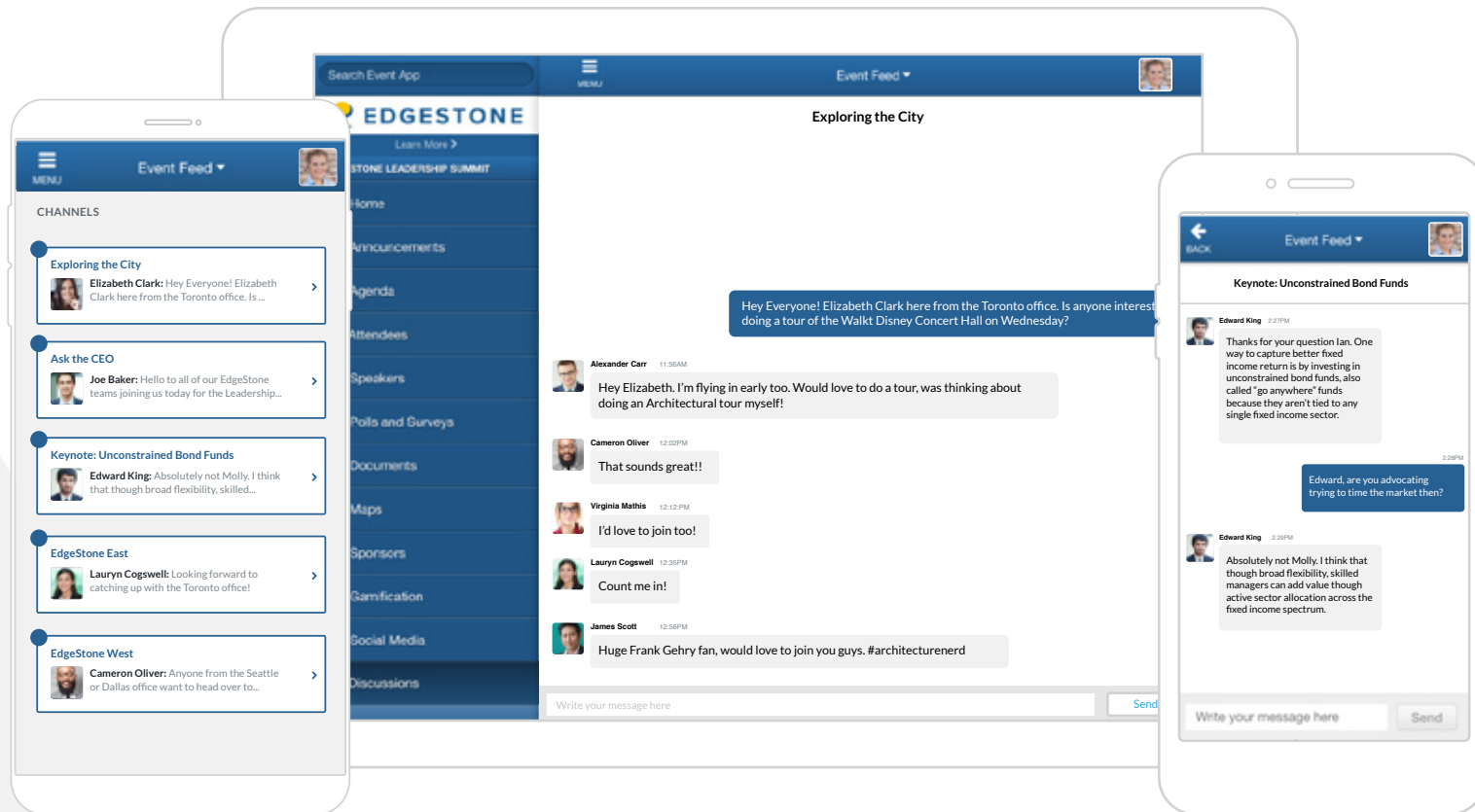


EVENT SUCCESS GUIDE

Group Discussions

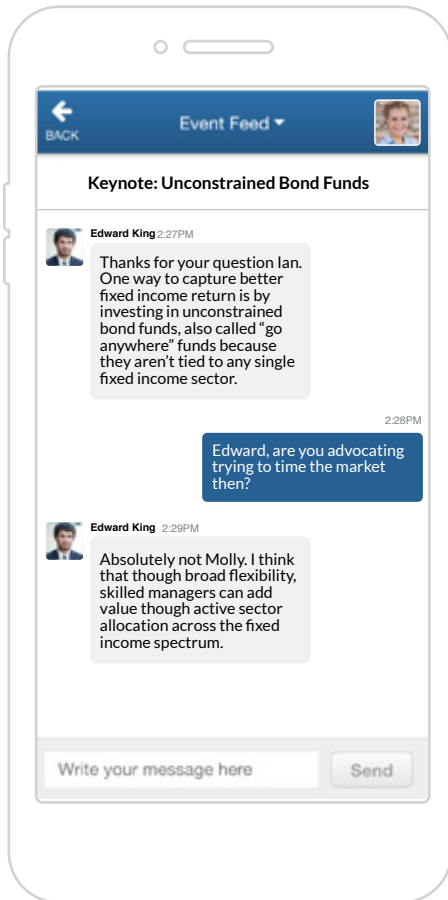
Spark Conversations and Elevate Attendee Networking



PRESENTED BY



Group Discussions



Event organizers know that some of the most valuable exchanges happen in the hallway. It's where people meet and connect, bond over shared experiences and discuss and exchange ideas. What if you could give attendees a focused way to have those "hallway" conversations digitally, where they can meet people with common interests and create a base for a passionate and engaged community around your event? After all, smartphone adoption is at an all-time high. Your attendees are already using their smartphone or tablet to connect with people on Twitter and beyond. So why not leverage your event app to enable your event participants to have more focused conversations with Group Discussions.

This feature allows you to create discussion groups to help attendees spark conversations around similar interests — attendees can connect, discuss and debate ideas and discover new contacts (and friends!) before the event, onsite or even after your event has ended. Group Discussions creates a private social network for attendees to connect and interact, both professionally and socially, building a sense of community around your event and ultimately extending your event's lifecycle.

