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Note: The main purpose of this document is to help you avoid being remembered as *that idiot who tried to organise a conference*. 
How to use the handbook

The Handbook is organised around the **Timeline** - the milestone items that you will need to do in the run-up to the event. It also discusses some of the practicalities that you need to have set up or in place to plan and execute the event successfully - most of these are also linked to from the timeline.

Start by reading the **Timeline**.

### 1.1 Milestone item sections

- *key decisions*
- *essential provisions*
- *ticket sales*
- *programme*
- *sponsorship*

### 1.2 Practicalities

- *organisation*
- *effective communications*
- *policies*
- *documented procedures*
- *financial planning and provision*
- *documents and templates*
About the handbook

The handbook was created by Daniele Procida, Community and Documentation Manager at Divio AG of Zürich. It's based on the experiences of organising and attending numerous international Python/Django events.

It’s aimed particularly at organisers of Python/Django community events, and reflects the traditions and values of PyCons and DjangoCons.

Note: This is a handbook, not an instruction manual. Every conference is different enough that you some of the advice here might not be applicable, or you simply might have your own preferences and ways of doing things.

Note: This handbook is currently incomplete and numerous sections still need to be written.

2.1 Timeline

Note: How to use the timeline

The timeline is a calendar that counts down to the first day of your event. It this gives you a clear synoptic and visual indication of your progress. You’ll need your own, editable copy, with actual dates in it.

You will need to adapt it to your own needs. For example if you have decided to hold an event in six months’ time, you’ll need to compress the timeline substantially.

For each date in the timeline, any item that can’t be checked off needs to be moved forward to the next day or week.

2.1.1 Two or three years

In order to run a DjangoCon or something like it, you need plenty of experience of similar events.

Go to a DjangoCon, so you know what it's really like. In fact, don’t just go to a DjangoCon, go to your local PyCon and any other events you can.

Better still, volunteer as a helper, or get involved - as a committee member, with talks selection, finding sponsors. Do any job that you think you can, so you get a bit of experience of it, and explain that you're anxious to help because you want the experience.

It helps to know what it’s like to be a speaker, so aim for that too.
Not only does all of this give you the experience of as many aspects as possible of community software events, it also gives other people an experience of you - which is vital when you’re asking an entire community to trust you with one of the most important weeks in their calendar.

At all points, make a note - not just a mental note, **Write it down** - in a DjangoCon notes file - of how it was done, how it worked, what you would do to improve it. Seriously, **don’t try to rely on your memory**.

### 2.1.2 Fifteen months

Three months from now you’re going to have to present your proposal, so you need some information to hand.

Identify your location, your **Venues**, your ideal dates, your **general schedule** and at least some fellow organisers.

#### Location

You need to be aware of and make judgements about:

- how people will travel to the location
- whether there are easy and reasonably inexpensive connections from most places
- suitable **Accommodation** available locally, that can be reserved for your attendees
- whether some attendees will be excluded, either because they won’t be permitted or because they might not be safe from harrassement - for example:
  - Israelis from many Arab countries, and vice-versa
  - gay people in certain countries

#### Dates

Are your proposed dates likely to be affected by public holidays, scheduled elections, sporting events, **boy bands**, G8 summits, religious holidays?

It can be harder than you think to find a suitable window, especially for a larger event in a smaller city.

Don’t forget that your attendees may need a day either side of the event if they are travelling long distances.

#### Venues

Make some initial enquiries at **local venues**, about:

- capacity
- suitability
- availability
- price
- key **Other services:**
  - **Catering**
  - accessibility
  - **Internet provision**
Fellow organisers

Whoever you have on paper at this stage won’t necessarily be the ones involved in the end. People you haven’t met will want to join in (and will turn out to be excellent contributors), and some who expected to be able to contribute will have to withdraw. But you still need to have a few people who plan to be involved. No-one’s going to be very keen on a proposal that mentions only one organiser.

If the other organisers have some experience already, so much the better.

Presentation

Prepare a short presentation document, mentioning all of the above, to show that even if you don’t have all the answers you need you are at least aware of all the issues and are thinking about them.

Budget

Make some back-of-the-envelope calculations:

• no. of attendees
• average ticket price
• total ticket income
• expected sponsorship income
• venue and facilities hire
• catering per person
• total catering cost
• other costs

Does it look workable?

2.1.3 Twelve months

Immediately before presenting the proposal, ask your venues to pencil you in for your preferred dates.

Turn your back-of-the-envelope calculations into something more carefully worked out. Err always on the side of caution.

Make your proposal.

Success?

Congratulations, be prepared for twelve months of extremely hard work.

As soon as your proposal is accepted, contact the venues and hotels you previously spoke to and start firming up your plans. Scrutinise the calendars very carefully.

Agree on dates and prices with the venues.

Agree on special conference pricing with some hotels. Get agreements about the number of rooms that will be reserved for your attendees.

Start collecting names and contact details of potential sponsors.
2.1.4 Eleven months

Form your committee. Have your first meeting. Set up your internal communications channels (email list, IRC channel, to-do list, etc.)

Depending on local legislation, you may need to form a registered (for example for tax purposes) organisation, register for VAT/IVA/sales tax, etc.

Buy Insurance; buying insurance that you turn out not to have needed is better than needing insurance you didn’t buy.

Start working on the things you’ll need to have made decisions on before you go public:

- numbers of Attendees
- precise Schedule
- ticket pricing structure
- Sponsorship pricing structure
- graphic design and artwork

2.1.5 Nine months

Get quotes for audio-visual services and filming, editing and publishing of the sessions.

2.1.6 Eight months

Accessibility

If you’re planning to offer a crèche, or speech-to-text transcription, start discussing this with Other services providers.

2.1.7 Seven months

Go public. It’s a good idea to use an appropriate established domain (djangocon.eu, for example) for website and email, Twitter account, and so on.

Once you have a basic Website ready (a single page is enough at this stage, with information about the location and the dates), post messages on email lists, the Django weblog, Twitter etc. It’s worth mentioning that the conference will be governed by a Code of Conduct, even if at this stage mentioning it is all you do.

You need to start collecting sponsors. Some sponsors can be relied upon to sponsor every DjangoCon almost without questions, but they are few. Most will need to know full details of sponsorship terms and benefits.

You’ll need a proper sponsorship prospectus. It’s best to have it available both as a web page and as PDF.

Start contacting potential sponsors.

Make sure your venues have firm bookings for you. Start discussing catering arrangements with the venues.

Make sure that your arrangements with hotels are firmly in place.

Ask the DSF to establish a fund for financial assistance. Work out how many free tickets you can afford to offer.
Programme

Think about:

- keynote talk slots (how many, potential speakers, how long)
- timetables
- length of available talk slots
- tracks
- workshops
- sprints

Your programme of talks is going to be at the heart of all this. Most other things are flexible and to some extent movable; the talks programme is much less so.

2.1.8 Six months

Publish a timeline of milestones on the website.

Open the call for proposals. If you haven’t already chosen or invited keynote speakers, consider submitted proposals for this too.

Open ticket sales - the point of no return.

Open the applications process for financial assistance.

Start announcing, and keep looking for, sponsors.

2.1.9 Five months

Branding, graphics and imagery

Start working in earnest on:

- banners
- t-shirt designs
- stickers

Services

Select your providers of:

- crèche
- AV services
- filming
- additional network services

and make your agreements.
2.1.10 Four months

Have *all* branding, graphics and imagery ready and finalised.

**Catering**

Discuss arrangements, including menus, in detail, with your caterers.

2.1.11 Three months

Stop accepting talk proposals and grant applications; start assessing them.

Start replying to the best proposals immediately. Make it clear that a proposal can only be accepted once the speaker has purchased a ticket (or has submitted a grant application).

Liaise with the grants committee to ensure that they know of any applicants you’d like to have as speakers. Make sure the grants committee understands your deadlines and the importance of making its decisions and informing people in a timeframe that works for the conference.

Visit the venues with service providers; even if you don’t, keep contact with them open.

Start compiling your conference programme booklet.

If you want to have music during breaks, start preparing your compilations.

2.1.12 Two months

Everyone should have been informed of the decisions of the proposals and grants committees; all speakers should have tickets.

Check again with service providers.

Publish your programme in full, or as full as possible, with a full timetable of talks, breaks, meals and so on.

Get quotes for printing expected quantities of:

- t-shirts
- programme booklets
- signage
- badges
- lanyards

Visit the venue to find out exactly where the sponsors will have their tables, and ensure that there’s going to be enough room for them all. Start compiling a plan for the layout of sponsors’ tables.

Contact all your sponsors to remind them that they need to provide you with:

- artwork for the booklet
- any gifts they want included in the attendee pack

Let them know what size tables they will be provided with, what kind of banners they should bring, and so on.

Your programme booklet should be essentially complete, even if there are numerous sections that are still subject to change. Send it to your printers to ensure that you both understand each other’s requirements.

Similarly, send your proposed artwork to t-shirt, sign and other printers.
Start finding volunteers for the event.

### 2.1.13 One month

Your programme should be more or less finalised. You should be in a position to provide final numbers - or very nearly final numbers - for catering etc to your providers.

Keep updating the booklet.

Contact all your speakers to ensure that they know what to expect - what equipment they need to bring/interface with, what format the data projectors use.

Order your:

- t-shirts
- signage
- badges
- lanyards

Make sure you know when your printing deadline is. Usually one week is enough - but don’t assume anything.

Prepare a handbook for volunteers and session chairs.

### 2.1.14 Two weeks

Get other people to proofread the booklet.

Check again that all service providers are ready and have all the information, deposits and so on that they require.

Contact volunteers inviting them to attend a meeting.

### 2.1.15 One week

Confirm final numbers to the catering, crèche and other providers.

Meeting with volunteers.

Registration rehearsal - if possible, do this in the space and with the equipment where you’ll be doing it on the day.

