

GEO INSIGHTS ARTICLE

SESSION DESIGN GUIDE

Creating practical, interactive learning experiences for the GEO community

At GEO Copenhagen 2027, every session should do more than share information. Our aim is to create engaging learning experiences that bring the expertise of our speakers and our global community into the conversation.

This guide explains the five session formats available at the conference and provides a practical framework for designing each one. Use it to shape your content, build meaningful audience participation and ensure attendees leave with ideas they can apply.

THE GEO SESSION PRINCIPLE

Don't just present to the GEO community. Use the GEO community.

The expertise in the room is one of the most valuable parts of a GEO conference. The strongest sessions combine speaker expertise with attendee experience to create learning that could not be replicated by simply watching a presentation online.

WHAT EVERY GEO SESSION SHOULD DO

- **Focus on a clear challenge or learning need.**
Make the relevance to equity compensation professionals obvious from the start.
- **Involve attendees throughout.**
Build participation into the session rather than relying on presentation followed by Q&A.
- **Draw on the experience in the room.**
Give participants opportunities to benchmark, contribute perspectives and learn from peers.
- **Connect insight with application.**
Help attendees understand not only what is happening, but what it means for their organisations.
- **Provide practical takeaways.**
Leave attendees with ideas, actions or questions they can apply after the conference.
- **Stay educational and non-promotional.**
Examples are welcome; sales pitches and product demonstrations are not.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FORMAT

Each format is designed for a different kind of learning. Choose the one that best matches the outcome you want attendees to achieve—not simply the number of speakers involved.

FORMAT	LENGTH	PURPOSE	BEST FOR
Trending Topic	60 min	Explore what's changing	Emerging trends, regulation, technology and evolving practice
Real-World Case Study	50 min	Show us what actually happened	Implementations, transformations, plan changes and lessons learned
Expert Panel	50 min	Conversation, not presentations	Issues that benefit from multiple perspectives or constructive debate
Fishbowl Conversation	50 min	Put the community into the conversation	Topics where peer experience is as valuable as expert opinion
Peer-Solving Lab	60 min	Reflect → Share → Solve → Act	Complex challenges where several valid approaches may exist



TRENDING TOPIC

60 minutes | Explore What's Changing

PURPOSE: Help attendees understand an important emerging issue, trend or development, what it means for global equity professionals and how organisations are responding. Combine expert insight with audience participation so attendees can compare their organisation's experience with peers in the room.

BEST FOR: Emerging trends, regulatory developments, new technologies, changing practices and issues where organisations are at different stages of the journey.

RECOMMENDED FLOW

0–5 min	Welcome, learning objectives and frame the trend
5–20 min	What's changing and why it matters
20–35 min	Expert perspectives, research, data or examples
35–45 min	Audience benchmarking
45–55 min	Practical implications and what to watch next
55–60 min	Key takeaways and Q&A

SIGNATURE INTERACTION

LIVE BENCHMARKING

Use the audience as another source of insight. Ask questions such as: "How is your organisation currently approaching this?", "Where are you on this journey?" or "Which issue is creating the greatest challenge?" Show the results and ask speakers to react to what the room says.

PREDICT → REVEAL → DISCUSS

Before presenting research or industry data, ask attendees what they expect the answer to be. Audience predicts → data is revealed → experts discuss why.

OTHER GOOD OPTIONS

- Live polls
- Show-of-hands questions
- Short scenarios
- "What are you seeing?" audience contributions
- Audience Q&A

SPEAKER TIPS

- Include at least 2–3 meaningful moments of audience involvement across the 60 minutes.
- Use interaction to deepen understanding of the trend—not simply to provide a break from the presentation.

AVOID

- ⊗ 50 minutes of presentation followed by 10 minutes of Q&A
- ⊗ Polls that are not discussed afterwards
- ⊗ Too much background before getting to what is changing
- ⊗ Multiple speakers delivering separate presentations
- ⊗ Promotional content

REAL-WORLD CASE STUDY

50 minutes | Show Us What Actually Happened

PURPOSE: Take attendees inside a genuine organisational challenge. Move beyond best practice to explore what you did, why you did it, what worked, what did not and what you would do differently.

BEST FOR: Implementations, transformations, plan changes, communications programmes and projects with meaningful lessons to share.

