

JavaScript for WordPress Speaker Workshop for Underrepresented Voices

Welcome to the JavaScript for WordPress Speaker Workshop for Underrepresented Voices!

You should have received the script I am using, the slides, and the handbook before the workshop. If you don't already have them, here is a link to grab all the material:

<http://diversein.tech/jsforwpworkshop2020>

A little bit of meeting tech: If you are watching together with other people, please put the number with you in your Zoom name in brackets. This is important because we will be doing some exercises in breakout rooms in pairs and groups of 4, and I will adjust for those who are in groups in person already.

You can do this by clicking Participants and hovering over your name. A Rename button will appear. If I was watching with two others so there were three of us in total, my name would be "Jill Binder (3)."

Introduce Facilitator(s)

I want to introduce your facilitators.

First, my name is Jill Binder and I'm the main facilitator. I just moved from Vancouver, BC, Canada to a small town a few hours away, Vernon, BC. I have been doing this workshop in WordPress since 2014. It started off as helping more women in Vancouver to bust through their Impostor Syndrome to want to start speaking at our monthly

Meetups and yearly WordCamp. We increased the number of women speakers at our conference from 14 to 50% in just one year! And it was a Developer Edition of our conference! Now I lead the Diverse Speaker Training group in WordPress that promotes and trains this workshop all over the world for all Diversity, and the 12 cities in 6 countries who ran it in 2018 typically had the same results as we did.

I started as a freelance WordPress web developer, and after having such great success with this and discovering that it was my passion and talent, now I do this work full-time. I have a 50% sponsorship from Automattic to keep leading our team in WordPress, and I now take this work to other tech communities, conferences, and companies.

I am thrilled that Zac asked me to bring you this workshop.

You can follow my work at Twitter @jillbinder, on LinkedIn, and my newsletter on my website, diversein.tech.

We have on the call with us today Zac, your conference organizer. Zac, would you like to say a few words?

Zac introduces himself and says some words about why he wants to hold this workshop

Agenda

The agenda that we are going to cover is:

1. Introductions and Ice Breaker
2. Impostor Syndrome
3. Finding a Topic

1. Introductions and Ice Breaker

In this section

- Introductions
- Ice Breaker
- Why are we holding a workshop for folks from underrepresented groups
- What we are looking for



Ice Breaker

Take out your slides now. You're going to need to refer to them.

Let's all introduce ourselves. In a moment I am going to split you into breakout rooms of 4-5 each. I'd like each person in the room to say:

- Your name
- Pronouns: What pronouns should we use to address you today, if you're comfortable sharing them. Example: She/Her, They/Them
- Just a few words about your JavaScript with WordPress experience
- What is your speaking experience, if any?

Know that you can always opt out of this or any of the other exercises in our workshop. At your turn, say, "Pass."

You won't have access to the slides while you're in the breakout rooms, so please have your copy of the slides available. This is on Slide 10.

I will give you each 1.5 minutes to speak. I'll let you know when it's time to change to the next person.

In order to put you into the rooms, I am going to hit a button and you will be automatically sorted into groups in the breakout rooms. You click a button to join the room. Inside, there will be a button to be able to ask me questions. When I hit the button to bring you back into the main room, there will be 60 seconds before you come back, so you will have a 60 second warning.

For those of you who are multiple people on one camera, I will try to adjust your rooms so that you have 4-5 in each breakout including the ones you are with in person.

In the room, please go in alphabetical order of your first name. I will let you know when it's time to switch to the next person.

Any questions before we begin?

I am going to hit the button to put you into the breakout rooms now. I will wait a moment before starting the first 1.5 minute countdown timer so that people can join and get settled into the rooms.

One more note: The breakout rooms will work for you if you're on the Zoom Desktop Client, Zoom Mobile App, or some devices.

If you're on the web client, Chromebooks/Chrome OS or Zoom Rooms, you won't be able to join a breakout room. For you, stay in the main room and you'll be able to have 5 of you participate out loud. Everyone else, please give them active listening.

Ok, I'm hitting the button now!

Why are we holding a workshop for folks from underrepresented groups

There are a few reasons that we want to hold this workshop for folks from underrepresented groups today:

1. A disproportionately large number of the speakers at tech events look alike and come from the same background. That means that the speakers do not represent everyone sitting in the audience. Folks from underrepresented groups may, therefore feel like they don't belong there. But the community does have diversity, with lots of folks with a wide range of knowledge to share and everyone can feel included.
2. WordPress is amazing in that it is open source and so all sorts of people use it. We want a more fair representation of the users in the people who are speaking.
3. One of the ways in which WordPress is being shaped is by the people who speak about it publicly. Many folks from underrepresented groups, by nature of having had different life experiences, would approach problems differently. Just as how a developer's point of view is different from a user's point of view, so are our viewpoints. You have experiences that aren't necessarily

being shared right now.