### 2.1.16 One day

Bag packing with volunteers.

Open early registration - attendees at DjangoCons and PyCons love helping, and will probably be turning up to find out if they can help. Take the opportunity to register as many as you can; each one will be someone you don’t need to register tomorrow.

Try to get a good night’s sleep; you’ll be up early in the morning.
2.2 Define your conference

Various things will determine the fundamental shape and character of your event, including its scale, duration and ethos.

You need to have a very strong idea of all of these from the start - they are what your conference will be, and they need to be communicated clearly otherwise potential attendees and sponsors won’t understand what it is that they’re being asked to commit to.

What is the focus of your event? What is it actually about? Why are you holding it and what do you want attendees to get out of it?

An established event will largely have these questions settled, by remit and tradition. If you’re organising a DjangoCon, you’ll know what’s expected for example. If you’re holding a new event, you’ll need to make some decisions.

2.2.1 Schedule

Most DjangoCons have been three days of talks followed by two of sprints. This pattern of talks followed by a shorter and more informal period of sprints is also used by other events (PyCon UK, PyCon Italia).

Some events have started with a day of paid-for workshops (PyCon Ireland, DjangoCon US).

Others have begun with an open day (i.e. free and open to any visitors) of talks and workshops (Django Weekend, DjangoCon Europe 2015).

DjangoCon Europe 2015 also turned the two days of sprints into two days of code, with workshops and clinics scheduled alongside the sprints.

It’s up to you what sort of schedule you adopt, and what sort of emphasis you place on the various parts of it.

Paid-for workshops

Typically these are held at the start of the conference, and can be a useful way of generating a little extra funds for the event.

The fact that the workshops are paid-for can actually stand in their favour, especially when employers are paying for someone to attend - it’s sometimes a language that they find easier to understand.

On the other hand, be aware that if you’re selling places at a workshop, then the typical we’re-all-in-this-together attitude of a DjangoCon workshop might not be appropriate, and the workshop leaders will need to be aware of this.

Open day

An open day provides a lower bar to entry, and gives people a chance to experience something of a conference at no cost - and if they like it, they might be back next year.

As well as an introduction to the community, your open day is also an opportunity to offer introductory technical sessions (talks and workshops) that will help draw in people from outside the field, or beginners in the field.

If your open day is held first, its introductory sessions can serve a third purpose, by helping less experience attendees gain some valuable technical knowledge or skills in advance of the main body of talks that will follow.

An open day gives you a chance to provide an extra platform for speakers or space for talks. For example, some first-time speakers will prefer to face a more general audience rather than one of perceived experts, while some talks may simply be more suited to this audience.

Finally, an open day helps you spread your registration out over an extra day, and can take a great deal of pressure off you and your volunteers.
Talks

Most people - not entirely correctly - regard the days of talks as being the part of the conference that matters most. It’s the part that is most heavily-attended, and usually the part that requires the most planning.

It’s also the part where your conference will be judged most exactingly and expectations are highest.

Planning a good day of talks, or days of talks, is an art, and you have to choose between numerous different approaches and structures even before you consider the content of the programme.

Sprints

One of the challenges of a conference is getting a good number of attendees at the sprints. Usually, the number who stay on for the sprints drops to around a third or a fifth of the “main” conference attendance.

Ways of raising this number include:

- offering workshops and clinics alongside the sprints
- providing food and refreshment at no extra cost
- ensuring that other services (such as volunteer assistance, or a crèche) continue to be provided during the sprints
- holding a social event on one of the sprint evenings
- not referring to the days of the sprints simply as “sprints”, since it’s not meaningful to many people, or to the days of talks as the “main” conference - call them two days of “code”, or “collaboration”

At DjangoCon Europe 2015, the combination of these choices raised the numbers staying on for the two days of sprints to about two-thirds of the total, and the two days of code were treated as an integral part of the conference.

Sometimes though the conference organisers sometimes leave it to a separate organisation to take responsibility for managing the sprints, and the sprints are essentially a fringe activity of the main conference.

Days of the week

Note: The discussion below assumes that your weekend is Friday and Saturday (there are many parts of the world where this isn’t the case).

You’ll probably spend a lot of time trying to decide which days your conference should start and end on, but it also probably doesn’t matter that much when it starts, especially for a large and established event.

Even so, an event that starts on a Saturday and ends on a Tuesday somehow seems not quite right; dropping your attendees out of the magical bubble of a community conference into the middle of a cold hard week will be a shock to their system. So although when it starts might not matter so much, it should probably end at or just before a weekend.

It’s harder for people to justify, to themselves and employers, that they should be attending a sprint during the working week, so it’s a good idea to have your sprints at the weekend if you can.

PyCon UK traditionally ends with its day of sprints on Monday, having run from the previous Friday - and probably would be better attended on that day if it were a Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

For a smaller, newer event, making use of weekends makes sense; a Friday-Sunday conference has a nice sense of fit with the working week.

2.2. Define your conference
Social events

See social-events.

2.2.2 Attendees

To be completed

- who
- how many
- diversity & accessibility

2.2.3 Social events

You don’t need to organise social events; the community will organise itself and most people will have a great time. All the same, a conference dinner (preferably on the first night) helps people establish new connections and friendships and is especially valuable for newcomers who have arrived on their own.

You don’t have to go to too much trouble: simply suggesting a gathering place for food or drinks helps, and if you can organise something, so much the better.

Another option is to contact a few favourite local restaurants, and ask them to provide a fixed-price meal; you can sell tickets for this meal along with with the conference tickets, and settle up with the restaurants later. This arrangement makes life easy for the restauranteurs, and gives your attendees an easy recommended option for a dinner or two.

You can also use social events to help encourage people towards certain parts of your schedule. Typically, nothing is planned for the evenings of the sprints, but announcing that your big conference party will be held on an evening after a day’s sprint will make it clear that the sprints are being treated as an integral part of the event, not an add-on.

If you can afford it, taking your speakers, volunteers and sponsors to dinner is a nice way to say thank-you.

Alcohol

Be aware that:

- many people - probably more than you realise if you do drink yourself - don’t drink alcohol
- alcoholic drinks are more expensive than other drinks
- alcohol has been known to fuel unwanted behaviour

It’s fair to ensure that your non-drinking attendees are also catered for.

If you’re going to provide alcohol at social events or meals, it means that the non-drinkers are paying for the drinkers’ pleasure. This doesn’t necessarily mean you shouldn’t do it, as there will be numerous aspects of the event that some people are “paying for” but won’t benefit from, and that’s simply unavoidable.

It’s strongly advisable not to furnish attendees with excessive quantities of free alcohol. The combination of drink and high spirits can easily take a wrong direction. Many complaints of inappropriate behaviour at events are actually about what happens at conference parties.

Code of conduct

Ensure that it’s made very clear that the conference code of conduct not only applies to all social events, but even to informal and unofficial gatherings of people attending the conference.
Being a good host

You - the committee - are the hosts, wherever your meal or part is being held. You should be the first to arrive and the last to sit down to eat or have a drink (this applies at social events - if you need to jump the lunch queue because you have to get back to your duties, that’s perfectly alright).

If possible, you should know who your attendees with special dietary requirements are, so that you can check whether they have received the appropriate food.

It’s also your responsibility to help make sure that no-one is sitting on their own, or left out at a meal or party.

You can’t be responsible for everything and everybody, but you can, as a committee, look after your guests. Venues and location are part of this too, but are discussed elsewhere.

The ethos of the conference will be determined by the Policies you adopt.

2.3 Essentials

There are certain things that you can’t possibly have a conference without - a venue, accommodation for attendees, catering for them and things like Internet and audio-visual services.

2.3.1 Venues

DjangoCons in particular have a tradition of selecting surprising venues in interesting locations.

DjangoCon 2012 in Zürich was held in the bowels of a football and athletics stadium. 2013’s event was held in a circus tent. In 2014, it was on a private island off the coast of the French riviera.

Even the less dramatic venues of other editions have been in attractive buildings, in Amsterdam 2011 and Cardiff 2015.

This doesn’t mean that you couldn’t choose the basement of an anonymous hotel for yours, but still, do consider other, more imaginative options. It’s especially appropriate to select a venue that’s somehow emblematic of the host location, at any rate.

Criteria

Size

Your venue needs to be able to accommodate attendees for talks, have room for their lunches and refreshments, space for sponsors’ tables and stands, and also some additional space for registration, quiet rooms, a crèche or anything else you’re planning.

Location

Choose a place that’s reasonably easy for people, especially people who may be unfamiliar with the local area or language, to get to from their accommodation.

Accessibility

Does the venue have good access for people who use wheelchairs or have mobility issues? Ask about lifts, ramps and disabled toilets. Is there step-free access between different rooms, for talks, lunch, breaks and so on?
The staff

You’re going to be working with the people at the venue, and will need their assistance. You’ll generally find that they are accommodating and helpful, but ascertain that as soon as you can.

Use your first meetings to ask everything you can think of; ask them to explain the most basic things, and to see as much as possible. If you get a sense that their patience is running out, you might want to reconsider working with them, because it will be painful and stressful later on when you need to rely upon their help and co-operation.

Facilities

Does the venue have adequate network provision? If not, can it be provided?

Venues for different purposes

For your Programme of talks, you need a venue that can work to a tight and demanding schedule. For sprints, workshops and other events, everything is more relaxed, and you can consider other venues too.

Universities

For sprints and workshops, a local university makes an ideal venue. This is especially the case if you’re not charging for those sessions, which typically makes it easy for a committee member involved with a university to book rooms, obtain suitable network/AV support, get official support for the event and so on.

Typically, universities are only too pleased to have collaborative coding events and educational sessions taking place on their premises, and are keen to be involved.

A university will also be likely to have a cafeteria or dining hall well-equipped to feed dozens or hundreds of people.

