

Smart(Up) Match- making

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS AS ORGANIZER OF
MATCHMAKING EVENTS

Eva Hjalmered and Ida Thomsson, Alexandersoninstitutet



SmartUp Accelerator is a collaboration project between seven countries around the Baltic Sea with the focus on building consumer cleantech ecosystems, activating its innovation actors and improving their skills to identify brilliant ideas and foster teams committed to creating new businesses. These startups and SMEs are aiming to reduce the environmental burden of consumption.
<https://www.smartupaccelerator.eu/>



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Author: Eva Hjalmered and Ida Thomsson, Alexandersoninstitutet

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Summary

Background to the activity

During the SmartUp Accelerator project 14 national matchmaking events were to take place, twice in each participating country. The first one was planned for period 2 and the second one for period 5 or 6. The matchmaking was focusing on connecting intermediaries and potential startups with specific actions to elaborate cross-border cooperation. The methodology was to connect startups (in the project called smartups) needs and potential markets with intermediaries' specific skills, experiences and focus areas. Every event was to be tailored to each country's situation, opportunities and needs, if possible, arranged back-to-back with other thematically suitable events to guarantee maximal interest and effectiveness. The main focus was creating a favorable venue and programme for the participants to get to know each other, given enough time to socialize and build deeper connections and trust as well as learn and exchange each other's innovative ideas and foresight visions.

The final output of the events is a guidebook and toolkit for other innovation matchmaking event organizer and a part of the SmartUp Accelerator model building block.

Set-up for the first round of national matchmaking events

All the countries had the same topic for the national matchmaking event, the topic of "Consumer cleantech". This was an opportunity to gather intermediaries, potential startups etc. and highlighting the topic of the project. The set-up with venue, time of day, back-to-back etc. varied across the Baltic Sea due to different possibilities and preferences. Lessons were learned about the marketing, the planning and the set-up of the events, especially since it is considered as a rather new topic to many. The results from the first round can be found on page 5

Set-up for the second round of national matchmaking events

Four of the seven participating countries had their matchmaking events prior to the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The set-up was thereafter pivoted in order to arrange matchmaking events, but in a safe and innovative way. A digital matchmaking event was planned. All participating countries were invited to take part, and all did participate. Since the first matchmaking event round focused on the theme, the second version focused on the participants list. The third round of accelerator in the project focus on "Smart consumption". These startups, which in the project are called smartups, in the acceleration of "Smart consumption" were highlighted. Each of the startups had the possibility to have pinpointed matchmaking with external expertise based on their formulated requests. The startups formulated a SMART request (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Relevant, Time-based) and external expertise were found to meet their match. The digital matchmaking was held both as an international part and a national part. The first part of the event gathered all participants. The startups gave an elevator pitch about their startup. The external expertise presented themselves and gave an insight of lessons learned during the pandemic. The project was presented and the theme of consumer cleantech was introduced by a partner in the project. Breakout sessions were arranged, and, in each room, there was a startup, their national representatives in the project and the external expertise assigned to them. They had a possibility to discuss the SMART request and possibilities ahead. The majority of the startups had an international external expertise since the aim of the matchmaking was focused



The methodology is to connect startups needs and potential markets with intermediaries specific skills, experiences and focus areas. Every event was to be tailored to each country's situation, opportunities and needs.

on connecting intermediaries and potential startups with specific actions to elaborate on cross-border cooperation. The final part of the event was the wrap-up with the startups presenting their next steps. The event was follow-up after two weeks. The report from the digital matchmaking event can be found on page 12.

Lessons learned

In planning, executing and after the event you need to ask yourself questions in order to create a successful event. In the guidebook you find example and answers to these questions

Planning

- Whom are you targeting?
- What is the aim, the purpose of the event?
- What can the participants expect?
- What should be prepared by you as an organizer, by local facilitators and by the participants?
- What would be a success?

