

Generative News Team Energizes Flemish Conference

Image



‘Citizen’ journalists, professional news makers collaborate to produce news throughout event

After sending the newsletter they had worked on the entire day to print, the news team covering a Belgian organization’s recent conference headed out for supper about 9 p.m. Lisa Coppin says she was “nearly euphoric” when, halfway through their meal, colleagues arrived with a large box of the now-printed newsletters. Almost instantly they could see the tangible results of their hard day’s effort.

A member of the [Axiomnieuws Belgium](#) team, Lisa shares this story to illustrate both the energy and rapid production characterizing a service she and Axiomnieuws

colleague Lien Van Laere piloted with the Agency of Civil Servants for the Flemish Community this fall.

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Lisa Coppin and John Sevenans of Stebo, Belgium.

The project entailed Axiomnieuws teaming up with seven of the client's employees, as well as several photographers and a filmmaker, to create a temporary news team. The team had a single task: to "generatively" cover a major client conference.

"(The client) was thinking about ways to enhance the learning effect and to make people come together and transmit their enthusiasm about the topic, and we started talking about news making as a way of doing this," says Lisa, who brings a background in human resources and training in [Appreciative Inquiry](#) to her role with Axiomnieuws.

"They were very enthusiastic about the concept of an internal team (from their organization working) with us from Axiomnieuws."

Axiomnieuws team members provided training on generative news to other members of the news team before the event. They also contributed to the writing, editing, layout and printing of the three newsletters that were published — one that participants received on arrival and two printed and distributed on each day of the event. Content was also posted online to the client site.

Client team members also played a pivotal role. Much of their efforts focused on interviewing conference participants and writing the news.

Lisa describes an energetic, co-creative spirit permeating the news team during the conference. People collaborated, took initiative and revealed they were "in tune" with each other and what was needed to accomplish the day's task of turning out a two-page newsletter of all fresh content.

Some team members discovered their latent news-making gifts through the

experience. One who had said he wasn't sure he wanted to write, ended up demonstrating a flair for capturing the atmosphere of the event, Lisa says.

On the interviewee side, conference participants appeared enthusiastic to stop their rush from seminar to seminar and participate in the interview process.

"It was like they really noticed there was a plus value to this and they wanted to tell their story too," Lisa says.

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A team member celebrates the fruit of his group's efforts.

Several participants said the interview process helped them refine their learnings from the event. "People would say, 'I didn't know I picked up so much from that workshop; thanks to this interview we really got to a deeper side of what we learned.' So already through the interview something happened."

One moment of pride for the news team was persuading the public services minister, who attended the conference, to not only be interviewed but answer questions inviting his appreciative reflections on the conference and participants. This was especially noteworthy given he's of a party that tends to be "quite critical, especially of civil servants," Lisa says. He not only acquiesced but tweeted later thanking for the interview.

Axiomnieuws Belgium is interested in continuing to hone and offer this type of event coverage delivered by a temporary, generative news team made up of professional news makers and client representatives, both Lisa and Griet say.

Benefits include client employees receiving news making and organizational development training and experience that they can continue to use afterwards.

The event itself receives "an incredible boost," says Lisa, through the opportunity for participants to engage in a thoughtfully designed interview process, as well as read "instant" insights from others. This can not only stimulate thinking but has the potential to generate action and new connections as people reach out to others

they've read about.

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Conference participants pause to review the newsletter created by the news team during the forum.

Then there is the final product — a compilation of stories capturing high points and insights. Organizations could leverage this in a number of different ways, including to identify champions or innovative ideas to support and inform future endeavours.

Lisa adds she believes it's important that this news service continue in some form after the event.

With regards to the Flemish community project, she's very curious to see what evolves from here.

Through the conference news coverage, that community now has a robust archive of input, contacts and insights it wouldn't have had otherwise. "What new things will arise from this, what changes in the way they lead? There are so many things you can ask," Lisa says.

An ongoing generative news exploration could discover and capture the evolution from the event, contributing to sustaining momentum and continuing the learning.

The conference news article can be found [here](#).

Please visit [this link](#) to access the conference newsletters.

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