During university vacations, it’s even easier to find suitable rooms and halls for your purposes. You could even find that the university is able to provide inexpensive accommodation in its halls of residence during vacations.

Backup venues

You’d be surprised at the number of apparently non-flammable buildings that catch fire the night before someone’s important event is due to take place in them. It does happen, and it could happen to you.

Don’t be distracted by quibbles about likelihood of fire. It doesn’t need to be fire; venues can be rendered unusable without warning by all kinds of causes: leaking pipes, discovery of asbestos, electrical faults, Legionnaire’s disease, adverse health and safety inspections, court orders and bizarre cases of simple bad luck.

You **must** have **Insurance** to cover you financially in the event of a disaster, but you also need to look into the possibility of having a backup venue.

For the three main days of talks for **DjangoCon Europe 2015** we booked a backup venue. It was a much less grand and attractive venue than our primary venue, but would certainly have been preferable to no venue at all. We were able to keep this venue on standby at no extra charge to us, thanks to our Cardiff University committee members.

In the end it may not be possible or feasible to arrange a backup; not every conference organiser can avail themselves of a University’s facilities in this way, but it’s still worth considering it at least and knowing what you would do if the worst were to happen.
2.3.2 Accommodation

Important: No accommodation means no conference

You can’t have a conference without attendees, and you can’t have attendees without accommodation. There will be no conference if your attendees don’t have a place to stay.

Most of the people coming to your event will be coming from out-of-town.

Accommodation needs to be within walking distance of the venue, or at least within inexpensive reach using public transport.

Warning: The accommodation worst-case scenario

At DjangoCon Europe 2015, we failed to reserve hotel accommodation in time. We made our plans and our announcements, and meanwhile, a boy band with a huge teenage following announced their own event in Cardiff. We’d just started selling tickets, and discovered to our horror that every hotel bed within a 20km radius of Cardiff had been booked in a matter of hours, save for a few at eye-watering prices.

That’s the kind of thing that happens when 140’000 teenagers and their minders descend on a town with a population of 340’000.

We had to reschedule the conference, moving it forward by two days. In the end everything worked out perfectly well, but it was a very difficult couple of days that could have been avoided.

Types of accommodation

Hotels

Don’t book rooms for your attendees unless you have to, for example if the whole conference is taking place in a venue and this is part of the contract.

It’s enough to identify some suitable local hotels at different price points, and to inform your attendees about them to allow them to make a sensible choice.

However, it’s essential to reserve sufficient hotel space for your visitors, and to do this as soon as possible.

You will need to spend a day or two contacting suitable hotels. Your approach should be along the lines:

- We’re running a conference of 350 people, of whom we expect about 330 to be from out-of-town.
- We’d like to advertise some suitable hotels for delegates on our website, so that they can book their accommodation when they register.
- Your hotel is one of the closest to our venue - can we reserve a number of rooms between the dates such-and-such at a discounted rate for them?
- Can you give us a code that the attendees can quote when booking in order to get the special rate?

Hotels are generally happy to agree to this. They may stipulate that the guaranteed rate will only be available for bookings made before a certain date, but that’s fine.

It’s advisable to spread this across a few different hotels.

For each hotel, make a note of the person you’re dealing with and their direct phone number or email address.

Be aware that if a boy band concert or other similar mega-event is announced, these guarantees may come under pressure. In this case, you need to reassure the hotels that the attendees will be coming, and urge your attendees to book their accommodation sooner rather than later.
It never hurts to keep the hotels informed of progress (tickets sold), and to make periodic enquiries about how many reservations have been made. Add notes into your timeline to remind you when to do this.

**Bed and breakfast accommodation**

Let your attendees sort this out for themselves. It’s worth noting that depending on where you live, “bed and breakfast” can mean quite different things. In the UK, it means what it says. In Germany, it apparently doesn’t include breakfast. Perhaps in some places it doesn’t even include a bed.

**Using accommodation complexes**

As well as hotels and local B&B houses, and depending on the location and season you might also do very well with out-of-season holiday accommodation complexes, or out-of-term student residences. This works very well with events with a strong community atmosphere, and helps strengthen it, especially if people will be sharing rooms or appartments.

This kind of accommodation is typically booked up a long time - well over a year - in advance.

Be warned that you will likely find yourself responsible for allocating rooms to attendees if you go down this route.

**Information about accommodation**

Give your attendees information about accommodation as soon as possible. You will be asked about it time and again, so have it all in one place on the website.

A map showing your venues and suggested places to stay is helpful.

Some people will be looking for room-mates or house-mates for the duration of the event. Set up a wiki to help them organise themselves.

### 2.3.3 Catering

Catering for 300+ people is a serious undertaking. If you get these arrangements wrong, a lot of people are going to be very dissatisfied. This is why you need to establish good relationships with the people who work at your venues early on, so that they can help and advise you.

During the course of a conference day you should provide:

- refreshments on arrival (anything from drinks and biscuits to a cooked breakfast - let your attendees know what you’ll be providing, so they can decide whether or they need to have breakfast before they arrive)
- tea/coffee/cakes mid-morning
- lunch (and perhaps tea/coffee after it)
- tea/coffee/cakes mid-afternoon

These are not always provided during sprints, but it’s a good idea to do it if you can, as it encourages participation.

You may, depending on your budget and venues, also be able to provide a conference dinner as part of the event and/or a contributors’ dinner (for speakers, volunteers and sponsors).

Catering is most likely to be the greatest single cost of running your event - between 55% and 75% of your total expenses.
Food waste

Some caterers have a very lax attitude to food waste. At the end of a lunch at some events you will see shocking quantities of expensive food being thrown away. Not only are you paying for this food to be thrown away, it’s a disgusting waste and you should not allow it to be a feature of your conference.

You need to make it clear with your caterers that you do not want food to be prepared unnecessarily, and you are not under any obligation to your attendees to provide huge mountains of food or protect them from the shocking sight of empty food trays.

Your part in this is to ensure that your caterers know exactly how many people to expect at each meal. This means requiring your attendees to give you that information when they register; the simplest way to do that is to require answers on the registration form to the question: *which of the following meals will you require?*

Dietary requirements

There are few things more miserable than going without food because you can’t eat anything that has been provided and no-one thought to ensure that there’d be something for you.

For religious, medical or other reasons some people can’t eat certain things. If you’re taking people to a restaurant or feeding them, you need to know how many special dietary requirements need to be catered for, and to supply the caterers with that information in advance.

It will often be the case that what people with special dietary requirements most need is information about the food being served. If someone has a kosher or halal diet for example, then simply labelling the food adequately will be enough for them to make suitable choices.

You need good communication with your caterers; they need information from you, and you need them to ensure that food is appropriately labelled (for allergies, vegetarians, etc), and if people need to ask for specially-prepared meals, it needs to be clear that they have to ask and whom to ask.

It will help your attendees, and save you time because then people won’t need to ask you, if you’re able to provide good information about food, in advance, to attendees.

2.3.4 Other services

To be completed

- audio-visual services
- filming
- crèche

Internet access

Everyone at a software conference expects to be provided with wireless Internet access. This doesn’t necessarily mean they should have it. In fact, there’s a strong case that people listening to talks don’t *shouldn’t* be using the Internet at the same time, but should be paying attention, and there’s no reason why you shouldn’t point this out and discourage Internet use in the auditorium.

All the same, some people do *need* access, perhaps because:

- they are doing live demos in their talks
- they are writing up and publishing reports of each talk (see the magnificent work of Reinout van Rees or Hamish Downer for examples of this valuable public service)
• they have work to do

Capacity

Don’t just accept assurances that your venues’ network capacity will be up to the job. The problem with access - and there is almost always a problem, somewhere - is rarely one of bandwidth, but one of connectivity to the wireless network.

You may have 350 attendees, but that doesn’t mean 350 devices - most people will have a laptop and a phone, and others may even have three or more devices. 350 attendees could quite easily be nearly a thousand devices on the network at once.

Make sure the network providers understand this. Have a direct mobile telephone number of one or preferably two people whom you can call on if you run into serious problems. Have a plan for backup or alternative network provision.

Speech-to-text reporting

Speech-to-text reporting - live transcription of speech to text - is currently not often used at software conferences, but that is changing. The value it brings is immense.

How it works

A team of two or more STTRs will sit together where they have a clear view of the speaker(s). They'll typically wear headphones and will need a high quality audio feed (expect to be asked for an XLR connector) of all the speech they are to transcribe, including questions from the floor.

They will be equipped with their own laptop computers and software, and also their stenographic keyboards. They will produce video output from the laptops, so their text can be projected or distributed to large-screen televisions situated at various points in the auditorium.

The text itself is in large type and scrolls up line-by-line.

Their text follows the speech with a minimal delay.

If you plan to use the transcripts to accompany the published conference videos, mention this beforehand when asking for a quote, because it’s not necessarily included and involves additional work.

The STTRs need to work in a team as it involves intense concentrations, and they will usually switch over to each other every 20 minutes or so. They will be working extremely hard all day, so let them have an accurate picture of your day’s schedule in advance so they know what to expect.

Your STTRs should also be provided with:

• a list of all speakers’ names and talk titles
• a list of the most commonly technical terms you expect speakers to use
• plenty of thank-yous from the podium

Why you need it

In fact you’ll find that during breaks the STTRs receive a lot of attention and kind words from your attendees.

Usually speech-to-text reporting is provided for people with hearing impairments, but in fact just about everyone benefits from it. Attendees whose first language is not English - a significant proportion of most software conferences, and nearly all of them at an event like a DjangoCon Europe - find it extremely useful. It doesn’t just help them
catch more of the words or meaning that they might otherwise have missed, it also makes the whole experience at the conference more relaxing, because they know that if their attention falters for a moment they can simply look up at one of the screens and pick up the thread again.