Technical preparations

- What channels are you using and why?
- Having back-up, such as presentations, technical equipment and shared roles.
- How can you create and promote interaction?

Follow-up

- What went well?
- What can be improved until next time?
- How will we make sure it is better next time?
- Internal and external follow-up

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Planning
2. Technical preparations
3. Follow up

First round of National Matchmaking events

Summary

Looking through these national matchmaking events one can distinguish different types of cultural difference in how the national matchmaking events were carried out: Breakfast meeting was held in Sweden, while the German partner arranged an evening activity. All countries seemed to benefit from social media, by sending invitations through Facebook for example. In the project, there were partners from seven countries. You could in the events find many similarities, but also differences in method, information and dialogue. The national matchmaking event have been held separately, back-to-back with existing activities as well as during breakfast, lunch or dinner time. There has been an approach to make the events informal, but what can we improve until next time?

- Whether the event was held morning, mid-day or evening, go with what works in the respective country.
- Be careful when choosing the date of the event. The calendar easily gets booked for many and you do not want to compete with complementary activities. It is also good to have a lot of time to prepare and promote. You never hear anyone say they had too much time to prepare, and there is a reason for that.
- The topic of consumer cleantech is rather new, we therefore need to awake an interest. It can be by sending personal invitations and invite topic relevant press. We can also think about micro influencers that can give great impact and start a buzz. (Micro influencers are creators on social media platforms who typically have between 1000 and 100000 followers.) A spectacular backdrop for example will get many photos that will be shared. If we have a venue that matches the cause, it is great.
- We should also be aware of wanting too much, too many speakers etc. We need to have relevant speakers and participants who can deliver their knowledge to others and that can inspire other. We must give time for the participants to network, to mingle we must give time for discussion. Especially when the topic is new, this is relevant and necessary.
- Targeting the invitations more specifically concerning the needs of the project
- Better marketing of the event and starting the promotion earlier
- The concept of using established groups or to piggy-back on other events will be further exploited



Whether the event is held morning, mid-day or evening, go with what works in the respective country.

Gathering information

How was the meeting planned, who was invited (intermediaries, startups, SMEs etc.), location, time of day, guest speaker?

Germany: The event was held at night on a solar powered boat, stationed on the Spree river in Berlin, with a relaxed After Work. Startups, SMEs, press, interested people, partners.

Intermediaries were not specially invited. The matchmaking event in Berlin was planned by SmartUp partner Eifi, starting three months in advance.

Russia: The event was organized in cooperation with St. Petersburg Cleantech Cluster, Center for Entrepreneurship Development and Support, White Nights Startup, Petersburg Startup. The event was organized in the framework of the summer business outdoor event – Big Business Fun Festival on 8th June 2018. There was also a panel discussion about: “Future energy and Clean Tech: The next big thing?” and the launch of the competition was announced. Guest speakers were : Dmitrii Simonov - CEO - Leningrad Regional Electricity Grid Company and Aleksandr Boroshnin – CEO of the LLC "RKS-Energo" / The largest electricity retail company - energy supplier on the territory of the Leningrad Region and Satu Lähteenoja - Head of Resource-wise economy department - Demos Helsinki (Finland). Pitching Smartups: Volts - manufacturer of energy storages for the houses, Enviro developer of solutions for waste disposal, Domvent ventilation systems manufacturer and Wind lamp, manufacturer of energy efficient street lamps.

The preparation work for the matchmaking event started in February 2018, as it was planned as a part of big city festival.

Sweden: The event was hosted as a breakfast meeting at the Johanneberg Science Park’s premises in Gothenburg. The meeting was co-arranged with the “SME council”, a recurring meeting gathering the intermediaries in the Gothenburg area for information exchange and discussions/planning of joint activities. For this occasion, additional attendees had been invited to reflect the scope of SmartUp Accelerator. Guest speaker was the project leader Lennart Walldén from Innovatum.