This guide will show you how to successfully implement Group Discussions through seven simple steps, from identifying your objectives to measuring success. And we've included a long list of ideas to help spark creativity when setting up your own Group Discussions in your EventMobi event app.

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STEP 1

Identify Objectives

Start by asking yourself what you're hoping to achieve with Group Discussions:

- ▶ Do you want to facilitate and highlight **networking** between attendees?
- ▶ Is education an important part of your event, and thus **knowledge sharing** between attendees is something you're interested in?
- ▶ Have you been looking for a way to build **community** around your event, engaging attendees pre-event and extending the conversation afterward?
- ▶ Are you looking for a way to **improve overall communication** at your event?

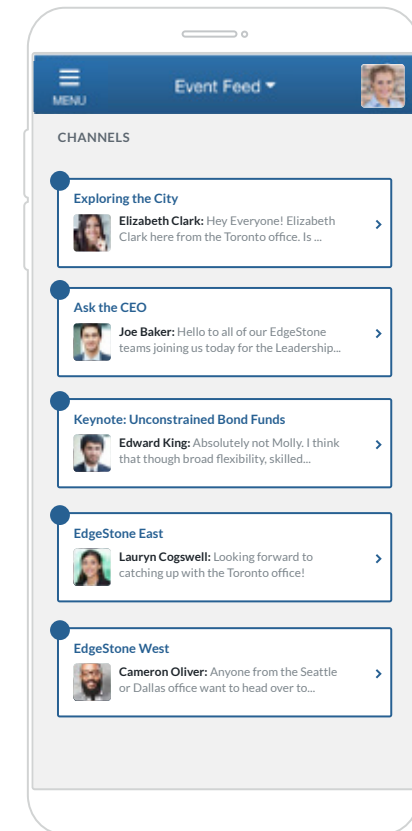
Once you've established your objectives, determine how you will measure if you've accomplished them. Set goals for group discussion participation and engagement so you have something to work toward, and consider what percentage of participants you want to say felt there was value in group discussion channels via the post-event survey. We'll dive deeper into success metrics in Step 7.