For people who actually have hearing impairments, speech-to-text reporting can be enough to make it worth coming to an event in the first place.

At DjangoCon Europe 2015, the STTRs and the service they provided turned out to be one of the most memorable parts of the event. Dozens of people made a point of telling us how the speech-to-text reporting had improved the conference for them, and the STTRs received a long standing ovation and flowers from the audience in appreciation.

**Cost**

Speech-to-text reporting at DjangoCon Europe cost us £2850 (£2530 for services at the event, plus £320 for the transcripts) for two STTRs over four days; the service was worth every penny.

**How to hire STTRs**

Our STTRs were Sheryll Holley and Hilary Maclean, both very highly recommended. They were provided by Action on Hearing Loss (formerly known as the Royal National Institute for the Deaf), but STTRs can also be approached directly.

See the UK Association of Verbatim Speech to Text Reporters.

**2.3.5 Insurance**

**Important:** You might not like the idea of buying insurance against something you expect not to happen, but you also won’t like spending months organising an event and then finding at the last minute that an ash cloud, industrial action by air-traffic controllers or other intervention of fate strikes a mortal blow against all your carefully-laid plans, or that an accident at the event

This is why you have insurance: to protect you from the possibly huge financial losses that you could face.

Insurance won’t protect you against circumstances that are wholly beyond your control. The right circumstances will ruin your event. But, proper insurance cover will at least mean that you and other people don’t suffer financially as a result.

Imagine the worst-case scenario: that everyone has turned up in your city ready for your conference, and for whatever reason, there is no conference. Perhaps the venue has burned down overnight. Perhaps everyone on the committee has fallen too ill to work. Perhaps there’s an armed seige taking place on that side of town.

It doesn’t have to be anything dramatic: a broken sewer pipe can do the job just as well as devasting conflagration.

If you’re obliged to give attendees or sponsors their money back (and some will have paid by credit card, so even if you don’t feel obliged, some will get their money back whether you like it or not) you could easily find yourself facing bills substantially larger than your annual income - a ruinous sum.

If you’re not able to pay everyone back, you could even face legal action by your creditors.

If you’re ever able to show your face in the community again after such a debacle, you really will be remembered as *that idiot who tried to organise a conference.*

This is what insurance will protect you against.
An example

There are various kinds of insurance for events, and numerous companies that specialise in providing events insurance. For DjangoCon Europe 2015 Europe 2015, our insurance or six days at our two venues cost us just under £620 and took half an hour to arrange. It was a small price to pay for the peace of mind. It included cover against:

- **Cancellation/abandonment of the event: £117,000**
  
  Covered expenses in the event of having to return money for a cancelled event, claims against us in case we failed to vacate the venue in time, and so on. We were protected against bad weather and terrorists, but specifically not against the activity of Icelandic volcanos.
  
  Our expenses were covered, but *not* loss of net profit (which would have made it quite a bit more expensive), since we weren’t relying on making any.

- **Property damage at the venue: £30,000**
  
  Covered our property and other people’s property, including while being transported. Items such as laptop computers were excluded.

- **Public liability: £2,000,000**
  
  General damage or harm for which we could be held liable. £2,000,000 would represent an extremely memorable software conference, though sadly criminal defence and pollution cover were limited to a mere £100,000 each.

- **Employer’s liability: £10,000,000**
  
  Obviously we had no employees, but even unpaid volunteers count as employees.

Our cover was provided by Hiscox Events Insurance.

Insurance is not enough

As noted above, insurance might save you financially, but might not be able to save your event. You also need to build backups and redundancy into your plans, from backup **Backup venues** to making sure that more than one member of the committee has access to bank accounts and so on.

2.4 Organisation

2.4.1 Committee

**Warning:** You can’t do this alone. It will be damaging for you, and extremely risky for the event.

You need to find ways to build collaboration into the working process early on. If you’re not good at that - for example if your natural inclination is to find it easier to do everything yourself - you need to start learning how to do it.

Committee roles

*Why defined roles are important*

You should establish clear roles and responsibilities as soon as possible.
These roles aren’t just unnecessary structure, they are needed because they help people get involved and work with
you and each other; they tell people what they are getting into and what needs to be done.

If people don’t know what is expected of them and what they are supposed to be doing, they often won’t do it. This
mostly isn’t because they are lazy or lack initiative, or even because they didn’t know they were supposed to be doing
it, but because it wasn’t clear it was all right for them to do it.

Having named, defined roles allows people to understand the scale and scope of the various tasks that need to be
undertaken, and allows them to have confidence to act and do things.

It also helps you see who is able to undertake these roles - if someone has a clear role with responsibilities and isn’t
dealing with them, that will be come quickly obvious. If they only have vague or undefined responsibilities, you’ll
have no idea what they are capable of.

The sooner you can do this the better. Later on you will need someone to drop everything to visit a venue at 9am,
or to run a Python script on a list of attendees late at night, and you can’t afford to find out only when you need their
help that they are unable or unwilling.

Suggested roles

Your committee should have a formal:

• Chair - the person leading the event
• Treasurer - to handle money: banking, invoicing, payments
• Secretary - to maintain an official record of meetings, and note who has agreed to do what

There are also other roles that need to be allocated; one person can take on more than one of these, and people can be
jointly responsible:

• Communications - publicity, news
• Designer - print and web, posters, banners, t-shirts, badges
• Webmaster - web content and updates
• Tickets - responsible for tickets, refunds, allocations
• Sponsorship

Fostering collaboration

Your team needs to be that: a team.

It doesn’t matter how energetic or experienced each person on the team is, your most important job as the leader of the
team is to find a way to ensure that they can all, and will all, participate effectively.

Your responsibility

If you aren’t able to do that, it’s your fault, not theirs. They signed up to help as volunteers, and people rarely do that
if they don’t intend to volunteer.

The more this project has been your own personal project, the more you need to be aware of that, and the harder you
will have to work to make it become a genuine team.
Make room for people

Some people are confident and will happily march in and start doing things. Most people are not that at-ease when it comes to someone else’s project, however willing and helpful they are, so you need to make it easier for them.

Having defined roles (above) helps make room for other people to come in, but you can also step back from particular tasks and responsibilities altogether. These need to be substantial ones, so that whoever takes them on feels they have a free hand. In fact you will typically find that they choose to work with others, and also want you involved, but the point is that by stepping away you will have made room for them to take it on.

This will only work if you do it from the start. Later on, it will be too late.

Delegation

People say “delegation is hard!” , and it’s true, but also a bit more complex than that.

Delegating tasks is actually fairly easy, especially if you have willing helpers. You need more than that though, unless you really think you can spend the entire planning process asking people to do particular things.

More difficult, and more effective, is to delegate responsibilities, letting people work out what their own tasks in a certain area are, priorities for them, and so on. You need a great deal of common understanding for this to work: if you delegate responsibility for managing volunteers to someone, and it turns out that they didn’t realise this included responsibility for recruiting them, you’re going to find yourselves in an awkward position.

The higher the level of delegation, the better communication must be in order for it to work.

However, it’s easier to start with more delegation rather than less, and sooner rather than later.

People can always give back the parts of their responsibilities that they don’t won’t relatively easily, but taking on something that someone else has been working on, in their way and according to their own ideas is more difficult.

You’ll soon find if a delegated responsibility isn’t something one of your team is able or willing to deal with, and if you do this early in the planning process, it won’t matter very much. If you discover it later on, it could be more of a problem.

Important: Everything you don’t delegate will be something you have to do yourself.

If you think delegation’s hard, try doing everything yourself. A conference organised by a heroic do-it-all might be a success, but is at great risk of being a disaster, and a bad experience for you.

To be completed

- committee meetings
- how to ensure everyone is working effectively
- delegating versus doing it yourself
- getting people to do things
- dealing with problems
- People fail to do things for all kinds of reasons.
2.4.2 Volunteers

**Note:** Although your committee members will be volunteers too, the volunteers in this section are the helpers who get involved in the running of the event, rather than the team that has organised it.

Volunteers are one of the joys of running a conference.

In the Python/Django community, they’re readily available. People want to volunteer and help - it’s their conference and they want to be a part of it. Don’t underestimate the number of people who’ll be willing to help, or how hard they’ll work or effective they will be.

Take advantage of their generosity, and make sure you repay it.

It’s better, unless a volunteer comes forward who looks like an excellent candidate, to keep your committee separate from your pool of other volunteers. Your committee has to stay small, but your volunteers can be a larger and looser group.

**Enlisting volunteers**

Just ask for volunteers if you want them, but you’ll also find that volunteers approach you asking if they can help.

Student attendees often make excellent volunteers, so especially if your event has some connection with a university, you’re likely to find some very good recruits amongst them.

**Roles for volunteers**

You’ll need volunteers:

- while setting up
- Bag-packing
- at Registration
- on the registration desk during the event
- to act as runners
- while clearing up

None of this work is in the least bit glamorous, but you’ll be surprised how willing people are to take part in it. Obviously, if you just stand around issuing commands at people their willingness may falter, but in any case you should take a lead by being the first to step in for the worst jobs.

**Information**

Volunteers need to know what they should do and where they should be; the clearer you can be about this, the better. It should be in written forms, so that don’t have to remember important things when they are in a rush. A Handbook for volunteers will be invaluable.

This should contain:

- information about what happens where and when and who’s involved in it
- times and places of all events, including social events
- contact information for all the committee
• a reminder of the code of conduct, and guidance on what to do if there’s an issue (see below)

**Code of conduct**

If there are any code-of-conduct-related problems, volunteers need to know what to do. This should be:

• look after anyone if they are upset
• gather some basic information such as names
• contact the committee

And that’s pretty much it. They should not be expected to investigate or resolve anything. Again, this should be provided in written form.

