About Remote Conferences

Adrian Kosmaczewski

2020-05-17

As the pandemic starts challenging all aspects of our life, I tweeted my personal opinion about software conferences in a thread.

So we've been watching bits and pieces of @theRemoteCon with my colleagues today, and I have a few things to say about the format; not about the content, and this might be useful for other upcoming online conferences (like @appbuilders_ch :)

— Adrian Kosmaczewski   (@akosma) April 7, 2020

Here's the thread, unrolled and summarized.

1. Short talks. No more than 10 minutes.
2. Pre-recorded. Speakers record themselves giving the talk. The recording should be YouTube-quality; that is, no "uhmmmmm" or "ehhmmmm". Also: no music.
3. The speaker's face appears on the recording, on a small window above the slides. Let us see you. At all times. That's important. Gestures, smiles.
4. The most important part of this idea: the speaker only presses "Play" and switches immediately to the associated chat system, answering questions from the audience, while the talk happens. That's right! Q&A session right during the session. Now that's value imho.

The advantages of this approach are:

1. Vetoing of talks beforehand. A small step for the organizers when talks are only 10 min long, a huge step for the attendees.
2. Optimized delivery, particularly when demoing, which might be useful in tech conferences.
3. Reuse. Yes, a speaker might be able to reuse a talk later in another context, why not.
4. Deliverables. Forget the PDF-only deliverable; there's also a video with all the talking.
5. Higher density of information. Remove those "uhhmmmm" and "eehhhmms" and silences.
6. Respect of the timetable. There will be never again a speaker stepping on the timeslot of the next one.

7. And for accessibility, since the talks are pre-recorded, don't forget the subtitles. This is super important.