What is Backchanneling?

A backchannel is an online conversation that takes place in real-time during a verbal discussion, presentation, lecture, etc. While backchanneling is a secondary conversation, it can be a useful tool for submitting questions during a lecture or redirecting the primary conversation. Thanks to increasing wireless connectivity, backchanneling has been brought to the forefront of communication in everything from TV shows to political debates.

Why Try Backchanneling?

- Foster engagement and participation during instruction
- Give shy students a platform to safely ask questions and give feedback
- Extend the discussion by giving students who aren’t physically present the opportunity to ask questions
- Limit student confusion by addressing questions and concerns as they arise
- Streamline Q&A time with audience/student questions waiting in a queue
- Lecture more effectively with a better understanding of where students struggle
- Encourage collaboration as students advise one another online
- Allow students with multiple questions to get answers without dominating class conversations

Challenges of Backchanneling

- Teaching students how to backchannel responsibly
- Adjusting the classroom model so that backchanneling can prove an effective tool
- Determining whether users should backchannel using their own names or if students can remain anonymous

Top Tips for Backchanneling

1. Determine your platform.

   Research which social networking platform will provide the structure that you're looking for in your backchannel discussions. Discuss acceptable use policies with your IT department and administration to determine the safest and most responsible way to hold online discussions during class time and to ensure that no anonymous users are involved.

2. Communicate with your audience.

   Be sure that your students know that you'll be incorporating a backchannel into your lecture/class period. Make it clear how they can access the discussion and what platform to use. Be specific about what is appropriate and what isn't as well as when they can expect their questions to be answered during lectures.

3. Appoint a moderator.

   To keep the discussion effective and on track, appoint someone to sift through questions and comments as they come in. Especially in the beginning, it can be difficult to perform a lecture while also monitoring questions coming in as you address the class. Appointing a student to be the backchannel moderator will keep questions organized and your answers more structured. Rotate the moderator duties to increase the class' enthusiasm about the new format and get all students involved.

The Lightspeed Systems Solution

With the Lightspeed Systems LMS (My Big Campus), our MDM solution and content filter, you have a complete solution for safe, mobile, collaborative learning that makes backchanneling easy. My Big Campus is all about making learning real and engaging with inspired collaboration. Keep students safe and excited to learn by using online groups to facilitate backchanneling in every class and inspire further discussion with the educational resource library. Whatever your subject or topic for backchanneling, our 3-in-1 solution will help make your new teaching format a success.

Together we do amazing things.