**Thanking your volunteers**

It’s important to make it clear what the deal is for volunteers. *everybody-pays*, but it’s fair enough to offer a volunteer-rate ticket. Your volunteers deserve to come to a speaker’s dinner if there is one, and don’t forget to have them all on stage at the end of the event to receive thanks from the audience.

### 2.4.3 Things to be done

**To be completed**

• how to share information
• how to share tasks

### 2.4.4 Write it down

**Warning: You cannot rely on your memory, however good it is.**

The successful planning and execution of a conference requires an olympian feat of attention to detail. You will have so many things to remember, many of which need to be delivered at precisely the correct moment without a second chance if you forget the first time, that some of them will get forgotten - unless you have something more reliable than memory to work with.

You need to find a way first, to capture everything that needs to be captured, and second, to put it in a place where it will come to hand in when you need it.

**Capturing the things that come to mind**

If you’re already in the habit of writing everything down as soon as it comes to mind, good. If not, now is the time to get into the habit.

Everything needs to be recorded somewhere other than the inside of your own head.

There are two reasons for this: firstly, no-one else can can see inside your head, and nearly every part of the organisation and planning needs to be accessible to the other conference organisers. Secondly, even for your own purposes the inside of your head isn’t a safe place - you will forget things that aren’t written down.

“Everything” really does mean everything. Every idea, thought, concern, thing to be done, *bon mot* for your speaker introductions, every thing that needs to mentioned in the programme booklet.
Every time you think of something, dump it as quickly as possible into external storage, whether it’s on paper or in an electronic form, or even as a voice memo to yourself. Find a way to do this with the minimum possible friction.

Don’t worry about structuring it or getting it down in its final form, because you can take a minute or so each day to move items into the appropriate files when you’re not rushing about doing something else.

**Ensuring that everything will be at hand**

As long as everything has been recorded, you can later move each item where it belongs.

Items for the programme booklet can be dumped into the appropriate file, things you want to mention in your introductions can be dropped into your slides or their notes, things to do can go into your to-do list and so on.

When you’re on stage at the end of the event thanking people, that is not when you want to be racking your memory to ensure that you don’t forget to thank someone important. You want that to be able to go on stage and know that if someone needs to be thanked, your slides, or the notes that you know you’ll have in your hand, will prompt you.

**To be completed**

- tracking things that need to be done

**2.4.5 Internal communications**

**To be completed**

- email list
- IRC
- video conferencing

**2.5 Communications**

For internal communications *within* the organising team, see Internal communications.

**2.5.1 Website**

In the months leading up to your event, its website is all that exists of it for most people.

Anything you want anyone to know should be on there; you can be certain that if it’s not they will be asking you about it by email. In fact, even if it is on the website many people will ask you anyway.

Put yourself in the position of a first-time visitor to your country who barely speaks the language and is a very inexperienced traveller.

If your website doesn’t at least guide them towards the information they need, many will not even consider attending.

**What to publish when**

*As soon as possible*, the website should contain information about:

- dates
• Venues
This will allow people to make their basic plans.

Next most urgent are:
• tickets and pricing
• sponsorship options
• Accommodation
• services that some people will rely upon, such as a crèche or Speech-to-text reporting

You should also publish your Code of Conduct.

These are the things that will allow people to commit themselves to the event.

The next most urgent thing to publish is travel advice.

In due course you will want to publish information about your call for proposals, and later, your programme of talks and other events.

If there are aspects of the conference that are particularly important to you (your Diversity or Accessibility initiatives for example), mention these at appropriate intervals. They may be important, but they’re less urgent than information about venues.

**Structure**

The more you publish, the more it matters that you organise it in a comprehensible structure. Beware of publishing too much information; just because you want people to know about something doesn’t mean that they care or will even read it.

Worse, the more content on the site the more that will not be read, and this will sometimes be at the expense of important information.

**Responsive design**

Especially during the event, more people than usual will be consulting it using mobile devices. Your site needs to have a responsive design so that it’s easily readable on a phone.

### 2.5.2 Programme booklet

Your programme booklet can be anything from a single sheet of paper with some minimal information to a 40-page volume. In fact, you don’t even need to have one at all, but it is a nice thing to have - useful at the time, a souvenir that people can keep and a record for future events.

How long it is and what gets put in it depends on what you consider its purpose to be, but at any rate, a programme booklet that doesn’t give attendees an easy way to find out what’s happening when is not worth the effort - so make that a priority.

**Contents**

Put key information, that people will need to refer to often, towards the front and the back of the booklet.

The two middle pages - if the programme is saddle-stitched, which is most likely the case - are also a good place to put key information, because the booklet will naturally fall open at these pages.

Contents can include:
• a description of talks and speakers
• maps
• code of conduct
• sponsor advertisements
• an at-a-glance listing of sessions - this is best placed in a double-page spread across the final page and inside back cover, or across the two middle pages
• contact information
• thank-yous

Printing

If you’re not already familiar with your printer’s requirements, or indeed with print industry standards, *find out exactly what you need to supply well in advance*, and don’t assume you know what it is until you do.

For example...

CMYK

Likely most of the images you supply and work with are in RGB colourspace; printers work with CMYK.

RGB images will be a little duller and darker when printed, and there may be some strange anomalies. Things that might appear identical on screen can look remarkably different in print.

Bleed

Usually printers will want to be provided with files that incorporate a bleed width of around 3mm. The simplest way to do this if you’re not using professional-level software for preparing your materials is to use custom page or canvas sizes that incorporate the extra bleed width.

Number of pages

A printed booklet must have a number of pages divisible by four, including its inner and outer covers.

Send a draft version to test the process

You don’t want to be dealing with unexpected glitches when you have a print deadline, so send your printers a draft version of the programme booklet two months before the event starts. You’ll soon find out whether there are any problems looming, and you’ll also discover how helpful and friendly the printers and willing to spend time solving your problems - an equally important thing to know.

Proof-reading

Any mistakes you make will be in print forever. Just saying.
2.5.3 During the event

**Note:** If you don’t find ways to communicate important information to your attendees during the event, you and the other organisers will find yourselves having to repeat it to people over and over again, sucking up vast amounts of your time.

You need to have a plan for communication, which includes people with designated responsibilities (for things like making announcements or signs) and ways of ensuring that things that need to be announced get to the right person in time and are not forgotten.

It doesn’t need to be an elaborate plan, but simple things like making sure that appropriate people have access to the website or Twitter account and know that they are expected to use them can help a great deal.

**The programme booklet**

Your Programme booklet should contain most of the information that people will need to refer to during the event - and they should be told that it does; you would be surprised how many people don’t even open it.

**At registration**

It’s worth also having a handout that is literally placed into attendees’ hands when they register, mentioning things that you want everyone to know, or that you think everyone is likely to ask about, for example:

- Code of Conduct
- emergency contact information
- information on how to access the wireless network

You also need to let people know how they will be informed over the course of the event of important news updates. If you’re going to use a Twitter account for example, they need to know what it is and that you will use it.

*You cannot assume that everyone is a user of Twitter or any other platform or service.*

**Announcements from the stage**

Any important announcements *need to be made multiple times*. People won’t be in the room, or won’t be listening, or won’t hear. These announcements should also be backed up in other forms (on the website, via email or a Twitter feed for example).

**Communications tools**

Communications during the event is generally more critical and time-sensitive than before it, especially if it concerns things like changed venues, different dinner arrangements or the like.

- *if* everybody knows that this is where they should look, the website’s ideal for announcements
- Twitter is excellent for messages about the event, but not good for important ones
- email - *if* you are sure you have everyone’s email address - is best for important announcements, but keep it for important ones

Either way, it’s best not to rely on a single mode of communication for important messages, and the key thing is that people **must** know how to keep up with them.
2.5.4 After the event

**Note:** After the event, you won’t feel like doing much. So, you’re strongly advised to prepare as much of the post-conference communications as you can in advance, so you need only to do a minimum of work later.

**Feedback**

You should ask your attendees for feedback, to find out what the experience was for them. Ask your:

- speakers
- sponsors
- general attendees

questions appropriate to them.

**Update this document**

On the basis of attendee feedback please update this handbook. Suggestions for improvement are very welcome, especially if you found that any advice here was unhelpful.

**Provide the feedback to next year’s organisers**

Make sure the feedback is shared with other people who will find it useful. If there’ll be an edition of the conference next year, its organisers need to receive it.

All communication for your event is a balancing act between *too much* and *too little*.

2.5.5 Email

Try to avoid sending endless email messages to people. Sometimes it’s inevitable, for example if you need attendees to update their tickets with answers to new questions.

Be warned that some attendees will *inevitably* manage to get their own email addresses wrong, and that your messages will not reach some of them. Many more will simply fail to read them.

2.5.6 Twitter

Twitter may be an appalling form of communication and a sign that civilisation is entering its final decline, but it does have its uses for an event, and can do an excellent job of spreading “buzzy” news.

*Twitter is a very bad way of communicating important information* though. Not everyone uses Twitter, and assuming that they do excludes them. It is courteous to send important information via email.

Don’t even consider using Facebook or another closed medium for circulating conference information.
2.6 Finances

2.6.1 The conference budget

To be completed

- the difficult art of forecasting
- an example budget spreadsheet

2.6.2 Managing conference finances

To be completed

- the bank account
- record-keeping

2.7 Policies

The character of your event will be determined by all the decisions you make for it. Some of these are material decisions - where it’s held, when, how long it lasts, how many attendees, its focus - and some are ideological: what values will it embody, what kind of changes it aims to effect in the community it serves.

You will have to adopt and work to your own policies. Just because something is mentioned here doesn’t mean that you are obliged to pursue it. Be aware though that the Python and Django communities have certain expectations - don’t expect to receive much support for an event that lacks an adequate code of conduct for example.

2.7.1 Code of Conduct

A formal code of conduct, a policy setting out expected standards of behaviour, is de rigueur for Python and Django events, and a formal requirement for events that are funded by the Python or Django Software Foundations.