4. By bringing more diversity to the people at the podium, there's a better chance of bringing in folks who are straddling several roles and thus creating unique things with unique perspectives. Power users who use JavaScript and WordPress in interesting ways, front-end developers, business people who use distributions to make specific kinds of sites, designers who use WordPress to do wild things with eCommerce.... People to talk about running a business in WordPress, how developers can communicate with designers, different things you can do with WordPress..... etc.
5. When people see themselves represented on stage, it gives more people confidence and helps them feel like they belong there. They feel less underrepresented.
6. Last year we made huge improvements in making the JS for WP Conf a more inclusive and diverse event. This year we are taking this even further. We are striving to make our event as diverse and inclusive as we can.

What We Are Looking For

What are we looking for? Well, the same folks speak frequently at WordPress events. We like them, they are great and we want them to keep speaking, but we also want to add new voices, have folks of different backgrounds, and add new perspectives. The whole community will benefit from hearing from more kinds of people. We'll get into why this matters more in the next section.

We will be having two tracks at this year's conference.

Day 1: Gutenberg. Things like:

- beginner blocks
- tutorials on building blocks
- examples of blocks you've built

-
- what block libraries or plugins you like using and their implementations
 - styling
 - anything Data API related
 - anything interactive front-end blocks
 - business talks
 - a product you've launched around Gutenberg

On Day 2, we will be covering Headless WordPress. Things like:

- anything Gatsby-related
- anything Frontity-related
- anything on building apps
- mobile applications
- custom Headless implementations
- etc.

[In this section:](#)

- Dispelling the myths of being a public speaker
- Why do you want to speak?

[Dispelling The Myths \(What We Think A Speaker Is vs What They Actually Are\)](#)

Everyone has their own reasons for not speaking in public, especially at tech events, but most of those reasons are based on myths that we can dispel or concerns that we can address:

Myth 1: I'm not an expert!

That's okay, you don't have to be an expert! Everyone has a different idea of what "expert" means.

No one knows everything, and everyone has something to learn. You just need to know more about your topic than your audience knows. You can find a topic where you have knowledge that your audience does not.

There are things you do with WordPress all the time that other people don't – that makes you an expert in their eyes. Even if your audience has knowledge about the same topic, they will not frame that knowledge the same way – they will still have something to learn from you. It's also possible that you feel you only know a little bit about a topic, but it's still more than many people in the audience who are happy to learn what you know.

You are probably more of an expert than you think you are. A lot of us suffer from Imposter Syndrome. This psychological phenomenon where you feel like you are an imposter, you think you don't really have the knowledge or skills to be here, but you have managed to fool everyone and soon they'll find out. Imposter syndrome is really common – you aren't alone.

A lot of us have imposter syndrome because we don't see people like us presented as experts. Many people who are not part of the over-represented majority set a much higher bar for “expert” knowledge.

Many communities have surveyed their members to ask what kind of information they want to learn at meetups and conferences, and most people request beginner topics. Remember that there are people out there who know nothing about any of this stuff, and they want to know more! If you have used WordPress before, you have knowledge that other people want you to share.

One area where you are always an expert is your own experience. Case studies make great talks – talk about how you did something, how you learned something, how you overcame an obstacle, the process you went through to create something or to solve a problem.

These kinds of talks are great because they are unique – not just the same information that anyone can find in an online tutorial. These topics help everyone overcome the “I'm not an expert” problem – you're a normal person sharing a normal experience, and that's valuable, so people will come to value their own experience and expertise.

Even if you are giving a talk that the audience knows all about already, you have a different perspective and they are likely to learn something new.

So you might not feel like an expert, but you are! If you care about your topic, that will shine through and that's what's important.

Myth 2: People will ask questions I can't answer, and I'll look like a fool.

