

Foo Camp

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Foo Camp is the annual invitation only, no-structure, no plan, tent on the lawns, hacker event hosted by publisher Tim O'Reilly. O'Reilly describes it as "the wiki of conferences", where the program is developed by the attendees at the event, using big whiteboard schedule templates that can be rewritten or overwritten by attendees to optimize the schedule. The goal of the event is to reach out to new people who will increase the company's intelligence about new technologies, and to create opportunities for cross-fertilization between people and technologies that are on the O'Reilly radar.

Some have described it as a meta-birds-of-a-feather (BOF) session, that gets smart people together to discuss technology issues. This style of event has also been described as an unconference.

The event started as a joke between Tim O'Reilly and Sara Winge, O'Reilly's VP of Corporate Communications. Sara had always wanted to run a "foo bar" -- an open bar for "Friends of O'Reilly" -- at one of O'Reilly's conferences. That joke morphed into a brainstorm after the dot com bust left O'Reilly with lots of unused office space in its new buildings, creating the opportunity for Foo Camp. And sure enough, there was eventually a Foo Bar at the camp.

Tim O'Reilly describes the goal of his company as "changing the world by spreading the knowledge of innovators." Foo Camp has evolved into an important mechanism for finding those innovators. O'Reilly asks attendees to nominate new and interesting people to be invited to future camps. The invite list is calculated to create cross-disciplinary "aha moments" -- new synapses in the global brain, with a focus on emerging technology.

In 2005, a complementary alternative BarCamp was created by a past attendee of Foo Camp and a few individuals who were interested in organizing their own version of Foo Camp, and hosted at the SocialText offices in Palo Alto, California by SocialText founder Ross Mayfield, with an open invitation to anyone who wanted to join.

Over the weekend of February 2-4, 2007, O'Reilly employee Nathan Torkington, staged the first Kiwi Foo Camp (otherwise known as Baa Camp) in Warkworth, New Zealand, where he now lives.

See also: Foobar, unconference, BarCamp, Science Foo Camp

External links

- O'Reilly Foo Camp 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 - EuroFOO 2004
- John Battelle's account of the first Foo Camp
- Sample Foo Camp Schedule Board
- Flickr photo stream

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Category: Computer-related events and awards

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