12%



MY GROUP DISCUSSION OBJECTIVES

- Knowledge Sharing
- Networking
- Build Community
- Improve Overall Communication
- All Four



STEP 2

Outline Strategy

Next, you'll want to devise a strategy to achieve your objectives. For example, if your objective is to build community around your event, one step to accomplish this using Group Discussions is to create opportunities within the channels for your attendees to connect socially, before, during and after the event.

If your objective is to increase networking, you can organize channels around common interests. If your objective is to increase knowledge sharing, you'll need to devise a strategy for starting focused topics of conversation within the channel. If your objective is to improve communications, consider creating a feedback channel where event staff or other attendees answer attendee questions.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Simply building channels doesn't mean they will be used. We recommend getting the ball rolling with a few "plant" comments or questions. In the same way you might have pre-determined audience members ask questions during a **Q&A period**, we suggest assigning two or three key attendees, speakers or staff members to comment or ask questions in each of your channels. By doing so, you create the social proof that the channel is active and questions and discussion are welcome. Often people don't like to be the first to raise their hand or comment in a discussion group, but once the ball is rolling they'll want to see what others are talking about, and ultimately join in.

ON THE SAME PAGE

Next, determine how you want attendees to use Group Discussions and what constitutes appropriate behavior. For example, would a sponsor promoting products or services in a group discussion channel be appropriate? What if they were promoting their products in a sponsored channel? Would sharing your LinkedIn profile and asking for a job be appropriate? Outline what's acceptable before you create channels.

Consider having a staff member monitor the discussion channel in case there is a question or comment that may require an official voice. Understanding what you do and don't want to happen within the channels will inform how you set up your channels in the next stage.

24%



POSSIBLE "PLANT"

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

ACCEPTABLE CHANNEL USAGE

UNACCEPTABLE CHANNEL USAGE

TIP

Group Discussions participants can click on the name of other participants in the discussion channel and be taken directly to that attendee's profile in the app, allowing them to learn more about their fellow discussion group members or message them directly if private chat is enabled.



STEP 3

Brainstorm Channels

Before attendees can start using Group Discussions, you'll need to create channels. Channels help organize the discussions and allow attendees to easily find a discussion to join based on common interests. It's important to note that you, as the organizer, are the only one who can create channels (they cannot be created by the attendees at this time).

To get you started, we've devised a list of ways you can set up channels:

BY ATTENDEE GROUPS

Large events can be intimidating, especially if attendees are travelling from different locations, there's a wide range of interests, or if it's their first time attending the event. By organizing your channels by geographic locations (ie. Canadians or New Yorkers) you allow attendees to easily find others where there's a built-in connection – their home. Here are some additional ideas:

FOR A CORPORATE EVENT

- ▶ Geographic Location
- ▶ Departments
- ▶ First Timers
- ▶ Job Specialization

FOR AN ASSOCIATION EVENT

- ▶ Chapter Membership
- ▶ Job Specialization
- ▶ First Timers
- ▶ Geographic Location

BY USE

Consider setting up a Help channel, where attendees can ask questions and event staff or other attendees can provide the answer. The Help channel may act as a FAQ sheet and can help eliminate repeated questions at the event.

- ▶ Help or FAQs



ATTENDEE BASED CHANNEL IDEAS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ACTIVITIES BASED CHANNEL IDEAS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TOPIC BASED CHANNEL IDEAS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SPONSORS WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

36%



STEP 3

Create Content Continued

BY ACTIVITIES

Social channels are a place where attendees can go to find others interested in meeting up in the days prior to the event, or in the evenings, and a place to share ideas for dining out or local activities. It can also help build a sense of community around your event.

- ▶ Pre-event Activities
- ▶ Sponsored Events
- ▶ Dining Suggestions
- ▶ Exploring the City

BY SPONSORED TOPICS

Add an **additional revenue stream** to your event by offering a sponsor the opportunity to have a topic sponsored by their company. The topic can be decided upon by both the event organizer and sponsor, and the sponsor would have naming rights. For example if Telus Mobility sponsored a group discussion channel the channel name could be *Communications Strategies sponsored by Telus Mobility*.

BY TOPICS RELATED TO THE CONFERENCE AGENDA

Events with an educational component are a natural fit for topic-based Group Discussions. Not only are hot topics a great way to spark pre-event conversations, oftentimes attendees have more to discuss than the session allows, and if a speaker runs over the allotted time, there may not be any time left for questions. Give your attendees the opportunity to continue the conversation by directing them to a group discussion channel in the app.

