

Contagious Energy • Customized Content • Motivated Audiences

ROOM SET-UP SUGGESTIONS



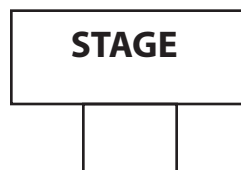
My name is Chip Eichelberger. I have been speaking professional for almost 20 years and spent 6 years with Tony Robbins throughout the US, Australia and the UK. I have done events for 6500 for the Association of Operating Room Nurses and leadership events for M & T Bank for 65. The room set-up and logistics of the room are very important to the overall success of the meeting : chairs, light, music, temperature, stage set-up all play a role. Here are some ideas to consider that will make a difference for all your sessions.

- The number of chairs and proximity to the stage is crucial to maximize energy. Keep a closetrack on the **actual number of participants** you have. The hotel/convention center will typically set up too many, up to 20% too many 90% of the time. You can always add chairs. Start the first row five feet away from the stage, not twenty feet. Pay extra attention at a closing session. Usually the numbers always go down 10 – 35% - take out some chairs. Why? The ones in the front rows will be empty. It is much harder for the speaker to connect with 300 spread out in 500 chairs. Create a fun incentive to get people to fill up the front rows.

One trick is to use masking tape to restrict access to the back rows before you must use them. **If you have tables use Reserved signs**. Have some staff protect access to the area.

At the closing session you will always have shrinkage of the audience. Set fewer chairs than you think you need or at least tape off the back rows.

- With groups over 70 and going 5 rows deep you need a 12" - 18" rise r/stage so the speaker can be seen. Over 150 go 18" and over 500 go 24", over 1000 go 36". When you have over 150 you will have better resultswith the stage in shape of a "T" instead of the traditional straight across rectangle.



- To magnify audience reaction and comfort the way the chairs are set up is the most important. Ideally instruct the hotel to **set the chairs 4 - 6" apart**. People hate to be jammed together. Also have the not put the chairs right behind each other, have them stagger them so it is easier to see between the heads in front of them.

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Typical way hotel sets the chairs - BAD



Recommend Chevron set-up

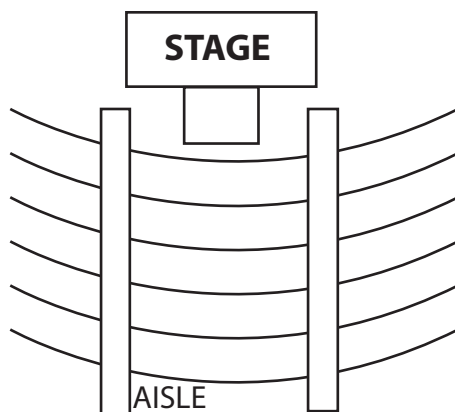


NOTE: you have to give very specific instructions to the hotel/convention center because they virtually NEVER do it this way because no one ever asks them to do it.

- Follow the same advice for all your breakout rooms.

Picture on the **left** is how the hotel set-up the room. Picture on the **right** is how I changed the room. This is only 50 chairs, but the principle is the same. Avoid a middle aisle! It creates two audiences for the presenters. Notice the chairs are about 6" apart for comfort and the chairs are staggered, not directly behind each other.

- Setting up the chairs in a modified theatre style "Chevron" pattern is paramount. *Unless you tell the hotel/convention center, they will set the chairs close together, right behind each other and straight across.* If you tell the hotel/convention center to do a Chevron pattern, they will only angle the chairs about 15 degrees – you want **45 degrees**. No matter where the chair is, the person is facing the center of the stage, perpendicular to it. I deally curve the outside rows in and the outside of each center row. Here is the best layout I know of. It may help to get this diagram to the hotel.



- Try to **avoid a middle aisle** if you can. It is much easier to talk to people than to speak to an empty space or a wide center aisle. It creates two separate audiences that the speakers must address. If you need a screen for Power Point or video presentations, try to use a rear projection system to avoid putting the projector in a middle aisle. If you can't do that, try to put the screen in one corner or both corners and not in the middle.
- **Bright lights equal energy.** Make sure all the lights are working and check to see if what track lights can be set up or other lights added to **light up the stage** if you are not using a professional crew. It is very common for the stage to be put in the center of the room below where an air wall was taken out. This puts the stage in the darkest part of the room. Having your speakers in the dark where they do not stand out is a problem. Having a "stage wash" of lights is a great idea and the speakers faces will be clearly seen.

- If you are using screens, instead of turning down the lights, unscrew the bulbs just above the screens. Keep the room as bright as you can. Try to place the screen in a corner and not in the middle of the room to avoid a center aisle. Today's projectors are so good you do not have to have the room "dark" any more. Have the room 100% bright and unscrew the bulb above the screens.
- If the room is too warm, especially after lunch, the energy will drop. Better a little cool (68°/69°) than too warm. Ask the hotel/conference center staff to turn the AC will in 90 minutes in advance of your morning start. If it is warm before the audience gets in the room, it will really heat up when you get a big crowd in the room.
- If you are planning on using student tables during your event, **almost everything still applies**. Still arrange without a center aisle and turn the rows of tables on the side to a 45° angle. Unless you are specific, the hotel will do 15°. To keep people from sitting in the back rows first, put up RESERVED signs on the tables or take away the chairs and add the if needed.

If you have a closing speaker after lunch, it may be possible to remove the tables during the break and set it up theatre style as described above. This will make a big difference in the energy of the crowd. Theatre style chevroned is always better than tables.

- Make sure you prepare the music in advance you want to play at your event. Tie it into your theme if possible. Always have some **up beat music** playing when people walk in the room and during breaks.
- If possible have the audience **enter from the doors** in the front of the room and not the back. If they enter from the back, that will fill first.
- **Room size advice** - in general to maximize energy a tight room will always create more energy. A huge room with high ceilings and lots of empty space will suck the energy out of the room. Close air walls if possible.

Bonus Tip: usually it is better to wait until 5-7 minutes before you begin to let people in the room for your general sessions. If you let them wander in 20 - 30 minutes before you begin and sit down, then the energy is much less when you begin! Let them burst in, with an upbeat song when you are ready. **Remember - CHANGE IS GOOD at your event!** Also if possible, have them enter the room from the doors near the FRONT of the room not the back of the room.



"Call me directly and I will help you plan a tremendous event. The right theme and the right speaker to bring it home can make all the difference in have a great event and a boring one."

chip@getswitchedon.com
getswitchedon.com
 865.300.2742
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