A code of conduct serves a number of purposes:

- it provides reassurance to attendees that they will not be subjected to unpleasant treatment by other people
- it reminds people that the way they interact with other people matters
- it helps remove ambiguity about acceptable standards of behaviour
- it makes it easier to deal with any problems that do arise

You don’t have to have a code of conduct, but there will be plenty of people who won’t attend or won’t speak if you don’t, and sponsors who won’t want to be involved.

Occasionally, people raise questions about the need for a code of conduct, on various grounds (that people should be trusted to behave decently; that it’s unnecessary to remind attendees not to harrass others; that it’s part of some sort of feminist conspiracy to prevent men from having fun, and more).

These questions tend to be raised by people who have never been harrassed, insulted, abused or otherwise had their enjoyment of a conference spoiled by someone else.

A more serious issue is that a code of conduct is not a guarantee that nothing untoward will happen, and even worse, that it’s not a guarantee that the right things will be done if something does happen. All the same, this is not an
argument for not having a code of conduct, but for not having a code of conduct that isn’t properly communicated or enforced - so make sure that you do both.

See the example for a suggested code of conduct text.

**Communicating the code of conduct**

The code of conduct should be in a prominent place on the Website and in the Programme booklet. It should also be in a visible place on the registration desk or on poster around the venues, and specifically mentioned to attendees when they arrive.

Needless to say, your Committee and Volunteers need to know and understand the code of conduct very well, and what they are supposed to do about it.

**Code of conduct liaisons**

It’s recommended that you have a couple of committee members, one male and one female, who will be on-call and available throughout the event. They should each be introduced at the start of the event, and mentioned in the programme booklet and on the website.

**Documented procedures**

It’s useless to have a code of conduct without having properly-documented procedures for its enforcement. They should be written down and communicated to every volunteer.

How to raise a code of conduct issue also needs to be communicated to the general conference audience.

**To be completed**

- how to enforce it
- things to watch out for

**2.7.2 Diversity**

To be completed

**2.7.3 Accessibility**

To be completed

**2.7.4 Everybody pays**

**Note:** At nearly all community events in the Python/Django world, the organisers adopt an everybody pays policy.

*Everybody* really does mean everybody - attendees, speakers, volunteers, organisers - **with one exception: those who can’t afford to pay.**
So, not only does nobody receive remuneration for their contribution, every attendee pays to be there. Free tickets - never mind a speaking fee - are not granted to superstar speakers, for example, while organisers and volunteers all have to buy a ticket, just like the other attendees do.

This is sometimes surprises people who are used to different arrangements, but everybody pays is a policy adopted by PyCon US, PyCon UK, DjangoCon Europe and DjangoCon US. These conferences don’t take a profit, and are run entirely by unpaid volunteers.

The aim of the policy is to make the conference fairer, and to make the organisation more transparent.

It’s fairer because it helps lower the price of tickets for everyone, which particularly benefits those with less disposable income.

It’s fairer because it puts everybody in the same boat, including the organisers, including the chair of the organising committee; we’re all equal and all in this together. (In other words, the organisers are not asking attendees to pay anything that we’re not paying ourselves.)

It’s more transparent because it avoids potential conflicts of interest - it means the organisers are not in the position of allocating free tickets to themselves.

Obviously this isn’t the only way to run a conference, and it won’t work for events that have to make a profit to be viable, or which represent someone’s income. There’s nothing wrong with other ways of doing it, but this is the PyCon/DjangoCon tradition and why it exists.

The policy is understood and supported by most attendees. Each year it makes a positive contribution to the unity and diversity of the Python/Django communities, and has helped successive community events more affordable for the people who need that the most.

**Free tickets**

The only people who don’t pay are the ones who can’t afford to. In their case, there’s a financial aid programme (which can be run by the organisers, or by a separate committee on behalf of for example the DSF or PSF), while the conference organisers are able to allocate free or heavily discounted tickets to people who need them.

The *everybody pays* policy makes it possible for the organisers to give more free tickets to attendees who are on lower budgets, which of course this also helps make for a more diverse attendance.

**Volunteer tickets**

It’s fair enough to offer volunteer-rate tickets to people who will give up a considerable portion of their time at the event running about doing errands and sitting at the registration desk.

### 2.8 Tickets

See Everybody pays

#### 2.8.1 To be completed

- pricing
  - student/individual/corporate/volunteer
  - early-bird/standard
- free tickets
• questions on tickets - get them in early
  – t-shirts
  – which days will you be here
  – dietary requirements
  – crèche
  – accessibility requirements

2.9 Sponsorship

Sponsors can be the financial life-blood of a conference. Their support helps you lower the ticket prices and generally offer attendees a better conference experience.

In return, sponsors benefit from exposure, an opportunity to meet and engage with the users of their products and services, and to meet potential new recruits. And also, often they simply want to support the open-source software communities that they are part of.

2.9.1 Sponsorship levels

Typically, a conference will offer a few different levels of sponsorship, so that small and large organisations can find a suitable way in which to contribute.

Below are some suggested levels. These are just suggestions of course - you need to make sure that the levels, however many and whatever they are, are suitable for your event. In this suggested scheme each level is twice the price of the previous one.

You don’t need to worry too much about fine-tuning the levels - just make the options clear and reasonable.

Bronze (£500)

• their logo, and a link on the website
• mentions in conference email messages to the community

Silver (£1000)

Similar to Bronze, but includes:
• a stand & banners at the venues
• a quarter-page advertisement in the programme
• a complimentary ticket to the conference

Gold (£2000)

Similar to Silver, but includes:
• a half-page advertisement in the conference programme
• two complimentary tickets to the conference
Platinum (£4000)

Similar to Gold, but includes:

- their banners adjacent to the speakers’ stage at the venue
- a full-page advertisement in the conference programme
- four complimentary tickets to the conference

2.9.2 Sponsorship prospectus

A sponsorship prospectus is a standalone document that contains:

- basic information about the event
- some reasons why companies will benefit from sponsoring
- a description of the sponsorship levels
- contact information

Even someone not already familiar with the event or the websites should be able to pick up the prospectus and understand what sponsorship would mean for them. Some photographs of previous events, venues, previous sponsors at their booths and so on will all help.

2.9.3 How to approach sponsors

Some companies have a person or an office dedicated to sponsorship of events - but either way, it’s always better to write directly to a named person, preferably one with whom you’ve already had some contact.

Write describing the event, mentioning the web page listing your sponsorship levels, and including a copy of the sponsorship prospectus. See the sponsorship request template for suggestions.

2.9.4 To be completed

- don’t be tempted into special deals
- thanking sponsors
- what sponsors mean to the event

2.10 Programme

2.10.1 Call for proposals

To be completed

- when
- how to get the speakers you want
- building diversity into your programme
- timelines
- speaker mentors
• seeking speakers outside the bubble

2.10.2 Selecting your talks

To be completed

• how to select
• voting
  – public voting?
• sending rejection letters
• accepting talks and speakers

2.10.3 Programme of talks

Your programme of talks should be the jewel in the crown of your event.

It might in the end not turn out to be what people remember or value the most (for different people, that could be the sprints, or a workshop or making new friends) but the programme of talks is what most people will come for, what most employers will pay for their delegates to attend, and it’s the formal structure at the heart of the conference.

It’s the easiest part of conference to understand (try explaining a code sprint for example to someone who hasn’t been to one) and the only part that many people are actually able to make judgements about.

So, you need to get this right, in advance, and to be able to promise and subsequently advertise a rich and balanced programme.

Single and multiple tracks

Conferences that run sessions of talks in parallel are called multi-track conferences. Sometimes the tracks are dedicated to particular themes (a science track, an education track), but not always; sometimes it’s simply a way to hold more sessions during the event.

Even an event with multiple tracks won’t always be running parallel sessions; keynote talks and other plenary sessions will bring the whole audience together.

Multiple tracks

A multi-track event has some advantages.

It allows you to offer a wider range of talks in the same space of time, and makes it easy to have talks that are of specialised rather than general interest. It also makes it possible for attendees to choose which talks to go to.

Single track

At the same time, some events hold strongly to a single track.

A single track is another way of emphasising the we’re all in this together ethos.

It helps unify the attendees: everyone has the same experience. Choice is often overrated, and sometimes people find themselves having to choose between two talks both of which they wanted to attend (or regretting the choice they made).
It’s good for speakers; it means they’re able to attend all the other speakers’ talks too. There’s always the risk with multiple tracks that a new speaker timetabled against a well-known and popular figure will find themselves facing a very sparse audience, which is a disappointing experience. With a single track, every speaker gets to share the same platform, enjoying the same experience and the same audience, and will be guaranteed everyone’s attention (possibly more nerve-wracking for inexperienced speakers, but far more rewarding).

A single track also obliges you to choose your programme of talks even more carefully, which is also a good thing. Finally, a single track is easier to manage - you only need one session chair or co-ordinator at a time, only one set of AV equipment and staff, while attendees know where to be and don’t waste time getting from one session to another.

Note: There may be good practical reasons to hold a multi-track conference, but somehow single-track events tend to be more memorable and special experiences.

Length of talks

For a single day of talks, consider slots of all the same length. It’s simpler, and puts all your speakers in the same position.

A longer event demands more variety and gives you more flexibility. For example, even if a speaker has a short slot, other attendees will have more opportunity to catch up with them over the course of the conference.

See The day’s timetable for more.

Keynote talks

A keynote talk sets a tone and makes an important statement of intent - often, they have a message, not just information, to deliver. A keynote address is usually a little longer than the long talks, at least to provide some extra time for discussion, or to allow it to unfold at a more measured pace.

A keynote talk isn’t just a longer talk, or even an important one. It’s one that helps define your conference.