Yes, people very well might ask questions you can't answer, but that's okay. Your audience understands that not everyone knows everything, and it can be hard to think on your feet – the audience is sympathetic. If you don't know the answer, there are several things you can do:

- You can ask if anyone in the audience has the answer.
- You can tell them you will look up the answer and get back to them. Tell them you'll post the answer on your blog – then you get more visitors to your website!
- Sometimes people ask questions that are off topic – feel free to tell them their question is off-topic and you would be happy to discuss it with them later.
- Also, remember that it's okay to say, "I don't know" – people will think more highly of you if you admit you don't know than if you try to make up an answer.

Myth 3: I'm too nervous to speak!

Your audience gets that too – after all, most of them didn't have the bravery to speak.

First of all, practice practice practice! The more you practice - in front of pets, family, friends, the mirror, small audiences - the less nervous you will be.

But if you are still nervous, that's okay! Everyone gets nervous in front of audiences, and that's just a part of being human. Keep in mind that your audience is on your side – they want to see you succeed. In fact, it's okay to admit that you are nervous – people will be sympathetic. I'm nervous right now, too, but I'm up here speaking in front of you and I haven't died yet! Making a little joke at the beginning about being nervous (like I just did) will dispel the nervous energy in the room.

If you're really nervous, don't start by speaking at an event where you will have a big audience. Start at a smaller meetup, or even start just in front of the mirror, pets, friends and family, etc.

Myth 4: I have failed if everyone in the audience isn't totally engaged.

Sometimes when you're speaking, you will look out at the audience and it will look like everyone is bored. That's okay.

First of all, most of them probably aren't as bored as they look. Audiences generally sit with neutral faces, so if they aren't smiling and nodding and cheering, that doesn't mean they aren't engaged.

If they are using their phone/tablet/laptop/another device, that doesn't mean they're ignoring you - in fact, it might mean they are writing down your every word, or they might be live tweeting your talk.

And no matter how good a speaker you are, you will not connect with everyone in the audience. That's okay - no speaker can connect with everyone. Expect that, don't take it personally, and be happy with the people who do connect with you.

Myth 5: A talk followed by a Q&A is the only format I can use to share my knowledge.

No, there are plenty of other ways to share your expertise at WordPress events. You could lead a group discussion, lead a workshop, or put together a panel.

If time: Questions for the group: What do you think? What are things you're worried about? Why haven't you given a tech talk? If you've only talked once, why did you not do it again?

To put up your hand to speak on camera, type in the chat.

Why Do You Want To Speak?

Those are reasons people don't want to speak. What about reasons people do want to speak. Here is another discussion question for you: Why do you want to speak?

If you'd like to share with us on camera, type your name in the chat

Here are some of the common reasons:

1. Be seen as an authority in your field
2. Share your knowledge with others

3. Build your confidence
4. Give back to the community
5. Meet people - be part of the community
6. Speaking teaches you more
7. It's fun!
8. Rewarding, feeling of accomplishment
9. Career building
10. Be a role model for your underrepresented group

3. Finding a Topic

In this section

- Talk Formats
- Big BrainDump
- Narrowing Your Topic Selection
- Present Your Topic (optional)

Talk Formats

Now that we've talked about why we are holding this workshop for folks from underrepresented groups, myths about what it takes to be a speaker, and why you want to speak, let's start talking about the actual talks.

A lot of talks are big "how to" brain dump sessions. "How to make a Gutenberg or Headless project" might be someone walking through how to make one, maybe even live coding, and then at the end, there are questions.

We have found that this isn't necessarily a good way to impart information. People often walk away feeling overwhelmed and not remembering anything that they learned.

There are other talk formats that promote story-based learning. Talking about how you learned something, for example, means other people can also learn how to learn.

Here are some of the various formats:

- **How To:** The standard way that tech talks happen

- **Discussion:** You are the facilitator on a topic and the audience discusses it together
- **Panel:** Multiple people answer questions on the same topic
- **Story-based:** This could be how you learned something, mistakes you made, or any other narrative format
- **Case Study:** The story of how you created one thing, in particular
- **Code walk-through:** Talking through a code example

A talk can also be more than one person. Talks with 2 or 3 people can be really engaging.



Brainstorm

The next few exercises will be found in your slides.

We are going into our first written exercise now. First we are going to help you answer the question, "I don't know what to talk about," "I don't know enough about anything to give a talk," "I'm not an expert in anything," or if you've given talks and you're just stuck for what your talk for this conference could be, we'll be answering that as well.

We are going to do a brainstorming exercise. Brainstorm as many topic ideas as you can in this exercise. We're not looking for "perfect" or even "good" ideas. The idea is just to get them out, good, bad, or ugly. See if you can get 30 or 40 ideas. Seriously, anything that comes to mind.

