



SIXSIDES

WHITE PAPER

ENCOURAGING ATTENDEE INTERACTION TO BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY AT EVENTS

HOW DELIBERATE INTERACTION DESIGN AND GAMIFICATION TURN EVENTS INTO COMMUNITY ENGINES

Most events are designed around content, not connection.

This white paper shows how to deliberately engineer interaction between attendees, sponsors, speakers and organisers – using gamification, design and technology – so people actually meet, talk and stay connected long after the event ends.

A SixSides white paper for associations, conference organisers and community-led events.

What you'll learn

> WHY PEOPLE DON'T CONNECT (EVEN WHEN THEY WANT TO)

We unpack the social and structural barriers that keep attendees on their phones instead of in conversation – and outline simple, repeatable ways to lower the stakes, break the ice and make networking feel natural, not forced.

> FROM ONE-OFF EVENTS TO ONGOING COMMUNITY

Discover how to turn moments on the day into long-term relationships, user-generated content and a stronger sense of belonging – across conferences, meetups and everything in between.

www.sixsides.co

Executive Summary

Most events are still built around content, not connection.


Attendees sit through talks, collect a tote bag, and go home with a handful of business cards and a vague sense that they “should have talked to more people”.

- Sponsors struggle to prove ROI.
- Speakers have no easy way to keep conversations going.
- Organisers put in huge effort... and then watch the energy disappear as soon as the doors close.

At SixSides, we believe **events should be the engine of a long-term community** – not just a two-day show. That means deliberately designing interactions between all sides of the event, and using technology and gamification to lower social barriers, capture real moments, and turn them into lasting relationships and marketing assets.

Themes of this white paper

- Why people still hesitate to connect at events – even when they want to
- How to think about your event as a **six-sided community**, not a one-off conference
- How gamification and structured interaction can unlock behaviour change
- Real results from events like Laracon AU and Volunteering WA
- A practical framework you can use to design more interactive, community-driven events
- How the SixSides platform helps you standardise this across all your events and meetups



At Laracon AU, SixSides helped measure 5,260 connections between attendees.

The connection paradox

We live in a hyper-connected world, but in-person events often *don't feel* very connected.

You've probably seen it at your own events:

- People standing around the coffee cart on their phones
- Attendees scanning name badges but not starting conversations
- Delegates who wanted to network, but walk away saying, "I didn't really meet anyone"

On paper, the ingredients are all there: shared interests, great speakers, sponsors who genuinely care about the space.

But without structure and safe "excuses" to interact, people default to what's comfortable – sticking with who they already know, or retreating into their phones. COVID has only made that hesitation stronger.

We see it differently

Our view is simple: **connection is too important to leave to chance.**

If your event is meant to build community, you have to design for interaction as deliberately as you design your agenda.

The six sides of an event community

The name *SixSides* reflects how we see event-driven communities.

A strong event ecosystem is made up of **six roles**:

1. Event organisers
2. Associations / the “head” organisation
3. Speakers
4. Sponsors
5. Attendees
6. Volunteers / staff



In many ecosystems (like Laravel), there’s also a mix of core brand, external organisers (e.g. community meetups and independent conferences), and global/local variations – all of whom still plug into the same community.

Each side:

- Comes to the event with different goals
- Needs different kinds of interaction
- Measures value in different ways

When events are designed around only one or two sides – usually content for attendees and logo placement for sponsors – **everyone else misses out on potential value.**

When you design with all six sides in mind, interactions start to compound:

- Attendees connect with each other and with sponsors and speakers in meaningful ways
- Sponsors move from “logo on a wall” to real conversations and qualified leads
- Speakers extend their impact beyond the stage
- Associations and organisers capture stories, content and data to grow the community between events

Why people don't connect (even when they want to)

From our work across conferences and meetups, we see the same blockers repeat:

- **Social apprehension:** introversion, shyness, or just feeling awkward walking up to strangers
- **No natural "reason" to approach someone:** the classic "what do I say?" problem
- **Old habits:** people stick to their own team or the one person they know
- **Design gaps:** everything is focused on sessions, not structured interaction
- **No single source of truth for media and moments:** photos live on phones; organisers can't access or repurpose them easily

The result?