Latvia: The event was organized in the format of a “Science Cafe” that has been used by University of Latvia for several years and well known among in Latvia, the event was organized in late afternoon. The target audience - were startups who are focused “green technologies” and individuals (master students, PhD, Researchers) who are working on projects that could be commercialized. Speakers and experts with different backgrounds but competent in the area of green technologies, were invited. After the speeches there was a networking part.

Finland: The event was organized in the format of Peloton Club Night, an event that Demos Helsinki has been organizing for several years. The idea of the club nights is to gather entrepreneurs, corporations, intermediaries, civil servants, students etc. in an informal atmosphere around topics related to sustainable lifestyles. The location was restaurant “Jackie” in Helsinki, and it was arranged in the evening. Invitations were sent via Mailchimp for Peloton Club Newsletter subscribers (around 1200 persons) and Facebook event. The program of the evening included three keynote speeches about topics related to smart homes and living as well as four pitches about smart home solutions and smart area development projects. The external speakers were among others from RIL Miimu Airaksinen, from Fira Ville Wikström and from Cozify Kimmo Ruotoistenmäki.

Poland: The first step was looking for a location that was startup friendly. Arranging formula of the meeting – decided on panel of experts, plus networking dinner. Inviting speakers: key note speaker, other participants of the panel, moderator (Key-note speaker: Bianca Dragomir-European Cluster Manager of the Year, Cluster, SME and Cleantech Entrepreneurship Expert, Director General at AVAESSEN Cluster (clean technologies cluster); other speakers: representatives of

corporations: Daniel Maksym (PGE New Energy), Tomasz Kołoszczyk (Bosch), Chris Ashe (EIFI, Project's Partner), Paweł Bochniarz (FTE) – moderator. Invite all possible actors of the ecosystem, via emails, in person, on occasion of other events and meetings, through various partnering organizations (inviting startups as the most important community, business support organizations, investors, corporations). Market the event (social media, other meetings and events, mailing, calls). Invite business representative to a 'discussion' circle with Projects Leaders during networking dinner to exchange experiences and ideas how to develop the SmartUp Accelerator project (gathering feedback).

Estonia: Competition launching event "Green Morning – Consumer Cleantech & Smart Homes" took place in Tehnopol Startup Incubator (Mäealuse 2/1) on the 22nd of May at 10 – 11:30 am. The event was planned under the greentech event series of Tehnopol "Green Morning", which is the community event for greentech startups, companies who are developing energy efficient solutions, environmental activists and visionaries with world-changing ideas. We put together the agenda, found the speakers, booked the venue, ordered catering. We shared the information about the event at Tehnopol channels (Newsletter, Facebook and Twitter posts) to audience focused on smart managements systems, IoT solutions, energy, heating, cooling, ecodesign, novel services, sharing economy, circular solutions etc. We had speakers from Demos Helsinki, who opened the topic and introduced the collaboration project, but also from two Estonian Greentech startup companies who presented their solutions related to smart homes. Additionally, we launched the competition for smart homes related startups and SME's "Startup Challenge 2018: Smart Homes". Heiki Aulik from Airobot introduced a heat recovery ventilation unit, which uses as little energy as possible for ensuring high air quality for optimal wellbeing and productive atmosphere in the room. Madis Uuemaa from Smart Load Solutions presented their intelligent thermostat that checks the electricity price when heating your home and thereby the users pay up to 60% less to their electricity supplier. Presentations followed with a panel discussion led by Marti Schmidt from Venturis. Besides to the representatives of the greentech startup companies, Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol Greentech Manager also took part of the panel. Members of the panel answered both of moderator and audience questions – discussion was very exciting and was looking to the future globally. Both bottlenecks and opportunities were discussed.

Focus

Who came, how was the venue?

Germany: The venue "Das Seminarschiff Berlin – Solar powered boat, stationed on the Spree river in Berlin. The Venue matched the cause. (close to nature, within an impulsive, innovative city; Sustainable concept; nice atmosphere; enough space; professional staff; good access by public transport). An ambitious and fruitful discussion took place during the presentations and conversations were carried to the matchmaking sessions on the roof top of the Seminarschiff.

