Were it not for three notable events that shared a common thread, it might have been an ordinary Saturday morning during the summer of 2007.

The first of these events occurred in California where some 200 invited attendees descended upon the Google campus to attend the second annual ‘ Science Foo Camp ,' a conference that draws together leading scientists and experts in technology and public policy from around the world. The format of SciFoo is unusual for lacking any predetermined agenda and being participant-driven where each attendee is expected to give a talk of some kind. Among those attending for the first time were two names familiar to skeptics,
PZ Myers
and
James Randi
.

The second event occurred much earlier that morning half a world away in Kazan, a large city in the Tatar region of the Russian Federation where a group of technology enthusiasts and professionals met to share their hard-won knowledge with one another. Like SciFoo this event's agenda was assembled on the morning of the event with presentations given by the attendees themselves. However, its format differed in one key respect-no invitation was necessary to participate. This ‘ BarCamp Kazan ' added to the growing number of participant-driven technology events that had already caught fire in hundreds of cities around the world. It was notably the first event of its kind in Russia.