Lightning Talks Workshop

Madison Women In Tech
February 20th, 2025

Madison Women In Tech

- Madison Women in Tech is a supportive, inclusive community that empowers and elevates women and nonbinary folks in the Madison, WI tech scene.
- https://madisonwomen.tech/

About Me

- Organizer for Madison Women in Tech
- Organizer for DevFest WI
- Staff Software Engineer @ Grow Therapy
- Very occasional speaker

Overview

- Lightning talk about lightning talks!
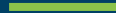- Lightning talks workshop!
- Present!

[Lightning talks are] the gateway drug of standing on the big stage with a mic.

Heidi Waterhouse

What is a lightning talk?

- A very short presentation, generally lasting between 5 and 10 minutes
- as part of a conference or similar forum.
- usually several lightning talks will usually be delivered by different speakers in a single session.
- Some formats are more structured (ignite, PechaKucha)

*A good lightning talk is insightful, inspiring, thought-provoking, useful, humorous, controversial, **or** enlightening.*

Barrie Byron

What makes a good lightning talk?

- Engages the audience
- Makes exactly one point
- Keeps details to a minimum

Why should I give a lightning talk?

- The benefits of giving a talk
  - Build public speaking skills
  - Boost confidence
  - Increase visibility
- While minimizing the downsides
  - Friendly environment
  - Low commitment

Lightning talks are almost always fun, for both the speaker and the audience.

Barrie Byron

Workshop

Pick a topic

What are *you* excited about?

- Spread your joy; share your passion for an idea. Or your frustration!
- Tell a story; storytelling is universal and we all have a story to tell.
- Capitalize on something recent

Pick a topic

- 10 minutes: Come up with ten potential topics.
- 5 minutes: Pick your top 3 and share them with your neighbor.

- Think back on the last week, what is something you:
  - learned?
  - found surprising?
  - were frustrated by?
- Think about your unique perspective
  - What do you think differently about because of the perspective?
  - What is a controversial opinion that you hold?
  - What is a mistake that you have made?
  - What is something you recommend everyone do?

Write your conclusion

What do you want the audience to get out of your talk?

- You must have a punchy conclusion. Write it first, then all your other writing will lead to it.
- Make sure you can make your point in 5 minutes.

Write your conclusion

- 10 minutes: For each of your top 3 potential topics, write down your conclusion.
- 5 minutes: Share with your neighbor. Narrow down to one topic & conclusion.

Outline

Less is more - decide on your main point and stick to it!

- Include the minimum level of detail necessary
- Some frameworks:
  - Thesis/Antithesis/Synthesis
  - "Power wrap"

Make the presentation

(but not now)

- More pictures, fewer words
- Most details don't matter
- Know your format

Outline & Make the presentation

- 25 minutes: Create an outline for your selected topic & conclusion

- Less is more
- Some structures:
  - Thesis/Antithesis/Synthesis
  - End strong and "power wrap" your lightning talk… restate your one great idea.

Practice

Practice practice

- Practice:
  - outloud
  - with a timer
  - in front of a mirror or video camera
- Get comfortable with your technology

Practice

- We'll break you into groups with a facilitator for each group.
- Present to your groups. 5 minutes per person.
- Be brave! You are all in the same boat!

You did it!

Are you interested in doing it again? Let us know!

References

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