Russia: 45 people from different organizations participated in the event. Big Business Fun Festival is a summer outdoor event, which is held in the park near the river. On the territory of the festival there were 3 pavilions: Marketing, HR, and Entrepreneurship. The matchmaking event took place in the last one. The pavilion was equipped with projector, TV's, PC.

Sweden: The participants were from Johanneberg Science Park, RISE - Research Institutes of Sweden, Sahlgrenska Science Park, Västra Götalandsregionen and Alexandersoninstitutet. The venue was in an enclosed part of the cafeteria/lounge of Johanneberg Science Park.

Latvia: Speakers were representing both - startups and experts who gave the insight in field of “green technologies” from different angle. Our target audience were startups who are focused “green technologies” and individuals (master students, PhD, Researchers) who are working on projects that could be commercialized. We chose the venue that has been used for similar events: speeches and networking afterwards. Venue was located close to city center and in walking distance from University of Latvia and Riga Technical university.

Finland: The event was a successful with around 70 people in the audience and interesting speakers. There were good questions and discussions after every speaker, and people also stayed after the official program to network and mingle. The venue was very good for an informal event. The only problem was the the lightning was a bit too dark for taking quality photos.

Poland: Venue was a perfect fit for the event. There were too few external guests – not enough startups and other representatives of support organizations.

It seemed as there were too many events offers towards startups during the time, plus the topic is quite new on the market. Needs more marketing, more events and more engagement of business partners (big companies).

Estonia: The main goal of the event was to introduce the SmartUp Accelerator project and launch the competition with the intention to raise awareness and introduce the topic and solutions of consumer cleantech and smart homes. Bringing together several greentech enthusiasts and companies, researchers etc. who could connect with each other, share the knowledge and take part of the competition was another goal. Many people from universities, companies, startups and experts came who found the topic relevant and interesting. There was around 25 people. During networking time different people talked with each other and discussed the topic themes further. One presenter, Airobot, was already interested to take part of the competition. The venue was lounge area, snacks and drinks were served.

Search causes

What worked out well, what did not work as planned etc.

Germany: The agenda timing was planned too tightly. Even with the DELTA group speaker, who cancelled the night before the event, all speakers took around 5-10 minutes more than planned. This caused a delay for the second Matchmaking session and the prepared dinner of around 30 minutes.

Russia: The event was organized as planned. All the questions in program were discussed by the startups, key speakers and expert community. The meetings and negotiations among the participants continued also after the panel discussion and the pitching session.

Sweden: Everything worked out well, Lennart’s presentation fit well in with the other topics discussed during the meeting and was well received.

Latvia: What worked well was that we spent a lot of time to find speakers who are experts in their field but also can deliver their knowledge to others. We chose Filip Lundin based on recommendations and this was definitely a good choice. Also Dr. Mikelis Grivins speech about green technologies from sociologists point of views was something unusual. What didn't work so well was that we realized too late that the 17 of May is not the best date to organize the event for two reasons: this is Independence Day of Norwegian and embassy of Norway was organizing several events (some experts did not come because they were invited by Embassy of Norway). There was ice hockey game between Latvia and Sweden. Despite this was something we were not able to predict, but it influenced the attendance of the event. Supposedly we started marketing activities too late and the theme of event was quite "provocative", but too wide. (However, we thought that it will be easier to attract audience with provocative theme, but it seems we were wrong. We tried to cooperate with other relevant stakeholders from Riga, but in the end other organizations were not involved in organizing the event.

Finland: What worked well was that all speakers were good, and topics were interesting and relevant, the speakers were relatively easy to find and attract through our contacts. Even though smart homes as a field is quite male dominated, we achieved to have a good gender balance of speakers. What did not work as planned was the amount of speakers was a bit too much, one keynote less would have left more time more discussion, the amount of startups in the audience possibly eligible to the SmartUp competition was quite low and there could have been an organized matchmaking/networking session in the program besides the informal networking.

