable feedback or to share unique solutions to potentially common design problems.

Organizing a UX Show and Tell isn't difficult, it's simply a number of steps that have to be reasonably complete to pull one off well, and by the time the last question is asked, chances are you'll feel good that people benefitted from the experience.

The next few pages examine the above responsibilities in greater detail, but you'll quickly notice there are no hard and fast rules here.

This isn't a franchise; it's your event.

We're just here to help.

As of May 2010, designers, developers, strategists, and others have participated in UX Show and Tell workshops on three continents, five countries and over a dozen cities.

**At its core,
organizing UX Show and Tell involves:**

• Finding a host location (if you don't work where you'll be hosting the event)

• Marketing the workshop

• Determining a workshop format

• Facilitating the presentations and dialogue to maintain a helpful, productive environment

• Making sure participants can stay in touch with each other after an event to continue networking and collaboration

Finding a host for UX Show and Tell

One factor will ultimately determine whether your UX Show and Tell will be an intimate, round table discussion or a presentation-style format: the host location.

We've had successful Show and Tells with as few as 7 people sitting around a table offering feedback and sharing deliverables, and we've also conducted successful events with only 2 presentations (twice), and another event that spanned 3 rooms and over 40 people with 3 or 4 people sharing work in each room.

It's important to remember that while the host location will determine the number of people who can attend, it likely won't determine the workshop's success—that's ultimately up to the presenters and the ensuing dialogue.

Invite the hosts of UX Show and Tell to speak a few moments to introduce their firm, talk about their work, and announce whether they have job openings available.

Serving food for after-work events is considerate and also encourages timely arrival.

Consider soliciting additional local firms to sponsor food in exchange for a few moments to discuss their firm's work prior to beginning. In other events, the host has additionally agreed to purchase food as well.

Recently, hosts have even provided beer to attendees, though serving alcohol is strictly the host's decision.

Common Attributes of Successful Hosts

Host locations are most successful when they've met the following criteria:

- Are reachable by public transit (in towns and cities that rely on public transportation, of course) or free/low-cost parking

- Have enough chairs for the number of attendees

- Easy access to the Internet

- Laptop and projector available

- Space available to hang or tape up large charts, maps, or other paper-based deliverables

- Willingness to let attendees eat and drink on-site

- Flexibility with ending time in case events begin to run long (not required, but nice to have)

How to Find a Host

Finding a host may take a few emails and phone calls to gauge interest and availability, but hopefully after a workshop or two you'll actually have requests to host events.

- Consider your own employer's office as a host

- Look to who hosts other local creative events

- Don't forget community centers and libraries

Marketing UX Show and Tell

When marketing the workshop, it's important to try positioning the workshop as valuable for seasoned User Experience veterans, but also for web designers, developers or others who are interested in all things UX or are trying to understand the day to day work we as UX designers do every day.

It's also important to encourage interested attendees to RSVP so you can have a head count but, perhaps more importantly, identify potential speakers.

Some events have featured numerous people excited to come to Show and Tell, but are hesitant when asked to share something of their own, particularly when they're attending their first Show and Tell.

Remember to encourage people to show drafts or incomplete work. Participants may receive feedback they can put to work the very next day following UX Show and Tell.

By facilitating a UX Show and Tell event, you can fully utilize any existing resources, such as the UX Show and Tell network web site.

Specifically, we suggest creating a location-specific group within the web site to manage RSVPs and poll attendees to see who wants to share work.

Furthermore, such a group also serves as a list of interested potential attendees should you choose to organize another workshop in the future.

Places and methods of marketing UX Show and Tell workshops:

- Twitter (both via @uxshowandtell and through attendees mentioning and re-tweeting workshop announcements).

- LinkedIn groups

- LinkedIn status updates

- Via our uxshowandtell.com web site

- Encourage host locations to tweet and blog their involvement

- Piggy-back with another group, such as the IxDA, ACM-CHI, or UPA

- Emailing local design schools/programs to alert students of the event

- IxDA.org Local Discussion board/email lists

- Boxes and Arrows Events

- UX Net Calendar

- Johnny Holland calendar

UX Show and Tell formats

UX Show and Tell has been conducted in a number of formats but with a consistent fundamental theme: everyday practitioners sharing work to generate helpful feedback or to provide insight into a unique solution.

