

# Find Your Inner Tech Talk Topic in 60 Minutes

Only speakers can be listed here. Adding authors who are not presenting or exceeds the max limit may disqualify your submission for review.

## FACILITATOR NAME

Organization  
Contact info  
(Minimum 2, Maximum 3  
Facilitators)

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## ABSTRACT

Tells us what your proposal is about.  
\*Must match what is in your submission

Increase your visibility in a tech community by giving a tech talk! You might want to educate, attract talent to your organization, or give back to the tech community. Join us in this exploratory workshop and discover what could make a great tech talk for you. Leave the room with a title for your tech talk, an abstract and bags of inspiration!

## AUDIENCE

Tell reviewers who will benefit most from this submission

This workshop is intended for anyone who wants to evolve as a tech speaker, but wants help discovering a topic. It is suitable for students and professionals (especially early career). New speakers who are looking for inspiration for their first tech talk will find this most helpful. More experienced speakers will also get help narrowing down their ideas.

We have previously presented this to large audiences at GHC17, GHCI17, Lesbians who Tech & Allies Summit 2018 and some other local meetups. Even though the material has been presented before, we hope to reach more people and to help any repeat participant come up with new topics.

## INTRODUCTION

The lack of female and minority representation in speakers at technical conferences is well-known (Danziger, 2016). This trickles down into meet-ups and tech events through industry and academia. Conferences,

such as Grace Hopper, and different initiatives that can provide female speakers lists, such as the 50/50 Pledge, have made significant progress in balancing the conferences themselves (Maerz, 2015).

We hope to approach this from the speakers' side by encouraging more women to deliver technical talks, at each stage of their careers. One of the main hurdles for first time speakers is finding a topic to talk about (Mann, 2014). This can be a challenging decision for seasoned presenters as well (Thompson, 2012). Imposter syndrome adds to this, and perceived lack of expertise, especially for people in early stages of industry and academia, can prevent them from taking the plunge. After identifying a good topic, commitment to deliver it is the next challenge. This is when people need more encouragement to commit to the next steps (Matyi, 2016).

## AIMS

We will help attendees delve deeper into all their areas of knowledge and interest. Through peer- coaching and hands on exercises, we will help them find a topic they are confident and passionate about, discover new and unique angles on it, and commit to deliver it in the near future.

## BREAKDOWN OF TIME

After introducing ourselves and the motivation for the workshop, we will delve straight into our five hands-on exercises. We will provide a workbook, to use for the exercises, decks of question cards and reference material.

Good submissions allow reviewers to clearly visualize how this session will go

### Stage One: Setting Goals [5 minutes]

Participants will be asked to pair up and introduce themselves to each other. Then we will ask them to define why they want to do their “first” or “next” tech talk. This is to help focus on just one talk. They will record this in their worksheet. We will share some examples as well, eg. Improve public speaking, establish expertise.

### Stage Two: Brainstorming [20 minutes]

We will provide participants with a deck of 60 probing questions on palm sized index cards. For example, to discover if participants are developing expertise on a topic, the deck will include questions such as “What was the last tech question a colleague asked you?”, “What project or problem did you last mentor someone on?”. They will split the deck and take turns reading the questions aloud. Then, they will both write one-word or one-phrase answers in their worksheets and create a mind map of themes and topics. Writing is aimed at involving introverts more (McClure, 2014). We will ask participants to spend just 10 seconds per question and skip immediately if questions seem non-applicable. This will remove hesitation and combat imposter syndrome.

We will have a running timer on screen and warn them five and nine minutes in. Through all the runs of our workshop, about 5 pairs of people have managed to go through all the questions in the deck.

This will be followed by the six boxes exercise. The page opposite to the mind map will have six boxes. The participants will be asked to work individually to pick the ideas they wrote down and put them in the boxes, with similar things going in the same box. They will then write a theme for each box. They will have five minutes for this exercise.

By the end of brainstorming, all participants should have some topics in their maps and potentially some themes amongst those topics.

### Stage Three: Refining [10 minutes]

The goal of this stage is to take all the topics and themes and boil them down to one idea. Something that meets the goal they set out to achieve in stage 1, something they are passionate about and are willing to spend effort to develop. We will ask them to coach each other to achieve this, ideally spending 5 minutes with one participant coaching, and 5 with the other. To aid in the coaching we will provide 3 tools

1. An impact vs effort graph – They can map the impact of the topic (how much does it help them achieve their goal?) vs how much effort they need to develop it. They can then pick topics with high impact and low effort.
2. A Novelty vs effort graph – Very similar to the above but measuring the novelty of the idea. This can be especially useful for academic conferences.
3. Questions: We have a set of 12 coaching questions. They should help in cases where there are too many or too few themes/topics to choose from. E.g. “can you combine any two themes together”, “What would really surprise someone about this topic?”

We will ask all participants to record the final idea in the workbook.

### Stage Four: Planning [10 minutes]

At this point all participants will have one idea to work with. In this section, they will come up with their ideal audience [e.g. beginners, experts], potential venue [GHC2020, their university or organization, local meetups] and format [deep dive, panel, workshop, keynote]. We will provide multiple examples in the workbook and as we discuss, and when each one is suitable.

Then we will ask all participants to come up with a title. We will present methodologies for generating titles (Mitchell, 2010) and share samples, such as a title that promises benefits, like “Find your inner tech talk topic in 60 minutes”. Another example would be to Add contrast, like “How to get an introvert to speak at a conference”

### Stage Five: Commitment [5 minutes]

We will encourage participants to commit to a timeframe for their talk. They may record that on the workbook. If they wish, they can also tweet it and @mynexttalk and share with the rest of the community. Then, we will encourage the sharing of contacts between the partners and the table, and suggest staying in touch as they prepare and deliver the talk.

The participants can take their worksheet home to have as reference as they prepare their talks. They will also have access to our brainstorming cards, and all the resources through our [Github repository](#) if they wish to use them again or share.

## OUTCOMES/CONCLUSION

By the end of the workshop we expect that the participants will:

- Have a tech talk topic that they feel passionate about.
- Have identified target audience and a venue to present their tech talk.
- Commit to a timeline for delivering the talk.
- Discover areas of expertise and interest that they might not otherwise consider.

We want the people in the room to feel empowered to shift the balance for diverse speakers at technical events.

We have had success in the past, where a topic generated in our workshop was developed into a talk presented at GHC2018. We have also had participants take our material from GitHub and run the workshop for their colleagues.

## PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

All facilitators will gladly attend the conference and serve on the workshop if accepted.

## REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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This section is required and should not be solely based on personal experience.

We envision a future where the people who imagine and build technology mirror the people and societies for whom they build it.

## BIO

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**Facilitator 1 Name, Title, Company**

Facilitator 1 Bio



**Facilitator 2 Name, Title, Company**

Facilitator 2 Bio