

# What is the danger of letting people choose which workshop to attend on the spot?

**In short:** people might not select a workshop at all and create a very disrespectful atmosphere with it. Registration to the workshops in advance with limited spots fixes this.



## The problem

When I was a kid, I usually got selected as the last one when teams were formed in soccer during sport classes. And that always sucked. It made clear, you were the last choice.

That same feeling can happen when we let people choose workshops on the fly during an event. Suddenly there might be no one in one workshop.

## How we could avoid this bug

The next time I organize an event with multiple workshops where people have to choose one, I'll do the registration process in advance at the registration moment with a form that limits the number of people registered by workshop.

The workshop facilitators then on the day of the event get to meet the 10 people they'll work with, and the decision of how people chose (was it their first, second, third choice or the only one left) is not visible to the workshop facilitators or to the whole group.

## An example

This is an issue I created by mistake in the Swiss Service Design Day 2026. In the two first editions, we asked people to split naturally between the workshops in equal numbers. And it worked nicely.

This year we had more people joining the event, and this time that natural split didn't work. It backfired. One workshop wasn't selected by people, even when the ask was clear from the start and the ask for equally numbered groups was reminded twice.

As the person who organizes the event this broke my heart. The team that put the most effort in organizing the workshop was not selected.

As I'm reflecting on it, my hypothesis is that once groups become bigger the shared responsibility of creating a loving experience for everyone gets lost, the urge of optimizing for one self comes out and the guy designing the event has to put more effort to contain this urge.

It's always the responsibility of the person designing the event when things go south. Yet such moments are really heart breaking and reveal that even in communities that are caring and full of empathic people, group dynamics can create disrespectful moments of personal interest over care.