Attendees leave saying things like:

- "I wish I'd talked to that person."
- "I should have taken more photos."
- "I didn't really meet anyone new."

Sponsors and speakers feel the same – they know there was potential in the room, but it never quite clicked into actual relationships.

"Most attendees don't remember the slides. They remember who they met."

From content to connection: shifting the event “strategy”

Most events are still designed around **content delivery**: great speakers, tight agendas, polished slides.

Those things matter – but they don’t automatically create connection.

We look at events through a simple lens:

- **Community is the consequence** – it can only emerge once people actually interact
- Every event has **demand** (people wanting to connect) and **friction** (all the reasons they don’t)

When friction is higher than demand, nothing happens. People sit in sessions, clap politely, perhaps collect a few business cards, and then go home without starting many new relationships.

To flip that equation, you need to:

- Make it **easier to connect than not to connect**
- Give people **clear, low-risk reasons** to start conversations
- Build **interaction into the design** of the event, not as an afterthought

That’s where gamification and deliberate interaction design come in – helping people take that first step, over and over again, until connection becomes the norm rather than the exception.



Gamification as a bridge, not a distraction

One of the most effective ways we've found to lower social barriers is to **turn connection into a game**.

With our *Tag, You're It* game (built into the SixSides platform), attendees earn points for doing the things you actually want them to do:

- Taking selfies with other attendees
- Snapping photos with speakers and sponsors
- Asking and upvoting questions in sessions
- Rating talks and sharing recap content
- Interacting with organisers, booths or activations

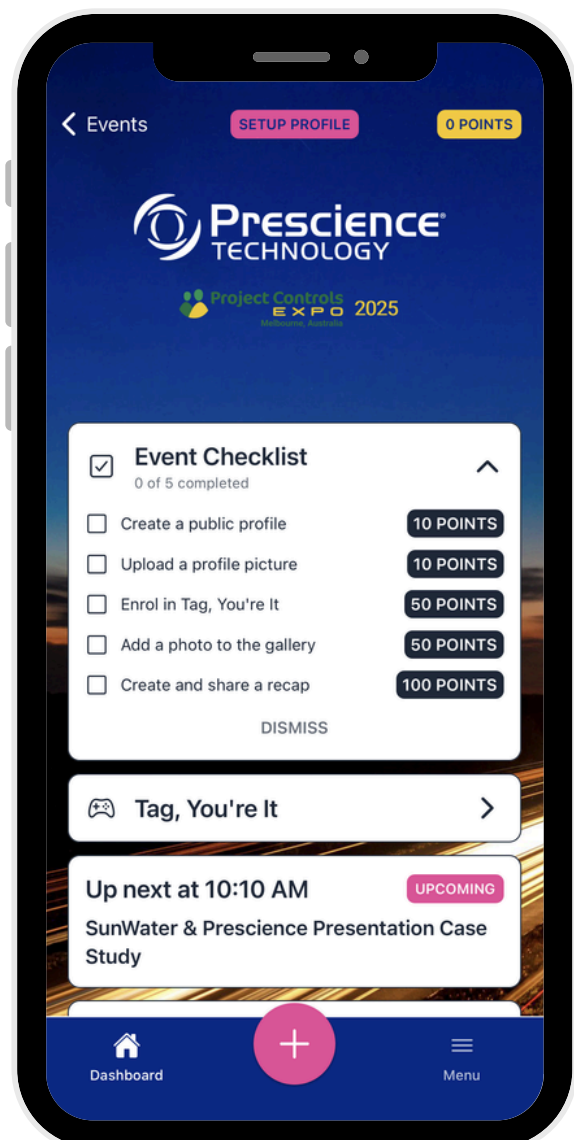
Done well, gamification:

- Gives shy or cautious attendees a *role* and a clear script: **"Hey, can we grab a photo for the game?"**
- Makes sponsors and speakers more approachable – **it's suddenly normal to walk up and interact**
- Creates a **shared objective**: everyone is in on the same challenge
- **Generates a rich, branded media library** of authentic photos and videos without extra admin for organisers

And the most powerful effect we see?

