

THE HUMAN WEEK

GUIDE TO BETTER EVENT DESIGN

For hosts of Human Week events

Human Week is five days of conversations about how humans interact with a changing world: AI, education, work, care, cities, attention, and more. Anyone with a stake in the future can host. *As far as we can tell, that's everybody.*

Events can happen anywhere in the greater Boston area, not just the city itself, and at any time of day. Think about when your audience is actually free: before work, over lunch, after work. Evenings are great, but they're not the rule.

ONE: WE CURATE

We're curating for quality, not just filling a calendar. Every session on the schedule should meet the design principles in this guide, and we read every submission against them.

TWO: YOU OWN YOUR EVENT

Human Week is decentralized. You design it, secure the space, line up your speakers, promote it, and handle the costs. We handle the week: the schedule, the shared marketing, and the shared identity that makes Human Week events stand out.

SEP 7

Submissions close,
11:59pm ET

SEP 8–11

You hear back either way

OCT 11

Title, description, venue,
and time locked

NOV 9–13

Human Week

Missed the window? It's not the end of the world – events will still be added to the calendar on a rolling basis.

01 **DESIGN PRINCIPLES** // *overarching*

What makes a Human Week event. We read every submission against these:

POSES A REAL QUESTION OR THESIS

Experience should hinge on a question or idea. "Who should be allowed to use AI to grade a kid's essay?" beats "AI and the Future of Education" every time.

USES CLEAR LANGUAGE

Clear language is communication that is plain and direct, so that attendees can find what they need, understand it the first time, and use that information.

LEADS TO PRO-HUMAN, POSITIVE CONVERSATIONS

Explores the topic by considering whether it makes life better for the people who live with it. Focuses on positive outcomes and productive sharing of diverse perspectives.

PARTICIPATION OVER CONSUMPTION

Prioritizes engagement across tables, in small circles, or other structured discussion — not just a stage and rows of chairs.

PRIORITIZE ACCESSIBILITY

Considers how best to provide rooms that don't echo, enough seating, no forced mingling, a quiet corner to decompress. Attending to human needs makes events accessible.

POINT OF VIEW PANELS

FRICTION, NOT CONSENSUS

This is a specific, structured, and moderated conversation designed to elicit disagreement in a productive way. Bring together two or three voices who disagree, or approach the same question from genuinely different lived angles. Moderated towards friction, not consensus. Preference is for discussion and debrief afterwards, with framing questions that ask people to reflect positively on what they learned or took away from the session.

SMALL-CIRCLE DISCUSSION

SALON-STYLE, NO STAGE

Salon-style, no stage. Hosted round tables of small groups, each with a facilitator. The facilitator does not need to be an expert, this is just someone keeping the conversation moving. One shared prompt. Ideal structure takes the “report out” approach, where you start as pairs, then move to groups of four, then eight, then share out to the room.

WORKING SESSIONS

HANDS MOVING IN 10 MINUTES

Hands-on, ending in something tangible rather than a memory of a talk. Ideal structure involves no more than 10 minutes of set-up and then hands are moving within the first 10 minutes. This includes art classes, yoga, hack-a-thons, and more. Invent your own!

PERFORMANCES AND TALKS

LIGHT ON A HUMAN

Musical acts, single-speaker talks, poetry events and more fall under this category. Anything that involves light pointed at a human on stage. Ideal structure involves audience interaction with the work through reflection or direct, auditory engagement.

COMMUNAL MEAL / WALK & TALK

SHARED TABLE, SHARED MOVEMENT

A shared table or shared movement event. Could be a small group dinner, potluck, or a walking conversation instead of a seated program. Walks and meals should be capped at a size where conversation is still possible.

POSSIBLE TOPICS // *examples to build from*

Examples of topics that will be covered or explored at Human Week. This list is presented as inspiration. Feel free to take one of these topics directly or adapt it based on what inspires you.

INTELLIGENCE

AI and People: what work, creativity, and purpose look like when computers and humans work together

Emotional intelligence in an automated world: the skills machines can't replace

The death and rebirth of expertise: mastery when a passable draft takes moments to generate

Wisdom vs. information: why knowing more hasn't made us wiser

Animal and ecological intelligence: what humans might learn by taking non-human minds seriously

Neurodivergence and the myth of "normal": different minds, different kinds of intelligence, different value

Different ways of knowing: exploring all the ways we know things: our bodies, our hearts, our minds.

ATTENTION

Attention as the scarce resource: algorithms, addiction design, and reclaiming focus

Digital identity: who we are online vs. off, what being online gives us and costs us

Paying attention to civic duty: what to pay attention to when considering collective good

Climate grief and agency: living meaningfully and managing anxiety under climate change

Slowness as resistance: deep work, deep rest, deep relationships

Caregiving as a form of attention: Care as a human act that can only be done by humans

Creative growth: the difference between understanding something and consuming something

CONNECTION

The loneliness epidemic: connection in an over-connected world

Cross-generational dialogue: what different generations can do for each other

Secular spirituality: ritual and meaning without religion, for the 21st Century

Hope and Joy as a discipline: not naivety, but as a tool that helps connect us with ourselves

Third places: the reinvention of social fabric and community infrastructure

Institutional trust: how local, regional and national leaders are rebuilding it

Death, grief, and loss: talking about the most taboo subjects that are also the ones we all have in common

Unlikely intersections: where disparate fields or identities collide, and what emerges

ARTS & CULTURE

Art in the age of generation: the uniquely human nature of arts and cultural creativity

Taste and the algorithm: discovery, curation, and pushing back against monoculture

Storytelling as infrastructure: how the stories a culture tells shape what it believes is possible

Who gets to make culture: access, gatekeeping, and the voices outside the "mainstream" narrative

The economics of making: patronage, platforms, and what it takes to sustain a creative life

Craft and the handmade: the growing value of slow, physical, imperfect things

Arts as civic space: museums, venues, and libraries as places where community grows and lives

WHAT WE WON'T LIST *// curation means saying no*

Human Week is curated. We say yes with enthusiasm and no with care, so that when you see an event on our calendar, you know it earned the spot. Here's what gets an event turned down:

A PITCH IN A PANEL'S CLOTHING

If the real goal is selling something, host a demo. Different event, different week.

SIX SPEAKERS, ZERO DISAGREEMENT

Too many people with the same point of view leads to conversation without substance.

NETWORKING AS THE WHOLE PLAN

"Come mingle" isn't an event. Give people something to gather around and the mingling takes care of itself.

ENDING ON "ANY QUESTIONS?"

Design your close like you designed your open. People should leave with something — a question, a next step, a person to follow up with.

JARGON AT THE DOOR

If your description needs translating, the room is already smaller than it should be.

We turn events down for one reason: so every event we do list is worth showing up for. That's the whole promise of the week.

HOST WORKSHEET: FRAME

YOUR EVENT *// required before listing*

A clear frame is what makes an event worth someone's evening and tells them why they'd attend. We are not collecting this worksheet, but we will ask you these questions on the host application.

WORKING TITLE

Use plain language.

THE TOPIC OR QUESTION

One sentence only, please. This follows the title of your event.

WHO IT IS FOR

Written as "For anyone who..." Define your audience by how this topic shows up in their daily life. Name it; don't explain it.

YOUR THESIS

Why host this event, at this moment, in this way? There are no wrong answers. It's a question about the question you're asking, the coworking you're facilitating, or the activity you're leading.

WHAT WE'RE LEAVING WITH

What do you want people still talking about on the way home? A question, a next step, a person to follow up with.

Let's be human, first.

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