Poland: There were too few guests from "outside" – not enough startups and other representatives of support organizations. It seemed as there were too many events offers towards startups during the time, plus the topic is quite new on the market. Needs more marketing, more events and more engagement of business partners (big companies).

Estonia: In our opinion we achieved the main aim very well and the event went smoothly, except that there could have been more participants.

Draw conclusions

What were the success factors, what went wrong?

Germany: There was a high diversity of the backgrounds and motivations of the guests to join the event. This led to fruitful discussions and conversations during and after the event. The selected venue, presenting a sustainable and successful business model, gave added value and a stunning effect to the atmosphere. The content presented by the speakers was accessible enough to keep yet uninformed guests interested and deep enough to give new insights for guests experienced in the field of accelerators or Consumer Cleantech. The timing and planning of the agenda was not accurate enough to work out 100% on-time.

Russia: Success factors were that the organization of the matchmaking event in the framework of the big city events makes it easier to invite speakers and participants, as it is integrated in the common program of the festival or forum. The cooperation with business support infrastructure plays a great role as they can invite aimed SMEs and experienced speakers. What could be improved is that since the organization of the big city events starts 6-7 months before it takes

place, the organizers cannot predict the weather, so this factor should be also kept in mind, if the outdoor event is planned.

Sweden: Success factors included using a well-established group of people that are highly relevant, have met many times and are comfortable as a group.

Latvia: The success factors were that the Speakers had different background and they were real experts in their field and that we used the existing brand identity “Science Cafe”, that has been used by University of Latvia to organize similar type of networking events. What could be improved was that our goal was to have around 50+ participants, but we did not achieve it and there were just a few Startups. Most attendees were individuals generally interested in the topic.

Finland: Success factors: The event was quite easy to arrange as a part of an existing format which already had regular interested audience. The invitations and Facebook event two weeks before the event worked well, because we had an existing mailing list and we invited hundreds of people in Facebook. In an after-work event people are happy if you serve food, pizza slices in this case.

Poland: The panelists were great and that is seen as a success (industry is interested in the topics and in taking part in such projects – they are looking for entry possibilities, would be advisable to create such still within the Smart Up Accelerator Project). What could be improved is that not enough startups took part in the event.

Estonia: One success factor was that the company Airobot, who presented their solution, was interested to take part of the competition. As a result, he participated and became a winner. Also bringing together people from different fields, who has the same interest, is also important and useful.

Proposed actions

What will be improved/changed/altered to the next national matchmaking event and how

Germany: The timing will be improved, by having less speakers and communicating with speakers to stay in the time frames. Intermediaries will be part of the next matchmaking session to add their insights and experience to the development process of the SMA. More topic relevant press and social media influencers could be motivated to participate.

Russia: The concept of being a part of big city festival/forum will be used further. In order to attract more consumer cleantech startups and SMEs, more direct invitations and cooperation with the key cluster association should be used.

Sweden: The concept of using established groups or to piggy-back on other events will be further exploited. Scope of invitees will vary depending on the objective of the meeting.

Latvia: The topic of the event should be more focused and it's crucial to have cooperation with other relevant stakeholders in order to have access to different communication channels or at least not compete with each other by organizing events with similar topics.

Finland: In the next matchmaking event we could target the invitations more specifically concerning the needs of the project. We could for example invite intermediaries and startups by personalized emails or phone calls. We could also have a planned matchmaking or co-creation session in the program to get more people actively involved.

Poland: Better marketing of the event, more direct invitations than via email. Especially right before the event (usually it works, since startups are very busy and the offer is huge now – they choose wisely, and often decide in the very last minute, after scouting actions).

Estonia: To the next national matchmaking event we will start the event promotion even earlier, also send personal invitations.