- ▶ Hot Topics
- ▶ Tracks
- ▶ Conference Theme
- ▶ Keynote or Influential Speakers
- ▶ Top Takeaways

While you may be tempted to create a channel for every session or every speaker, we don't recommend this strategy. Why? You don't want to overwhelm attendees with options and create inactive channels.



SPEAKERS WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED

TIP

Offer your attendees additional value or incentive to join the conversation by inviting your speaker to answer questions in the channel! The speaker's participation (especially if high-profile or considered an influencer) will help build excitement around the discussion. Be sure to include the speaker's participation in their speaking contract and add the speaker to your Event App attendee module so they can participate in the discussion.

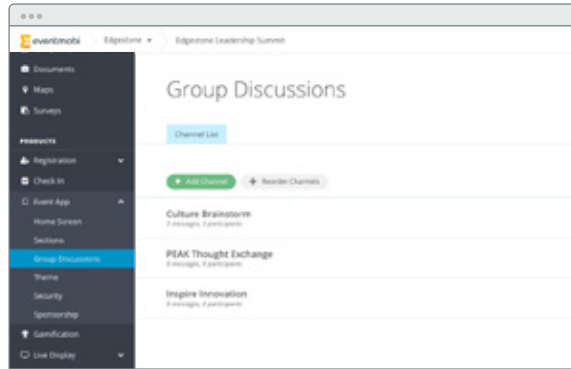
48%



STEP 4

Build Group Discussions

Now that the strategy and concept have been outlined in your worksheet, you're now ready to build your Group Discussions. Simply choose the channels you want to create and add them to the Discussions module in the EventMobi Content Manager. You'll want to keep channel names short and concise so it's easy for attendees to determine what will be discussed, as well as easily viewable on their device.



NUMBER OF CHANNELS

One thing to consider is the number of channels you create. We recommend you begin with five channels, regardless of the number of attendees.

What you want is active channels with engaged participants, not channels with only one participant or unused channels altogether. From there, you can add additional channels as you receive requests or see fit.

We recommend building your channels and heavily promoting them in pre-event communications and social media at least two to four weeks prior to your event to ensure participants exploring the app in the weeks leading up to your event can participate in discussions, especially those around pre-event activities, dining, and city information.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ **Character Limit:** When choosing your channel names, stick to 35 characters or less.
- ▶ **Who Can Post:** Only attendees, or those uploaded to the attendee module, can participate in Group Discussions. If there are speakers, staff or sponsors who you want to participate in the discussion channels, be sure to add them as an attendee in your event app.
- ▶ **Security Settings:** If your app is public, remember that anyone (not just your attendees) can create a profile and participate in Group Discussions. Depending on your organization, this may be welcomed outside perspective; however, if that's not the goal and you'd like to keep these discussions between event attendees only, then you'll need to enable "Registered Users Only" under **App Security** in the Content Manager.



MY FINAL CHANNELS

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

DATE TO BUILD GROUP DISCUSSIONS BY

SPEAKERS, STAFF OR SPONSORS TO ADD

60%



STEP 5

Promote Group Discussions

You've created your group discussion channels, but nobody knows about them yet! Promoting your group discussion channels is the most important step in successfully getting attendees to adopt this incredible feature.

PRE-EVENT PROMOTION

Emails

Consider adding Group Discussions to your pre-event email marketing. You can include Group Discussions in your app promotions, as well as in your education, networking and know-before-you-go promotions as they relate to your channels. It's important to not only let attendees know how to use them, but why to use them. If you've opted for an **event app promo video**, we recommend making Group Discussions one of the highlighted modules.

Social Media

If your event is public, include Group Discussions in your social media marketing strategy. Promote specific topics and drive attendees to ignite conversations before the event starts.

Speakers

Engage your speakers in the process. Inform your speaker before the event that you will be including a group discussion channel in the app where their session attendees can continue the conversation. They can help promote the discussion channel in lead up to the event.

Sponsor

If you've opted for a sponsored topic, your sponsor will have a vested interest in promoting their channel. Ensure they include their sponsored discussion channel in their pre-event marketing push.