Your choice of keynote talks indicates what you consider to be important or of moment, or whom you consider to be someone who should be heard or represents something significant that is happening.

Usually, a keynote address won’t be a particularly deep technical talk, but will take a wider perspective, perhaps personal, professional, political or historical.

Usually, the first talk of each day is appropriate for a keynote, but you can also use a keynote talk to wrap up a programme of talks, but choose the topic appropriately.

See Selecting your talks on the selection of keynote speakers.

Lightning talks

Lightning talks are short - usually strictly a maximum of five minutes - on any subject at all.

The best time for lightning talks is at the end of each day, though for an event with only a single day of talks, you should consider holding two or even three lightning talk sessions earlier in the day. This gives your attendees who have never spoken before a chance to see what lightning talks actually are, and to realise that it’s something they could do themselves, and the time to gather together their thoughts and courage to propose one.

Many speakers get their first taste of speaking at a conference through doing - and enjoying - a lightning talk, so it’s important to provide as much encouragement as possible, both by example and through exhortation.
Balance

Of talks

Aim for a good balance: of technical topics, war stories, community-oriented talks, and so on.

Similarly, you need a good range and balance of technical depth in technical talks. It is important for a community conference to offer a platform to new speakers (whose perspective might reflect less experience) and also to make it possible for attendees to hear less talks pitched at a lower technical level. A programme only containing technically demanding talks is exclusive.

Balance matters both for the overall programme of talks, but also for each day and each block of talks.

See Selecting your talks for more.

Of speakers

See Diversity.

Rhythm

Pay close attention to the pattern of talks through the day. The pace should be reasonably consistent, without jarring changes, and also needs to rise and fall at appropriate times. Use the day’s natural structure and breaks to guide this.

A conference - and usually each day - should open with a keynote talk.

People are typically at their freshest and most alert mid-morning, so that’s a good time for the most difficult technical material, but speed up immediately before breaks. Your final scheduled talk, of the event or the day, can afford to be reflective or retrospective, and should be a way to help wind down the mood and provide a route back to the real world out of the conference bubble.

Lightning talks do an excellent job of breaking the conference spell, and are the perfect way to end a day.

Variety of tone and pace is important, but also try to mix up your speakers, by age, sex, race, native language, experience of speaking, personal style. Put first-time speakers immediately after a keynote talks or very well-known speakers; it’s a reminder of the importance of nurturing new contributors and an affirmation of the principle of inclusion. Of course, this is only possible in the first place if you have succeeding in assembling a diverse range of speakers.

Local speakers

*Especially if your event is one that moves to a different location each year, you must have some local speakers. It’s important for a number of different reasons.*

Your event ought to engage the local community; it’s not just a visiting bubble of touring programmers that is there only to enjoy the local food/weather/nightlife/architecture and then to leave, but a meaningful community of human beings.

You can invite local speakers who represent something of the location - researchers or students at a local university for example are always doing interesting things. Many of them - most of them - will be new to the open-source communities we often take for granted, and won’t even be aware of your event, but will have something worthwhile to contribute.

Your local developers are bound to offer up some things and ideas and projects that don’t normally find their way into the mainstream, and the local connection is an excellent way to bring some of these unusual things to the forefront - speakers from “outside the bubble” will bring new perspectives.
It also helps forge relationships with the institutions that the local speakers are part of, and having such relationships can greatly enrich your event - not just with speakers, but in all kinds of unexpected ways.

When the event is over it should have left behind something of value, and that’s only possible if local people are able to be involved in the event. Every event should advance the community and its projects, and if that doesn’t include making a positive local contribution, something important has been neglected.

2.10.4 The day’s timetable

Selecting and sequencing a Programme of talks might be an art, but timetabling them is probably a science.

You can spend hours trying to put together a timetable that works well, that leaves sensible and adequate room for breaks and lunches and changeovers, and that adds up to a good day of talks.

Some timetabling rules of thumb

- It simplifies things if every session can start on the hour or half-hour.
- The maximum time between breaks should be two hours - it’s too much to ask your attendees and their coffee-filled bladders to last longer than that at a time.
- More than one long talk (40-60 minutes including questions) without a break in between is excessive.
- Don’t make a long talk the last one before lunch or a break.
- Try to avoid asking your attendees to sit through more than seven hours’ worth of talks a day.
- Hold Lightning talks early on in the programme, so that people who experience them for the first time get the opportunity to think: I could do that.
- Build some slack into the programme to allow for the unexpected, and to recover from it.
- Give yourself small buffers around the start and first talk and before and after break - they will fill themselves up naturally, and if they don’t, nobody will be inconvenienced.
- The slot before lunch should be lively and fast-moving, otherwise attendees’ thoughts start to drift towards their next meal.
- The session after lunch needs to be light, fast, short and preferably amusing, because many people will be experiencing a post-prandial slump - it’s a bad idea to put a long and difficult technical talk in this slot.
- A good way of dividing up the day is:
  - a first morning session
  - a break
  - a second morning session
  - lunch
  - a first afternoon session
  - a break
  - a second afternoon session
Example plans

These are all based on actual examples that worked well. They also all include margins to absorb delays - there are always delays - and leave you some room for ad-hoc announcements.

Always make sure you include time for introductions, both at the start of the day and for speakers when they come on stage, and for closing remarks and thank-yous. Don’t underestimate how long it takes to get through a round of thank-yous, especially at a larger event with an enthusiastic community audience.

Plan one: 25-minute slots

Suitable for a single-day event.

This works well because every session will start on the hour or half-hour.

Everyone gets a slot the same length, 25 minutes each including questions, in blocks of two hours at a time, with a slightly longer keynote talk at the start.

Breaks and lunches are multiples of 30 minutes.

You can create a 60-minute slot this way, but that’s a very long talk. If you want to have a talk that’s longer than 30 minutes, it’s better to make it about 45 minutes and use the remaining time for announcements, welcome addresses and so on, as in the example of the opening keynote talk.

Start times are nominal.

Timetable

- **First morning sessions**
  - 09.00 Welcome and introduction
  - 09.15 Keynote talk
  - 10.00 Talk 2
  - 10.30 Talk 3
- **11.00 Break**
- **Second morning sessions**
  - 11.30 Talk 4
  - 12.00 Talk 5
  - 12.30 Talk 6
- **13.00 Lunch**
- **First afternoon sessions**
  - 14.00 Talk 7
  - 14.30 Talk 8
  - 15.00 Talk 9
- **15.30 Break**
- **Second afternoon sessions**
  - 16.00 Talk 8
  - 16.30 Talk 9
– 17.00 Lightning talks
– 17.50 Closing remarks (if required)

• 18.00 Close

Plan two: 20-minute slots

Suitable for an Open day, where you need a fast-paced programme for a general audience of possibly unknown interests and expertise, including some who may be school pupils.

Leaves plenty of room to insert announcements, or to absorb overruns.

Start times are nominal; even if it seems that some slots are longer than others, that’s simply because it makes the start times more convenient to deal with. The point is that within each block there is sufficient time for the talks and an allowance for changeovers, small announcements and so on.

Timetable

• First morning sessions
  – 09.00 Welcome and introduction
  – 09.10 Talk 1
  – 09.50 Talk 2
  – 10.10 Talk 3
  – 10.30 Talk 4

• 11.00 Break

• Second morning sessions
  – 11.30 Talk 5
  – 11.50 Talk 6
  – 12.10 Talk 7
  – 12.30 Talk 8

• 13.00 Lunch

• First afternoon sessions
  – 14.00 Talk 9
  – 14.20 Talk 10
  – 14.40 Talk 11
  – 15.00 Talk 12

• 15.30 Lunch

• Second afternoon sessions
  – 16.00 Talk 13
  – 16.20 Talk 14
  – 16.40 Talk 15
  – 17.00 Talk 16
• 17.30 Close

Plan three: long and short talks

Talks are in two-hour or 90-minute blocks, mixing up long (40 minutes including questions) and short talks (20 minutes including questions).

This scheme is more suited to a longer conference.

Start times are nominal.

Timetable

• First morning sessions
  – 09.00 Welcome and introduction
  – 09.20 Keynote talk
  – 10.10 Short talk
  – 10.30 Short talk
  – 10.50 Announcement

or

• First morning sessions
  – 09.00 Welcome and introduction
  – 09.10 Keynote talk
  – 10.00 Short talk
  – 10.20 Short talk
  – 10.40 Short talk
  – 11.00 Break

• Second morning sessions
  – 11.30 Long talk
  – 12.20 Short talk
  – 12.40 Short talk

• 13.00 Lunch

• First afternoon sessions
  – 14.30 Short talk (note that there are no long talks in this post-lunch session)
  – 15.00 Short talk
  – 15.20 Short talk
  – 15.40 Short talk
  – 16.00 Break

• Second afternoon sessions
  – 16.30 Long talk
17.20 Lightning talks
17.50 Closing remarks (if required)
18.00 Close

Breaks

Lunches

Different cultures have different expectations for lunch. Your French or Italian attendees might be a vaguely appalled to be confronted by a lunch hour that's only 60 minutes long, while a north American or northern European might consider lunch at 13.00 to be on the late side. Adjust your timetable accordingly.

2.11 Procedures

2.11.1 Bag-packing

The day before the event starts, you can pack your attendees’ gift bags.

The best place to do this is in the registration room so that nothing needs to be removed from it except rubbish.

Your sponsors will have sent a vast collection of stickers, pens, notebooks, leaflets and other items, and you will also have some conference items such as programme booklets to go in them too.

It’s simple enough to do this, but it’s also remarkably easy to get yourselves in a muddle, and the spectacle of 12 people trying to work out in which of 350 bags one of the 15 different items hasn’t been packed (or has been packed twice) won’t be one you want to see.

Make sure that the items you plan to pack are actually intended to go in the bags. A sponsor may have sent items to be kept at their booth, not to be placed in the bags - you need to know this before your bag-packers ask you.