People quickly forget they're "playing a game".

The habits change. **That first awkward step is taken for them.** Once they've broken the ice a few times, they start approaching others without needing the excuse. Even after the game ends, the new behaviours stick – at least for the duration of the event, often longer.



Case study: Volunteering WA

At Volunteering WA's conference, we saw what happens when volunteers and sector leaders are given a safe, fun way to interact.

For Volunteering WA, this **became a goldmine of user-generated content** – authentic photos and recap videos they can reuse in campaigns, annual reports and future event promotion, without needing a big marketing team.

And the qualitative feedback was just as strong: people consistently described the event as “fun, friendly and full of connection”, and noted how comfortable they felt approaching others once the game got going.

By the numbers

Attendees
232

Photos
629

Ratings
148

Recaps
64

Questions
62

Votes
113



Case study: Laracon AU

Developer conferences are often seen as “hard mode” for networking – attendees are brilliant, but many are naturally introverted and hesitant to approach strangers.

At Laracon AU, we ran *Tag, You're It* across the two-day event.

Organisers didn't need to run complex ice-breakers or heavy-handed networking games, they simply:

- **Introduced the app at the very start**
- **Gave everyone a few minutes to join the game**
- **Prompted them to meet the people on their left and right and take a photo**

From there, the community essentially ran itself.

As one organiser put it, the unexpected benefit was that **“after a while, people weren't shy anymore and just started speaking to strangers”** – a rare and valuable dynamic for a developer event.

