

Presidential (Dessert) Round Table Emma, Jo and Javi

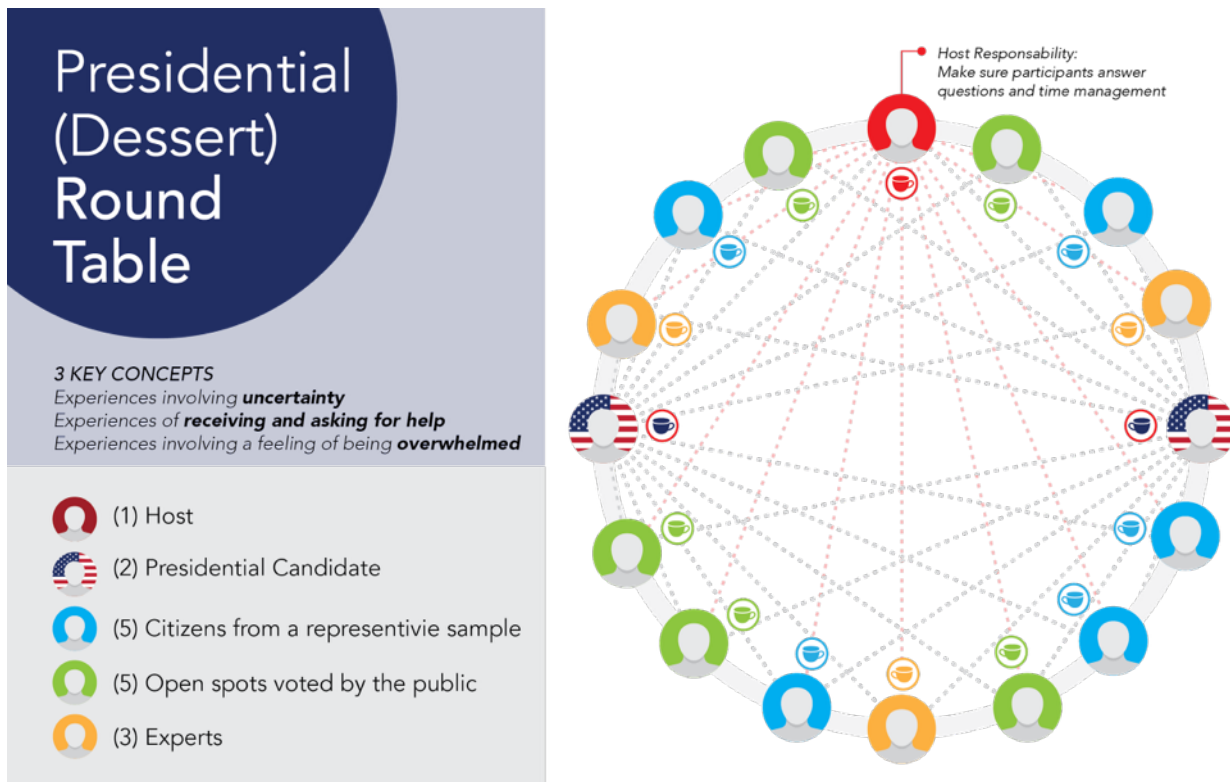
Introduction

We built on our previous “self reflection and chocolate” prototype to develop a TV show format that could either replace or be an addition to the existing presidential debates.

Throughout the project, we learned that people were fed up with the candidates bashing each other and were craving authenticity. They wanted the candidates to talk about their experiences, both good and bad and what they had learned from those experiences. People however felt that the current political environment made it impossible for candidates to display vulnerability and therefore they lost some of their humanity.

From the prototype we found that it was important to set the right atmosphere where these conversations to be had. In order for it to work, perhaps a “collective vulnerability” would be required where the candidates and the audience both shared experiences and reflections.

Prototype 2.0 Diagram



Concept & Structure

- Similar to the debates, it would be a 1.5 hrs tv show

- Rather than a formal structure, the candidates and other participants would sit around a large round table, and talk while enjoying coffee and pastry/dessert.
- The group conversation would be facilitated by a host who is responsible for making sure that the conversation runs smoothly and that the topics of discussion are kept relevant and interesting for a broader audience
- The round table represents a non hierarchical structure where the candidates, host, and other participants are all on an equal level. The participants would include:
 - 1 host
 - 3 experts
 - 6 citizens (randomly selected from a representative sample)
 - 6 open spots voted by the public
 - 2 presidential candidates
- The conversation would revolve around 3 key concepts:
 - Experiences involving uncertainty
 - Experiences of receiving and asking for help
 - Experiences involving a feeling of being overwhelmed

Script

(just “PART ONE: UNCERTAIN CONCEPT” presented in class)