What not to pack

If at all possible, any packed bag should be suitable for any attendee. Name badges and t-shirts should be left out of the bags and only handed over at registration time.

This makes registration easier - it’s quicker to pick a t-shirt from the right pile and flip through the name badges for the right one than it is to pick through a pile of 100 bags looking for the name badge that someone pinned to it the previous afternoon.

It also helps to avoid a situation where you’re looking through a pile of bags for the t-shirt of the wrong size that must have been put in one of them.

The assembly line

The best way to pack the bags is with an assembly line - set up a long line of stations, with one item to be packed and volunteer allocated to each, and all the empty bags at the start.

The volunteer at each station should ascertain as far as possible whether there are enough of each item for all the bags you plan to pack. It won’t matter too much if some bags don’t get an x and some don’t get a y, but try to avoid finding out that the last batch of bags lacks not only an x and a y but a z too.

Do the first few bags slowly. Get each volunteer to do their own, taking it from station to station. After that the packing can begin in earnest.
If some stations are slower than others, the assembly line should never allow bags to pile up at it - volunteers should move downstream to help relieve the bottleneck.

Bags should be counted as they enter the system, so that you don’t pack more than you intend to, and grouped in batches so that you know how many you have completed.

The easiest part of the operation is passing the bags down the line and putting things in them - it’s managing all the things that are moving around, from empty boxes, packing materials and completed bags that’s trickier. 350 packed bags can take up a surprising amount of space, and you need to plan where they’re all going to go. Similarly, it’s amazing how things like scissors can disappear if people are careless about what they do with discarded packing materials or boxes.

2.11.2 Registration

Checking in your attendees is something that you need to get right from the moment it begins until the last attendee is checked in.

If your event has 300 attendees, and it takes 30 seconds to check in each one, that’s a total of two and a half hours. And 30 seconds is a very optimistic estimate

To be completed

• manual

2.12 Document templates and examples

These are suggested examples of documents that you might find it useful to adapt.

2.12.1 Code of conduct

[This is a suggested template.]

Preamble

DjangoCon Europe is a community conference. We value the participation of each member of the Django community and want all attendees to have an enjoyable experience. All attendees - delegates, speakers, volunteers, sponsors, exhibitors and organisers - are expected to abide by this Code of Conduct. If necessary, the organisers will act to enforce it.

Code of conduct text

All attendees are expected to show respect and courtesy to others throughout the conference and at all conference events. This includes social and fringe events, whether officially sponsored by DjangoCon Europe or not.

All communication should be appropriate for a general audience, which may include children and people from many different backgrounds. Sexual language and imagery are not welcome.

DjangoCon Europe will not tolerate harassment in any form, or language, imagery or behaviour that are:

• sexist, racist or exclusionary
• intimidating or threatening
• insulting or unpleasant

Harassment can include: offensive verbal comments related to sex or gender, sexual orientation, disability, appearance, body size, race, religion; the use of sexual images; deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following; harassing photography or recording; sustained disruption of talks or other events; inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

**Should there be a problem**

If you are troubled by the behaviour of another attendee at the conference, or are concerned that another attendee may be in distress, please speak immediately to any member of conference staff or contact our code of conduct liaison volunteers.

[Include the name and photo of each of the volunteers here.]

Your concern will be heard in confidence, taken seriously, and dealt with according to a documented procedure.

Conference staff - volunteers and organisers - will be on hand throughout the conference. Any concern, whatever it is, will be immediately passed on to a member of the conference committee. The committee will investigate promptly and if necessary will take appropriate action. This may include:

- asking a violator of the Code of Conduct to leave the event immediately (no refunds will be forthcoming)
- passing on details of the incident to the Django Software Foundation and Python Software Foundation
- informing the police about the incident

We will provide you with a written statement of the outcome, whatever it is.

**The purpose of the Code of Conduct**

The Code of Conduct does not exist because we expect to deal with any such problems.

On the contrary, it exists to help give attendees confidence that they are attending an event where high standards of behaviour are the norm, where everyone is aware of those standards, and that something will be done should it fall short.

By signalling inclusivity and diversity as values we expect the conference to uphold, the Code of Conduct helps guarantee that the event will indeed be inclusive and embrace diversity.

### 2.12.2 Handbook for volunteers

[This is a suggested template.]

**Committee phone numbers**

*Please don’t hesitate to ask a member of the committee for advice, help or information.*

[list the phone numbers of committee members]

**Code of Conduct**

You need to be familiar with the code of conduct (see website or programme booklet). The short version is: no-one at the event is to suffer harassment or abuse of any form, and no-one should behave in a way that distresses anyone else.

If you become aware of any problem, speak to any member of the committee immediately.
Please don’t attempt to resolve, investigate, or otherwise deal with the problem beyond establishing basic facts like the names of people concerned.

**Conference timetable**

[List the time and location of every session, including meals and breaks. For each session, there needs to be a co-ordinator and a runner listed.]

**Day one - Sunday 31st May**

All events take place in Cardiff University Main Building.
Volunteers should be on-site by 08.00.
Registration takes place in the Council Chamber.
Lunch will be available 12.00-14.00 in Aberdare Hall.

**Workshops**

- **08.30 18.00 Django Girls Justyna Kalužka, Anna Warzecha** Location: Small Chemistry Lecture theatre Co-ordinator: Ola Sitarśka, Baptiste Mispelon Runner: Eva Gonzalez
- **11.00 13.00 Daniel Quinn: Python & Django for PHP coders** Location: Lecture theatre 1.25 Co-ordinator: Geraint Palmer Runner: Iain Majer
- **13.00 16.00 Tracy Osborn: Django for web designers** Location: Lecture theatre 0.53 Co-ordinator: Vincent Knight Runner: Tom James

**Talks** Location: Large Shandon Lecture Theatre

**Part 1** Co-ordinator: Vincent Knight Runner: Ben Sharif 09.00 Welcome to DjangoCon 09.15 Prof. Roger Whitaker: Welcome to Cardiff University 09.30 Russell Keith-Magee: What on earth are Python & Django? 09.50 Mark Steadman: A web framework for the creative mind 10.10 Rhiannon Titcomb: Understanding Bezier curves with Python 10.30 Tom Bakx: Python in Astronomy 11.00 Break


[etc]

**Co-ordinator**

[checklists for co-ordinators]
At the start of each day

- note which sessions you are chairing
- where and when they are

Before each session

- make sure your runner is ready
- introduce yourself to each of the speakers
- make sure they know where and when they have to be
- ensure you can pronounce their names correctly
- note down how they’d like to be introduced, and whether there’s something you should mention
- remind your speakers to have water in their bottles

Before each talk

- remind the speaker how long they have: * open day talks and short talks: 20 minutes including questions *
  longer talks: 45 minutes including questions
- ask the speaker how long they intend to speak
- note down the speaker’s ending time at the start of the talk

During each talk

- keep an eye on the time
- use the “20/15/10/5 minutes remaining” cards to indicate remaining speaking time
- prepare and write down at least three different questions for the speaker
- maintain eye contact with the speaker and look as though you’re enjoying the talk, especially if the speaker
  seems nervous; a discreet thumbs-up, OK sign or nodding in agreement always helps

After each talk

- thank the speaker
- start the questions (see below)
- invite further questions
- keep an eye on the time, and announce “two more short questions please”
- thank the speaker again
- help the speaker down from the stage and make sure they have all their things
Notes

A speaker must never be allowed to deliver a talk and not have questions from the audience. You are responsible for starting the questions, so that other members of the audience have time to gather their thoughts for their own questions. Preparing some in advance makes this a lot easier.

It doesn’t matter if a speaker ends sooner than expected, but a speaker who goes over time will be a problem.

Emergency questions

If you find yourself - you shouldn’t - in a situation of having to start the questions and don’t have any ready:

• “What do you think is the single most valuable lesson to be drawn from your experience?”
• “Can you say little bit more about how you/why you did/chose/suffered from such-and-such?”
• “Where do you think this will take you/you will take this next?”
• “Can you explain [some deeply technical thing that was mentioned] in a little more detail?”

Runner

As well as being a runner, you’re also a backup Co-ordinator - so please be aware of what the Co-ordinator needs to do, just in case there’s a problem.

At the start of each day

• note which sessions you are responsible for
• where and when they are

Before each session

• make sure your Co-ordinator knows you’re there

Time cards

[At the back of the handbook it’s a good idea to have some pages with large text showing remaining time, that can be shown to the speakers, for 20/15/10/5/0 minutes.]

2.12.3 Introductory address

[This is a suggested list of things to be mentioned at the start of the event.]

• welcome
• safety briefing (fire alarm, exits, etc)
• introduce the team of volunteers
• mention code of conduct
• introduce code of conduct liaisons
• thank sponsors
2.12.4 Sponsorship request

[This is a suggested template.]

Dear [name of contact],

Following the success of [your conference] last year, this year’s edition will be held in [location] at [venue], from [date] to [date]: [link to your website].

We’re seeking sponsors who can provide financial support for the event, which will bring together [number of] [Python|Django] developers from across the world for six days of talks, tutorials and collaboration.

Our sponsorship prospectus is published at [link to your website], and a PDF version is also available at [link to PDF]. Attendees at these events know that they are only possible through the generosity of sponsors, and sponsors rightly earn a great deal of goodwill through their involvement.

At this event, we’re also holding a recruitment session on [day], which you’re warmly invited to participate in.

Our prospectus lists some suggested levels of sponsorship, but you are most welcome to offer your own proposals if you’d like to suggest some other arrangement. We’re working very hard to stage an event that will be esteemed and valued by everyone who is able to attend, and we hope you will decide to be a part of it too.

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch if you’d like to know more. If you prefer you can contact me on [your phone number].

Yours sincerely,

[Your name, your role]