You can write, draw, do mind-maps, list, any format you like. While you're summoning inspiration or getting writers' block, or anywhere in between, I'll be prompting you with questions to generate more topics.

Remember, it's always great to talk about what excites YOU - not what you think you should talk about.

Also if you are newer in JavaScript and WordPress and don't have answers to these yet, that's ok. You can use the prompts to imagine what your answers might be in a year.

I'll give you a moment to start writing any ideas that are coming to mind already before we start the prompts, and in a moment I'll start the first prompt. Go ahead and start writing now.

- What got you into JavaScript for WordPress?
- What keeps you in it?
- What do you love about it?
- What do you want to learn next?
- First time you: created a Gutenberg or Headless project, built a block, etc.
- Biggest challenge in JavaScript & WordPress in the last year or two
- The last thing that you learned? How did you learn it?
- Biggest challenge you've ever had with JavaScript & WordPress? How did you overcome the biggest challenge?
- What are you most passionate about when it comes to JavaScript & WordPress? What most excites you?
- What sorts of things do you love sharing with others about JavaScript & WordPress?
- What question about JavaScript & WordPress do you get asked about most by clients, friends, and family?
- A list of what you want to learn
- Favorite Gutenberg or Headless project?
- A cool thing you've created?
- Favorite resources?
- Cool tricks you use all the time?
- What could you talk about without slides?
- What prompt did we not ask which you wish we did?

Out of curiosity, how many topics did you write down? Put your number in the chat.

Good work everyone. You've done well. Even just writing down one is great.



Topic Selection

Okay, now you've got some good, bad and ugly ideas, we are going to do an exercise where you are picking the two topics from your list that you think best fits the following

questions. You might also find that you come up with new answers that weren't in your list. If so, go ahead and write those down! If for some of these you don't come up with any answers, that is ok. Just skip that one.

1. For a story-based talk: Pick 2 topics that you don't know a lot about, but have had some success with. (e.g. I don't know much about Super complex blocks but I've made some simple ones).
2. For moderating a panel: Pick 2 topics you may not know much about but that you would have good questions for.
3. For a how-to-presentation: Pick 2 topics that you are confident about and could lead a how-to presentation.
4. For a case study: Pick 2 topics that you've successfully worked on that you feel you could do a case study about.
5. For a code walk-through: Pick 2 topics that have Gutenberg or Headless pieces of code that you're really proud of. This could be for a Code Walk-Through.
6. For any type: Pick 2 subjects in the topic list that are your favorite.

Pick a topic

Go ahead and pick the topic you're most excited about.

In a couple of minutes, you're going to have a chance to share and discuss with each other in your breakout rooms of 4-5 people.

I'll give you 2 minutes each. This time go in alphabetical order of your last names.



Let's go around the room and hear your topics. This is a chance to get feedback from the room and from Zac!

What's Next

1. Your next step is to apply to speak at the JS for WP Conf! Anyone who is ready, let's go there now and enter your info:

<https://javascriptforwp.com/conference/apply-to-speak/>

2. If you loved this workshop, saw the value in it, saw that this really does help with impostor syndrome. You can see why it is transforming WordPress, why their conferences are going from 10% to 50% or more diverse speaker lineups after doing this work. It is an effective tool that yields tangible results.

So many of you may be feeling ready to start public speaking...

BUT!

You want more help. Coming up with a catchy title, writing your talk's description (aka pitch), creating a good talk structure, learning tips to become a better speaker,

I have two options for you.

Because you're all in WordPress, you already have a free resource to learn these to be able to speak at WordPress meetups and WordCamps.

Have someone at your local meetup or WordCamp contact us at tiny.cc/wpdiversity

If you want this work at another tech conference, company, or community, you can contact me through diversein.tech.

In both cases, you'll be helping not only your own growth but also helping folks in your community as well.

Also, if it is paid workshop, you'll be getting a nice referral bonus.

3. Also we have opportunities in the Diverse Speaker Training group to give back on a global level, to learn how to teach this work to meetups and WordCamps around the world.
4. I'm always improving this work. Let's go through a questionnaire together:

<https://forms.gle/rtFMDLNsZ8MnGqUEA>

Thank you

I want to give a big thank you to Zac who invited me to give this workshop for you today.

Stay in touch

Please stay in touch! Follow me on Twitter @jillbinder, LinkedIn, or sign up for the newsletter to stay apprised of how this work is going, and to keep getting tips on diversity in tech.