PART ONE: CONVERSATION ABOUT UNCERTAINTY

1. **Host v.1:** As the host of this lovely evening salon, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to our dysfunctional American family gathering. Let’s be honest here – our shared national community suffers from divisions as deep as our fiscal deficit. Perhaps the deepest divide is the one between our elected officials and the people they are here to serve. These are heavy topics indeed for a simple coffee gathering such as ours, which is one of the reasons I’m wearing this stupid costume. Whatever it takes to ease this situation up, eh? But this costume also represents something very real. It represents blown-up egos, pie-throwing and name-calling. It’s a costume I will be the first to take off this evening. (takes off costume) So now let’s get to know each other, for real. How is everyone feeling? Coffee ok? So we’ll start this evening by throwing out a question to our guests from the American public. *I would like for everyone to think of a moment or a situation in the past when you felt uncertain, confused, not sure what direction to go. A moment that you somehow resolved and learnt something from. Would anyone like to share an experience?*
2. **Host v.2:** Good evening, I’m _____ and I will be your host for a little coffee and dessert with the candidates this evening. We have two goals tonight: 1) to encourage this random gathering of people to talk honestly and thoughtfully about their past experiences and 2) to prevent any bloodshed. So now let’s get to know each other, for real. How is everyone feeling? Coffee ok? So we’ll start this evening by throwing out a question to our guests from the American public. *I would like for everyone to think of a moment or a situation in the past when you felt uncertain, confused, not sure what direction to go. A moment that*

you somehow resolved and learnt something from. Would anyone like to share an experience?

3. **Guest 1:** A few years ago I was feeling a lot of uncertainty about the safety of my youngest son, he was 16 years old at the time. The situation in our neighborhood had gotten really bad over the last few years, I didn't dare to let him out, maybe he'll get into trouble or even be shot, by the police or by someone else in the community.
4. **Host:** How did you handle the situation?
5. **Guest 1:** I decided to stay, I couldn't afford to leave. I expressed my thoughts to the Reverend in my church and he told me to have faith and let God show me a way. So I started organizing the community, all the mothers. We went on community rounds together, protected each other's children. I would have wished for society to take care of this, that this burden wouldn't be all on us. But things did get better.
6. **Host:** What did you learn from this experience?
1. **Guest 1:** I learnt that I need my community. We need each other. Otherwise there is no one to stand up for you.
2. **Host:** So turning this over to our presidential candidates. It would be easy to get into policy discussions here but I would like to ask you to stick to talking about your own comparable experiences. Did either of you ever feel this kind of uncertainty that Maria just shared with us?
3. **Politician:** I have never lived in a neighborhood that inspires the same fear that Maria described. I'm sorry to hear you're having this experience. I have definitely felt uncertainty with regards to my children though. This public service path that Bill and I have chosen has also sucked in Chelsea. When the media hound her, followed her to school, commenting nastily on everything from her clothes to her grades, you worry about that. It's hard to know what to do at the time, and what to say.
4. **Host:** How did you handle the situation?
5. **Politician:** Well, I had to talk to her honestly about our situation. I described the phenomenal privileges we had, but also some of the challenges. I talked to her about the media, explained that while I was sad that they don't respect children, or privacy, the stuff they write was one of the challenges we had to face. But I also talked to her about what we were trying to do, and the opportunities we would have to make real change. In the end I thought it would be easier to protect her if she knew, and perhaps that it would make her stronger somehow.
6. **Host:** What did you learn from this experience?
7. **Politician:** I learnt that you have to be very strong. Strong enough for yourself and your family even when people are cruel and circumstances are challenging. It's hard, but it's the only way.

TV Show Complete Structure (just for us to have the complete script)

PART ONE: UNCERTAIN CONCEPT

Host:

1. Sets the tone and introduces the concept.
2. **Question #1** directed to a person in the audience: Tell us about a time you have felt **UNCERTAIN**. How did you feel and what did you do?

Person from audience:

1. Answers the host's question #1
2. Asks both candidates: Can you share a comparable situation. What did you do? And what did you learn?

Candidate #1 or #2

1. Answers the addressed question

Opposite Candidate (optional)

1. Answers the addressed question

PART TWO: RECEIVE AND ASKING FOR HELP CONCEPT

Host:

- i. **Question #2** directed to another person in the audience: Tell us about a time when you received **HELP** and how you ask for it?

Person from audience:

1. Answers the host's question #2
- ii. Asks both candidates: Can you share a comparable situation. What did you do? And what did you learn?

Candidate #1 or #2

- iii. Answers the addressed question

Opposite Candidate (optional)

- iv. Answers the addressed question

PART THREE: OVERWHELMED CONCEPT

Host:

1. **Question #3** directed to another person in the audience: Tell us about a time when you have felt **OVERWHELMED**? How did you feel and what did you do?

Person from audience:

1. Answers the host's question #3
2. Asks both candidates: Can you share a comparable situation. What did you do? And what did you learn?

Candidate #1 or #2

1. Answers the addressed question

Opposite Candidate (optional)

1. Answers the addressed question