If you try a new twist we'd love to hear about it so we can try it out ourselves.

Roundtable

Ideal for smaller audiences with proportionately high number of participants (10 people attend and 5 to 8 people share). A projector and screen is ideal but not required.

Pro:
Intimate discussion, people feel comfortable sharing since it's not a presentation.

Con:
Only feasible with small numbers of attendees. You'll need a greater number of participants since the group is smaller and thus discussions may be brief.

Speaker/Audience

Traditional format where a presenter stands in front of an audience and speaks to the attendees. This format will likely require a projector, screen, and laptop, and chairs facing a common direction.

Pro:
Ideal for groups of more than a dozen people. More people attending likely means there will be more discussion.

Con:
Some people may be intimidated to share work with a larger audience.

UX Book Club dual event

Select a practitioner-friendly book (*Prototyping* by Todd Zaki Warfel, *Communicating Design* by Dan Brown, and *A Project Guide to UX* by Russ Unger and Carolyn Chandler come to mind) and spend the first hour discussing the book, and a second hour sharing deliverables inspired by the text.

Pro:
Share work directly influenced by the book, in addition to all the benefits of a UX Book Club.

Con:
Less time for sharing work, dependent on an appropriate book, people may want to share without reading the book.

People have also suggested organizing a UX Show and Tell where junior practitioners share their work with UX veterans for guidance.

Interest-Focused Show and Tell

If an event has a number of participants who want to share, consider dividing groups into interests, so one room or table is focused on pre-design deliverables and another group is focused on a different group of deliverables, such as wireframes or prototypes.

Pro:
Attendees participate in self-selected interests; if someone wants feedback on a usability evaluation, the chances are good that someone else can contribute to the conversation.

Con:
Limits cross-pollination of expertise; risks one group with too many participants and not enough in another group; requires numerous presenters.

UX Show and Tell best bets

Before the event:

Try to find a host interested in fostering or maintaining a relationship with the UX community

Market the event with advanced notice, but drum up exposure within days of the event via Twitter, LinkedIn, and various email lists (the Philadelphia event had a strong turnout in part because the event was also promoted by the Philly-CHI email list, for example).

Manage RSVPs via the *uxshowandtell.ning.com* web site or other similar system (Eventbright, Upcoming, etc.). However, using *uxshowandtell.ning.com* will allow for greater opportunity for post-workshop collaboration and networking.

Serve food early to encourage people to arrive on time. To offset costs, solicit sponsorships by a local firm in exchange for the opportunity to promote their organization and increase brand awareness.

When planning an event, try to have 1 or 2 people already willing to show work, or keep a few files handy in case the last scheduled presentation ends sooner than expected.

After the event:

If interested, notify attendees before and during the event if there will be a post-workshop get-together at a local bar or pub.

Encourage the participants to revisit the *uxshowandtell.ning.com* web site to maintain communication with attendees even after the event.

Attendees can then either continue specific conversations, connect on other sites such as LinkedIn, or post the deliverables they shared, if appropriate.

During the event:

Start the event on time.

After you've determined how many people are going to show work, determine how long each presentation will be and adhere to the time allotted.

Alert speakers when they have used half their total time, so they can decide how to balance the rest of the presentation and leave time for questions and answers.

Focus the discussion on the deliverables; at times the group may get hung up on business questions that the presenter may have little control over, or even any knowledge. Asking a UX designer why a product costs so much or why they don't ship internationally isn't a good use of time.

> Though people may not initially want to share at their first UX Show and Tell, they'll likely encourage you to schedule future events where they'll feel more comfortable sharing work...

Likewise, try to focus the presentation on unique aspects of the work, if a person begins to simply describe elements painfully obvious on the screen.

Consider providing attendees the means to notifiy each other if their respective firms are hiring. Often times a big colored sticker to wear with a name tag is sufficient for large events; for smaller events you can simply prompt attendees to raise their hand.

For smaller events (fewer than 10 people), leave a few minutes after opening remarks to allow the participants to introduce themselves to each other to encourage the informal conversational format.

Thank you.

Thank you for considering organizing a UX Show and Tell in your community. If you need anything else that you didn't find here or elsewhere, don't hesitate to contact Chris Avore at any of the following:

Twitter: @erova

email: avore@erova.com

and don't forget to follow
UX Show and Tell news and events at

@uxshowandtell