Second round of National Matchmaking Events

On the 26th of May a digital national and international matchmaking event was held

The project was planning on organizing 14 matchmaking events during the project (2017-2020). Seven of them were held in 2018 with a focus on “consumer cleantech”. The final matchmaking events were planned for the spring of 2020.

As stated in the project application all partners were going to arrange two matchmaking events in their countries. Four countries had their matchmaking events prior to the lock downs due to covid-19. Therefore, a digital matchmaking event was planned to make the best of the situation. All countries had the opportunity to join even if they already had held their matchmaking events. All countries saw an opportunity and choose to join with their startups, external expertise and themselves.

The 26th of May Alexandersoninstituttet held a digital matchmaking event with focus on the startups in the acceleration of “smart consumption”. The startups were asked to formulate a SMART request (see below) prior to the event which made it possible to invite pin-pointed external expertise. These external experts were invited to the event to either help the startup with their request or know someone who could. During the event all startups, partners in the project and external experts were invited to participate.

Preparations

1. Startups received a template for formulating a SMART request, Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Relevant, Time-based need to work on (see below) prior to the event. They had one week to formulate their request.
2. The local partners scheduled a call with their startup and acted as a sounding board for the startup in the SMART request formulation, i.e. they made sure that the request was formulated in accordance to the SMART framework.
3. The local partners then used the request to find external expertise that could help the startup with the needs highlighted in the request. The external experts were then invited to join the matchmaking event to discuss the request with the startup in breakout sessions.
4. When the external expertise was established, both startups and external expertise made a profile on Howspace.com and published their request and short information about themselves.
5. The agenda, a Zoom invitation and a ‘How to use Zoom’ instruction was sent out to all participants one week before the event.

SMART

- Specific
- Measurable
- Assignable
- Relevant
- Time-based

Template for formulating a SMART request

We are looking to {larger goal} so that we can {why this goal matters}. To achieve this goal, we would need help in {specific need which helps you complete a step towards the larger goal}, by {deadline/timeframe}.

Example Habits:

We are looking to find partners so that we can scale up and expand our business. To achieve this goal, we would need help in identifying and connecting with local sustainability consultants with established customer contacts, by June 15th.

Realisation

Agenda Matchmaking event:

- 9.15 Zoom room opens
- 9.30 Welcome by Eva Hjalmered (Alexandersoninstitutet)
 - Björn Westling (Johanneberg Science park) about Consumer Cleantech
 - SmartUp Elevator pitch
 - External expertise about learnings in these special times
- 10.15 Breakout sessions; SmartUp, External expertise and local partner
- 10.45 Main room; Present requests and Next step
- 11.00 Thank you!

The Zoom room opened at 9.15, 15 minutes prior to the event. This made sure that all participants could join without problem, mingle and get comfortable before the event started. Ida Thomsson, from Alexandersoninstitutet, facilitated the event, which means that she let participants into the Zoom call, facilitated the chat and divided the participants for the breakout rooms. Eva Hjalmered from Alexandersoninstitutet, moderator of the event, welcomed everyone and presented the agenda at 9.30 when the event started.

The event was divided into three main parts; presentations, breakout sessions and a round up with the smartups next steps. Björn Westling from Johanneberg Science park (partner) started the presentation session by presenting the Smartup Accelerator project and Consumer Cleantech, a theme that the project has been working with the last year. Eva then invited the smartups to pitch their business idea, one by one, for one minute. All smartups have been working on specifying their business mission at boot camps held by the Smartup Accelerator earlier in the project.

The external experts were then invited to present themselves and to share some lessons learned during Covid-19, as many startups have had to pivot their business models.

During the breakout sessions the startups were divided in breakout rooms with an external expert that the local partner had pin-pointed before the event based on the SMART request. The breakout session was a way of creating cooperation and went on for 30 minutes. The startup managed their time as they preferred and were supported by the local partner in the breakout room.