By the numbers

Attendees

227

Photos

1,626

Ratings

363

Recaps

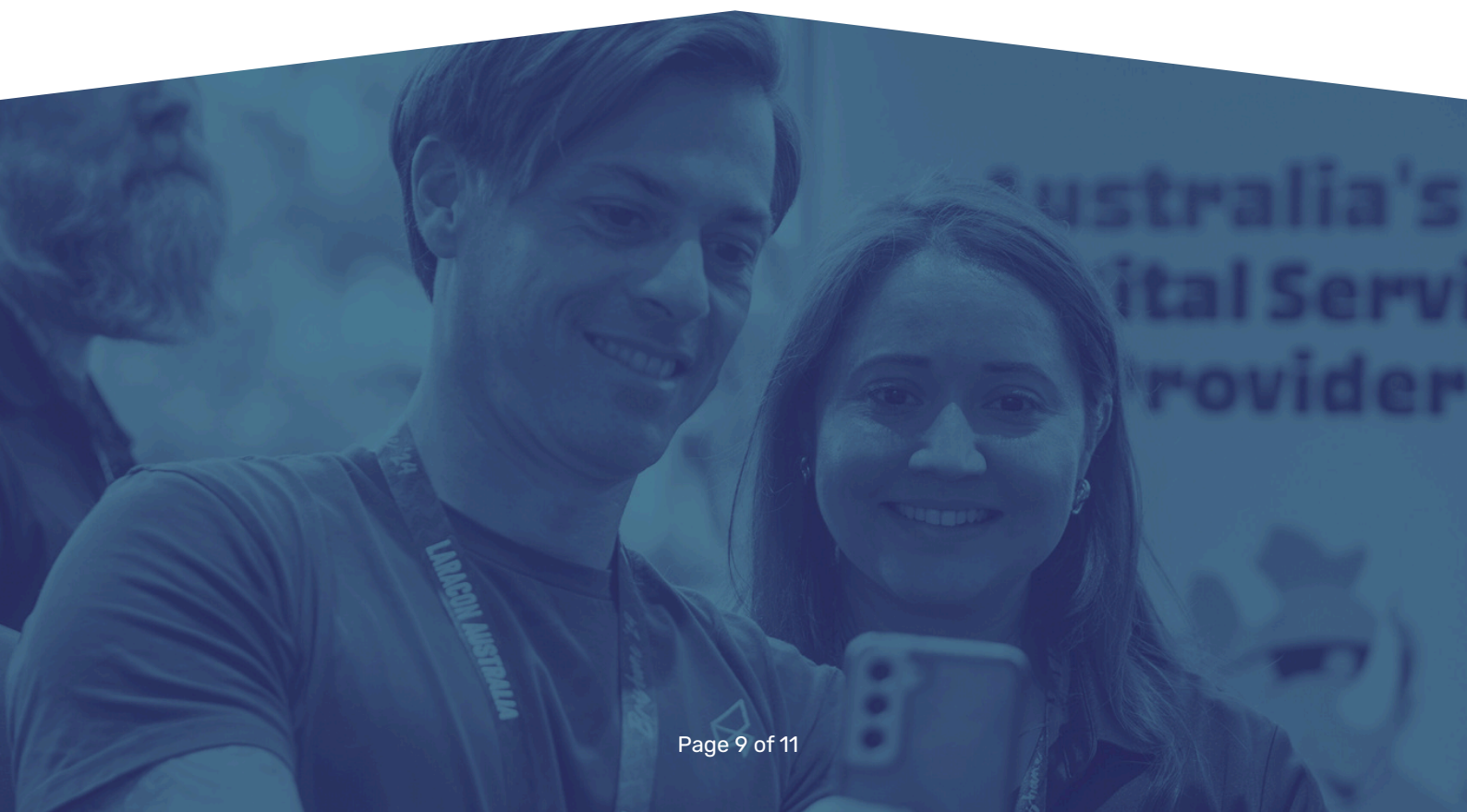
288

Questions

302

Votes

1,246



Putting it into practice: a checklist for your next event

Before the event

- Define success for each side** What would great interaction look like for organisers, sponsors, speakers, attendees, associations and volunteers at this event?
- Choose the behaviours you want to encourage** Examples: meeting new people, visiting sponsors, asking questions, sharing recap content, rating sessions.
- Plan your “connection moments”** Add 3–5 specific moments to your run sheet where people are asked to:
 - Introduce themselves to someone nearby
 - Take and upload a photo
 - Ask or upvote a question in the app
- Brief your MC and speakers** Make it clear how and when they should mention the app, the game and Q&A – especially in the opening session.

During the event

- Kick things off with interaction, not housekeeping** In the first session, give everyone a minute to join the app and game, and meet the person on their left and right.
- Reward the right behaviour** Use gamification to give points for:
 - Meeting new people
 - Visiting sponsor stands
 - Asking and upvoting questions
 - Rating sessions and creating recaps
- Make it visible** Show leaderboards, photo galleries and popular questions on screen so people can see the community in action.

After the event

- Turn moments into marketing** Use attendee photos and recaps in your wrap-up comms, social posts and sponsorship reports.
- Follow the data** Look at which sessions, topics and formats drove the most questions, photos and ratings – and feed that into your next programme.
- Keep the community warm** Share highlights, tagged photos and short videos over the following weeks so the event stays present in people’s minds.

How SixSides helps every side of your event community

SixSides is an event platform built to turn one-off events into a connected community.

We focus on helping each side get more value from being in the same room.

For organisers & associations

- A single platform for schedules, Q&A, photos, games and analytics
- Built-in tools like *Tag, You're It* to encourage interaction without extra admin
- A central gallery of attendee and professional photos you can reuse across campaigns
- Data on questions, ratings and connections to guide future programmes

For sponsors

- Clear reasons for attendees to visit stands and start conversations
- Warm, trackable leads based on in-app interest and interactions
- Authentic photos and recap content they can share with their own audiences

For speakers

- Session pages with live Q&A and upvoting so the best questions rise to the top
- Easy ways to keep the conversation going and share resources after their talk
- Photos and social-ready recaps that showcase their impact

For attendees & volunteers

- A simple, fun way to meet new people and feel part of the community
- One place for schedules, questions, photos and connections
- Personal "wrapped" style recaps with their favourite moments and faces

If you'd like to explore how SixSides can help you design more interactive, community-driven events:

- Visit www.sixsides.co, or
- Book a chat with the team to walk through your next conference or meetup series.



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