PRE-EVENT PROMOTION Email Ideas

72%



STEP 5

Promote Group Discussions



ONSITE PROMOTION

ONSITE PROMOTION

Emcee

The best way to promote use of Group Discussions is to highlight its use live onsite. Have your emcee or leadership team remind attendees where to find Group Discussions in the app and encourage them to participate. Better yet, have the emcee reference some of the conversation content taking place in the discussion channels.

Speakers

Have your speakers remind attendees at the beginning and close of education sessions and direct them to where to find the channel in the app.

Live Display

Promote Group Discussions on your Live Display digital signage. Live Display is a custom branded digital display that highlights everything from event and agenda information to social media and sponsors. You can add Group Discussions to the final rotating screen on your Live Display and include images of your most active discussion channel.

Daily Emails

If your event is multi-day, you may already send out recap emails from the day before. If that's the case, add highlights from your Group Discussions to help encourage participation on the following days while simultaneously promoting users who sparked conversations with their thoughts, questions and ideas.

POST-EVENT

Wrap-Up Email

Send attendees a post-event follow-up that thanks them for their attendance and includes stats about engagement. Include a summary of the hot group discussion topics or highlights from the discussion channels — perhaps around a conference theme or top takeaways as a final thank you to those who participated, and to remind attendees to check out the discussions as they're still live in the app. Showing attendees what they missed is one way to encourage future participation and engagement.

WHAT MY EMCEE SHOULD SAY

WHAT MY SPEAKER SHOULD SAY

WHAT MY WRAP-UP EMAIL SHOULD SAY

72%



STEP 6

Manage Onsite

Once your attendees are onsite, and your Group Discussions have been promoted, you'll want to monitor the channels onsite for usage and remind attendees where to find the channels in the app.

In addition, if you have created a channel that no one seems to be using, you can easily remove it or swap it out for another channel in the Content Manager. Ideally, this would be done before the event starts, but since you'll see an uptick in usage onsite, it may be wise to wait. If there is a hot topic that arises out of a session that would make a great group discussion topic, have your staff add the channel and promote it before attendees leave the room.

Check in with the staff member assigned to monitor Group Discussions to ensure participants are using the channel appropriately and answer any questions the attendee may have about your event. While it's not possible to attach a formal moderator at this time, if necessary, you may delete users onsite.

If you've created a Help or FAQ channel, you'll want to ensure your staff are monitoring it regularly to answer any questions or clarify any points made in the Help channel.



BACKUP CHANNELS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STAFF MEMBER MONITORING ALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

OR

STAFF MEMBER MONITORING CHANNEL 1

STAFF MEMBER MONITORING CHANNEL 2

STAFF MEMBER MONITORING CHANNEL 3

STAFF MEMBER MONITORING CHANNEL 4

STAFF MEMBER MONITORING CHANNEL 5

84%



STEP 7

Measure Success

Now it's important to measure success against the objectives and desired outcomes of Group Discussions you outlined in Step 1.

BY THE NUMBERS

The Content Manager can provide analytics for you to measure the adoption and engagement of Group Discussions. You'll be able to see the total number of attendees who participated (adoption/usage) and the total number of messages sent (engagement). You can also do your own analysis of the most used channels and determine which types of channels or topics were most used and most widely debated.

$$\text{PARTICIPATION METRIC} = \frac{\text{TOTAL NO. OF DISCUSSIONS PARTICIPANTS}}{\text{TOTAL NO. OF ATTENDEES}} \times 100$$

With heavy promotion and thoughtful channel choices you should expect 20% of your total attendees to participate in your group discussion channels at the first event in which you implement them.

If your participation numbers are lower than expected, reevaluate your promotion strategy. How did you promote Group Discussions? Did you enlist your staff and speakers to help?

Next, unpack the engagement metric. The total number of messages sent won't tell you a lot about engagement if the majority of comments made are by the same three attendees. Review the discussion channels for engagement trends. Did the majority of users leave one comment or question and move on? Did most participants actively engage in conversation by sending multiple messages? And how did this measure up to your goal for the channel?