When the breakout sessions ended, all participants re-joined the main room and the startups presented their request and how the external expertise could help them achieve this. A list with contact information to the participants was sent out after the event.

Outcome

44 participants joined the Matchmaking event on May 26th, of whom 9 were startups, 21 partners in the Startup Accelerator project and 14 external experts, all from the seven different countries in the project.

The day of the event a few new participants joined and there were a few last-minute cancellations. A few changes of the breakout sessions and the PowerPoint presentations of all participants were made by the organizers of the event. More participants attending also meant that the presentations by the external expertise took longer time than what was planned for. The organizers shortened the round-off of the event to make sure all participants had 30 minutes in the breakout sessions.

Reflection

Howspace.com

Prior to the event all startups and external experts made a profile on Howspace.com, the startup published their SMART request and the external experts were told to write a short text about themselves. This was supposed to create pre-networking prior to the event. But as time was limited and all partners already had found a pin-pointed external expertise for the startups no networking was occurring before the event. In other networking events, Howspace.com or other profile-based platforms constitute a great way of networking, getting contact information and obtaining a description of the participants before and after the event.

Sharing screen on Zoom

Some startups had problems with sharing their screen during their pitch. To eliminate this kind of technical problems, all presentations should be brought together in one PowerPoint presentation prior to the event, or not use shared screens at all for this short presentation (1 minute). In this event it was more important to be able to share screen during the breakout sessions rather than during the pitch where there was a minimum of time assigned.

Organizing the event

It was reassuring for the organizers to have one another due to some last-minute changes and facilitation of the event. There should always be a division of who is going to moderate the event and who is going to facilitate the participants and the ongoing agenda to go as smooth as possible.

Evaluation

A couple of days after the event all partners gave feedback during a partner meeting online. This was perfect for getting feedback on the timeframe, agenda and the implementation of the event. Two weeks after the event a survey was sent out to the participants, one created for the startups and one created for the external expertise. All participants agreed that they had received enough information about the event and the startups or external expertise they were going to meet in the breakout sessions. One external expert noted that a pitch deck, a brief introduction of the startup summed up in either PowerPoint, Prezi or Keynote, would have been helpful to receive before the event.

Most of the participants, both startups and external expertise, answered that the breakout sessions went on well, that the startups were well prepared and that a formulated SMART request was helpful for the discussion.

The startups chose different approaches on how to spend their time in the breakout session. One external expert said that their startup was not well prepared and that the breakout sessions didn't lead anywhere. Luckily, they had a call after the event and had a great sparring session then. We cannot stress enough the importance of being prepared.

There were mixed opinions about the amount of time in the breakout sessions, some thought it was enough, some too short. It is better to have it too short rather than too long, so the participants would have wanted to continue, and may engage in different ways of continuing after the event has ended. That means the startups and external expertise had enough time to talk about the request but not enough time to talk about the solution and a new meeting could take place later. We feel that we were able to create the catalyst we were hoping for, since our participating startups were able to find relevant external expertise to realize their request.

Annex 1 - Online matchmaking event – Guidebook for Hosts





Planning

Pre-event

- **Plan for a "location"** – if you are new to the technical solution, make sure to try it out several times in advance. Is there a maximum amount of the number of participants? What kind of virtual rooms are available?
- **Who is going to network?** - Are they matched before the event or during the event? And also, how are they networking during the event?
- **Communication** - what information does the participants need to know about one another before the event? Will they receive pre-assignments? What kind of set-up is most suitable? What can be expected?

Are you creating a long term network?

- When planning and inviting participants, be clear about the message, whom to invite and what the aim the event is. This will improve chances of creating long term networks
- Make sure there is time to mingle. This is important for both physical and digital events.
- Can the group of the event have a new LinkedIn group? Mentions, hashtags etc

Planning the set-up

- Do not fill the entire agenda with presentations. Make sure there is time for questions, breaks etc
- Have a Plan B. It can cover having the presentation in back-up, thinking about what bits can be skipped or shortened if a presentation is too long etc.