RECOMMENDED FLOW

0–5 min	Challenge and learning objectives
5–10 min	Context
10–20 min	Decisions and approach
20–30 min	Implementation
30–40 min	Results and lessons
40–47 min	Audience scenario
47–50 min	Practical takeaways

SIGNATURE INTERACTION

YOU DECIDE

Do not immediately tell attendees what the organisation did. Stop the story at an important decision point and ask: "You're now facing this situation. What would you do?"

Give attendees 2–4 realistic choices. Audience chooses → reveal what actually happened → discuss the outcome. This can happen more than once during the story.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

Once the outcome has been revealed, ask attendees to consider what they would have done differently, then compare their answers with the organisation's lessons learned.

OTHER GOOD OPTIONS

- Decision-point voting
- Risk-ranking exercises
- Before/after comparisons
- "What went wrong?" scenarios
- Short table discussions
- Audience sharing of similar experiences

SPEAKER TIPS

- Build 2–3 decision points into the case rather than waiting until the end for questions.
- Be candid about unexpected outcomes and lessons learned; the value is in the reality, not a polished success story.

AVOID

- ⊗ A polished corporate success story
- ⊗ Spending too long on company background
- ⊗ Hiding failures or unexpected outcomes
- ⊗ Telling attendees the answer before asking what they would do
- ⊗ Product demonstrations

EXPERT PANEL

50 minutes | Conversation, Not Presentations

PURPOSE: Bring together complementary—and sometimes different—perspectives on an important industry issue. The session should feel like a smart conversation attendees get to participate in, not several presentations placed next to one another.

BEST FOR: Topics that benefit from multiple perspectives, constructive debate or comparison across organisations, markets or disciplines.

RECOMMENDED FLOW

0–5 min	Introductions and frame the issue
5–15 min	What's happening
15–30 min	Moderator-led discussion or debate
30–40 min	Audience scenario or reaction
40–47 min	Audience questions
47–50 min	Final takeaway from each panelist

SIGNATURE INTERACTION

AUDIENCE VOTES → PANEL REACTS

Ask attendees a question before asking the panel—for example, “What would your organisation prioritise?” Show the result, then use it as a moderator question: “Interesting—62% of the room chose Option B. Does that surprise you?”

The audience result becomes part of the conversation rather than a standalone poll.

AGREE OR DISAGREE

Put a clear statement on screen—for example: “AI will fundamentally change the role of the stock plan administrator within five years.” Ask the audience to vote Agree / Disagree / Unsure, then invite panelists to respond and explore where their views differ.

OTHER GOOD OPTIONS

- Scenario reactions
- Audience-submitted questions
- Myth vs. reality
- Rapid-fire questions
- Ranking exercises
- Invite an attendee to share a different perspective

MODERATOR TIPS

- Connect speakers to one another rather than simply asking a sequence of questions.
- Instead of “Let's go down the line”, direct questions to the panelist best placed to respond and invite others to challenge or build on the point.
- Create space for genuine differences of view; agreement is not the objective.

AVOID

- ⊗ Individual slide decks for every panelist
- ⊗ Long introductions
- ⊗ Going down the line repeatedly
- ⊗ Everyone agreeing without exploration
- ⊗ Saving audience involvement until the final five minutes
- ⊗ Sales pitches



FISHBOWL CONVERSATION

50 minutes | Put the Community into the Conversation

PURPOSE: Turn the audience into active participants in the session. A small group begins the conversation, but attendees are invited to contribute their own experiences, questions and perspectives throughout.

BEST FOR: Topics where peer experience and diverse perspectives are as valuable as expert opinion.

RECOMMENDED SET-UP: Arrange an inner conversation area with 3–4 starting participants and one open seat. The remaining attendees sit around them. The open seat allows attendees to temporarily join the conversation.

RECOMMENDED FLOW

0–5 min	Explain the format, objectives and opening question
5–15 min	Starting group frames the challenge
15–35 min	Open Fishbowl
35–43 min	Introduce a new question or scenario
43–48 min	Community reflection
48–50 min	Facilitator takeaways

SIGNATURE INTERACTION

THE OPEN CHAIR

Keep one seat permanently open. Attendees can join the inner circle to share an experience → ask a question → challenge an assumption → offer another perspective, then leave the chair open for someone else.

COMMUNITY QUESTION

Give the whole room a challenging question such as: “What are organisations getting wrong about this issue?” Allow a moment for individual reflection before opening the chair. This usually produces stronger contributions than simply asking whether anyone has anything to add.