Not only will this give you a better understanding of participants' engagement level, but it will also identify which topics or types of channels work best for your event.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Group Discussions benefit more than simply the active users. While participation is encouraged, it's not a prerequisite for enjoyment of this feature. Once a discussion begins, other attendees may find value in simply reading the exchange.



PARTICIPATION METRIC CALCULATION

$$\begin{array}{r} + \\ \text{Total Number} \\ \text{of Discussion} \\ \text{Participants} \end{array} = \begin{array}{r} \\ \text{Total Number} \\ \text{of Attendees} \end{array} \times 100 = \begin{array}{r} \\ \text{Total} \\ \text{Usage \%} \end{array}$$

TOTAL NUMBER OF MESSAGES SENT

MOST USED CHANNEL

LEAST USED CHANNEL



STEP 7

Measure Success

BY FEEDBACK

Another way to measure success is by your post-event survey feedback. We recommend adding questions to your **post-event survey** about the objectives you set out for Group Discussions. For example:

- Do you feel this event met your networking expectations?
- Do you feel you learned from other attendees at the event?
- Did you feel a sense of community around the event?

And finally...

- Did you benefit from the group discussion channels?

This feedback will allow you to better measure the success of Group Discussions and ultimately your networking, education and community-building objectives.

Start by reviewing the post-event survey results to see whether the attendees who used Group Discussions felt they benefited from them and/or had suggestions for the future. You can also view the group discussion channels and understand how they are being used by attendees. Were people using them to meet others? To debate ideas? To learn or share knowledge? Were any of these uses different from your intended purpose? This intel will help you build future Group Discussions.

MOST ACTIVELY ENGAGED ATTENDEES

These are your influencers. You should engage these attendees early next year to help kickstart discussions.

TIP

Use the group discussion participant list to reach out to attendees for testimonials for your event. Actively engaged participants can be your event's greatest advocates.



BONUS: Success Checklist

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- ☐ **Identify Objectives.** Have you determined what you're hoping to achieve with Group Discussions (ie. networking, knowledge sharing, communication, community).
- ☐ **Brainstorm Topics.** Devise a list of your top 10 channels you'd like to add to support your objectives.
- ☐ **Add Channels.** Begin by adding five channels.

THREE WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- ☐ **Assign Key Influencers.** Reach out to key attendees or speakers and invite them to drive the conversation and promote participation in the discussions channels located in the event app. The goal here is to create an active channel.
- ☐ **Assign Staff.** Assign staff to monitor the channels to ensure they're being used for their intended purpose or to answer questions that should be addressed by event management.
- ☐ **Promote Group Discussions in Pre-event Marketing.** Promote your group discussion channels in email promotions.

ONE TO TWO WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- ☐ **Monitor Group Discussions.** Monitor group discussion channels for inactivity. Follow-up with key influencers if they have not engaged in the discussion.
- ☐ **Enlist Help of Speakers, Emcee and Sponsors.** Remind speakers or emcee to promote Group Discussions in their sessions; Sponsors to promote Group Discussions in their booth.
- ☐ **Prep Staff.** Make sure your staff are fully prepared and can identify appropriate and inappropriate uses of the discussion channels.
- ☐ **Create Post-Event Survey Questions.** Add Group Discussions satisfaction questions to the post-event survey.

ONSITE

- ☐ **Monitor Group Discussion Channels.** Keep staff on top of what's happening in the channels. Take the time to share updates about the channels with your emcee, speakers and attendees onsite.

POST-EVENT

- ☐ **Don't Stop Monitoring.** Check back in on your Group Discussions post-event in case attendees post questions that require follow-up.
- ☐ **Build Community.** Group Discussions has the potential to transform into a private social network that exists beyond your event. Continue the conversation, if this is your goal.
- ☐ **Measure Success.** See how you stacked up against your goals and objectives through Group Discussions analytics in the Content Manager and via your post-event survey questions.
- ☐ **Create a List of Top Users.** Pay special attention to the most engaged users. They're your Group Discussions advocates and can be leveraged to kickstart discussions next year.
- ☐ **Send a Wrap-Up Email.** Provide a summary of the discussions that took place at your event to encourage future adoption and entice people to go check the discussions out for themselves.



If you have any questions about how to be successful with Group Discussions or other attendee engagement tools, connect with EventMobi!

Contact Us

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