Template for formulating a SMART request

This template is perfect for startups to fill in before the event, to make sure they have a realistic goal for the matchmaking and developing their start-up further.

- We are looking to [larger goal] so that we can [why this goal matters]. To achieve this goal, we would need help in [specific need which helps you complete a step towards the larger goal], by [deadline/timeframe].

Success factors

- **Do not start your meeting on time** - Yep, you heard it! Even if you arrange the event physically or virtually make sure everyone has found their seat and something to drink.
- **"Schmooze"/Make small talk** - Some participants can be nervous at these kind of events. Make conversation before you start.
- **Set a goal** - Create a goal for the participants, for example "Today I am going to do my elevator pitch to five people, get the contact information from 3 new people etc."

Technical preparations for digital events

- **Sound** - The sound from your microphone is more important than your video quality. Test your microphone and again the same day.
- **Eliminate risks** - Make sure to have a facilitator that can help you facilitate: the chat, let participants in to the meeting etc.
- **Camera** - Place your camera in eye-level and make sure to look straight into the camera when speaking.
- **Break** - It is way harder to focus during a digital event than a physical one. Make room for breaks, even though it is just for 5 min.
- **Background** - skip the virtual background, use a backdrop with your logo instead.
- *Tip!* Close all other programs, to make sure you show the correct slides.

Create interaction

- **Active participants** - encourage your participants to answer a poll or a question in the chat or even make them show their favourite cup! You can use chat, Menti, pre-assigned questions.
- *Tip!* Both at physical and digital events it is good to have the participants "check in" and "check out".
- **Breakout sessions** - Perfect for the actual networking. Divide this either randomly or as planned.
- *Tip!* In the breakout rooms, it is good to have an assigned facilitator. The facilitator should be well-prepared, for example about the topics or via a facilitator guide.
- **Next step** - whether the event is an event in a series of a single event, prepare a plan for the next steps. What can be expected?

Follow-up

Internal follow-up

- Shortly after the event, by your own, or in the internal group – go through all steps of the event;
 - What went well?
 - What can be improved to the next event?
 - How will we make sure it is improved to the next event?

External follow-up

- Prepare a thank you e-mail to all participants. In this you can attach documentation from the event, participants list etc.
- In a couple of weeks make a follow-up to check in with the participants, but also to check the actual outcome of the event after some time.

Alexandersoninstitutet
Eva Hjalmered, Ida Thomsson
eva.hjalmered@alexandersoninstitutet.se

Good luck with your Matchmaking event!



Annex 2 - Template for formulating a SMART request

BAD example:

I've been thinking about updating our product offering and need some information to get started

GOOD example:

We are looking to renew our product offering so that we can better reach our main target market (women in their 20-30s with a strong interest in health and wellness). To achieve this goal, we would need help in identifying an affordable service designer by the end of the month who can do user research and help us develop a holistic service for our users.

S.M.A.R.T request formulation

SPECIFIC: Specific and well described needs are easier to respond to than vague requests

It might seem that general requests cast the net wider and could potentially let more people help you. But general requests actually make it harder to help, since there isn't a strong trigger for thinking about what and who people know in relation to what you need. Make your need as specific as you can.

MENINGFUL: Knowing your need matters to you can motivate a helping hand

Share why your request matters. This can help people relate to your request, take it seriously and can even help motivate them to help. It also contextualizes your request for them.

ACTION ORIENTED: the request should orient you towards the larger goal

At its best, your request orients you towards the end goal. If your overall goal is to successfully position your product with online retailers, you may need help with a number of things. Perhaps you need to understand.

Template for formulating a SMART request

We are looking to {larger goal} so that we can {why this goal matters}. To achieve this goal, we would need help in {specific need which helps you complete a step towards the larger goal}, by {deadline/timeframe}.