OTHER GOOD OPTIONS

- Audience-submitted challenges
- Agree/disagree prompts
- Experience sharing
- “What’s missing from this conversation?”
- Scenario cards
- Anonymous question submissions

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Your role is to prompt → probe → connect → challenge → summarise, not to provide every answer.
- Keep the discussion connected to the learning objectives.
- If the same people repeatedly participate, actively invite new voices.

AVOID

- ⊗ Turning the starting group into a panel
- ⊗ One person dominating the open chair
- ⊗ Completely unstructured conversation
- ⊗ General networking discussion
- ⊗ Losing sight of the learning objectives



PEER-SOLVING LAB

60 minutes | Reflect → Share → Solve → Act

PURPOSE: Don't just talk about a problem. Put the GEO community to work solving it. Attendees use their collective experience to tackle a realistic equity challenge and develop practical recommendations.

BEST FOR: Complex operational or strategic challenges where there may be several valid approaches and where peer problem-solving adds value.

RECOMMENDED SET-UP: Use round or cabaret seating, ideally with 5–8 attendees per group. Each group receives the same scenario, constraints and prompts.

RECOMMENDED FLOW

0–10 min	REFLECT — Introduce the challenge
10–25 min	SHARE — Compare experiences
25–40 min	SOLVE — Develop an approach
40–52 min	COMPARE — Hear solutions
52–60 min	ACT — Identify three practical actions

SIGNATURE INTERACTION

SCENARIO-BASED TEAM CHALLENGE

Give attendees a specific problem with realistic constraints. Instead of asking "How can organisations improve employee engagement?", make the challenge concrete.

Example: "Participation in your global share plan has declined for three consecutive years. Leadership wants participation improved, but you have no additional communications budget and operate across 20 countries. What would you change?"

ADD A CURVEBALL

Halfway through the exercise, introduce new information—for example: "UPDATE: Leadership now wants measurable improvement within six months" or "UPDATE: Your budget has been reduced by 20%." Groups must adapt their solution.

FINISH WITH THREE ACTIONS

Do not end with every table simply reporting back. Ask the room to identify three practical actions for the GEO community. Capture them and, where appropriate, use them as a post-conference takeaway.

OTHER GOOD OPTIONS

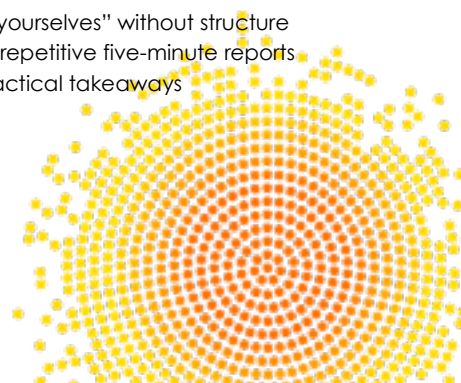
- Prioritisation or risk-ranking exercises
- Build a 90-day plan
- Resource-allocation challenges
- Compare approaches between tables
- Individual reflection and peer critique

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Provide enough expertise and context for attendees to solve the challenge, but do not solve it for them.
- Move between tables and challenge assumptions with questions such as: "What would happen if...?", "What's the risk in that approach?" and "How would this work globally?" Bring the collective learning together at the end.

AVOID

- ⊗ 30 minutes of presentation before the activity
- ⊗ Vague scenarios
- ⊗ "Discuss amongst yourselves" without structure
- ⊗ Every table giving repetitive five-minute reports
- ⊗ Ending without practical takeaways



FINAL SESSION CHECK

Before you finalise your session, ask:

- ☐ Is the learning objective clear and relevant to global equity professionals?
- ☐ Have we chosen the format because it suits the learning outcome?
- ☐ Does audience participation happen throughout—not only at the end?
- ☐ Does each interactive element have a purpose and lead to discussion or insight?
- ☐ Are we using the experience in the room as part of the learning?
- ☐ Will attendees leave with practical takeaways they can use?
- ☐ Have we removed unnecessary background, long introductions and separate mini-presentations?
- ☐ Is the content educational, balanced and non-promotional?

THE TEST

Could attendees get the same value from simply watching a presentation online?

If the answer is yes, look for another opportunity to use the GEO community in the room.

ARE YOU READY?

Review the submission deadlines and speaker terms, then submit your proposal. We look forward to hearing your ideas and building an engaging, impactful conference program together.

SUBMIT A SPEAKER PROPOSAL ON THE [GEO WEBSITE](#):

**SUBMIT A SPEAKER
PROPOSAL**

