

/10

**EVENT
TRENDS**

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/10 EVENT TRENDS FOR 2017

Julius Solaris

Or should we say 40? This is the big news. For 2017 our 6 year old Trends series transforms into a more holistic look at the event industry.

While technology is still an integral part of the event mix, venues, social media and event design are three elements that cannot be overlooked when analysing trends.

Therefore this 10 Event Trends edition will present a more in depth overview with the purpose of making events and meetings more appealing and effective in 2017.

We love trends and we love what's new. In a social driven era, we consume the experiences of our friends and peers. We know a whole lot more about what is going on around us.

As a result we demand and expect more when attending events. Just tech, doesn't cut it anymore. A true wow effect is channelled through a wise venue choice, strong digital and social presence, solid meeting design and forward thinking tech selection.

We hope you will enjoy this year's 10 Event Trends - here is a breakdown of the sections and contributors:

/10 TRENDS IN EVENT TECHNOLOGY

Julius Solaris, Founder and Editor, EventMB

/10 TRENDS IN EVENT DESIGN

Ruud Janssen, Founder, The New Objective Collective

/10 TRENDS IN DESTINATION AND VENUE SELECTION

Pádraic Gilligan, Managing Partner, SoolNua

/10 TRENDS IN EVENT SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Nick Borelli, President, Borelli Strategies



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10 TRENDS IN EVENT TECHNOLOGY

Julius Solaris

/10 MIXED REALITY

Two words made popular by Robert Scoble. The intersection of virtual reality and live interaction. We called them hybrid meetings 8 years ago but nobody really believed in them. Until Facebook made substantial investments in Oculus Rift and virtual integration.

With such level of spending and global interest we can anticipate that 2017 will be the year when virtual reality meets events, creating a third dimension where people around the globe interact, blurring the lines of physical venues.

This is what the generations of the '80s and '90 have dreamed of and seen in movies. This is the opportunity for events to be amplified, to go beyond the location, to preserve the one to one interaction while being miles away.

The startups in this trend offer the ability to remotely attend but completely immerse in the action, to create an avatar that resembles ourselves.

One of the traditional struggles of event professionals selling virtual attendance tickets was poor experience. These services submerge the attendees in a sensorial experience that resembles so much the live event to justify a sound ticket price. That is the real opportunity with mixed reality, to surpass the awkwardness created by early 2000's virtual environments a la Second Life in favour of experiences so real that they give goosebumps.

Mixed reality uses technology to break down barriers and creates new opportunities for event professionals. Remote attendance is now sexy. We can feel being at the stadium watching a game, or experience the speaker at a conference looking at us, or we can interact with the attendee sitting next us in a third dimension.

TECH COMPANIES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <http://virtuallylive.com/>
- ➔ <http://www.nextvr.com/#/>
- ➔ <http://lunascanner.com/>





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/9 DRONE STREAMING



In the last three years the role of streaming events live has evolved, booming in 2016. Last year we looked at CrowdStreaming as the next big thing with attendees streaming live from the event. We anticipated the boom of Facebook Live and the subsequent investment from the tech giant in supporting live video feed on its platform.

While user generated streaming is not going anywhere in 2017, attendees (especially remote ones) are craving different viewpoints, making waves and capturing the throne of social media.

A shaky phone does the job for attendees but can just be an excuse to save money for large events underinvested in streaming. The scenario changed in May when Mark Zuckerberg went live from his presentation with a drone livestreaming for the audience online.

Drones with 4K cameras and the ability to live stream on social channels are powerful engagement tools. They contribute to create the immersive experience we've discussed in Mixed Reality. While streaming drones are a reality in sporting events and have been for a while, the technology is now extremely accessible for those event professionals willing to step up the livestreaming game and offer a truly personalized and quality driven experience to attendees.

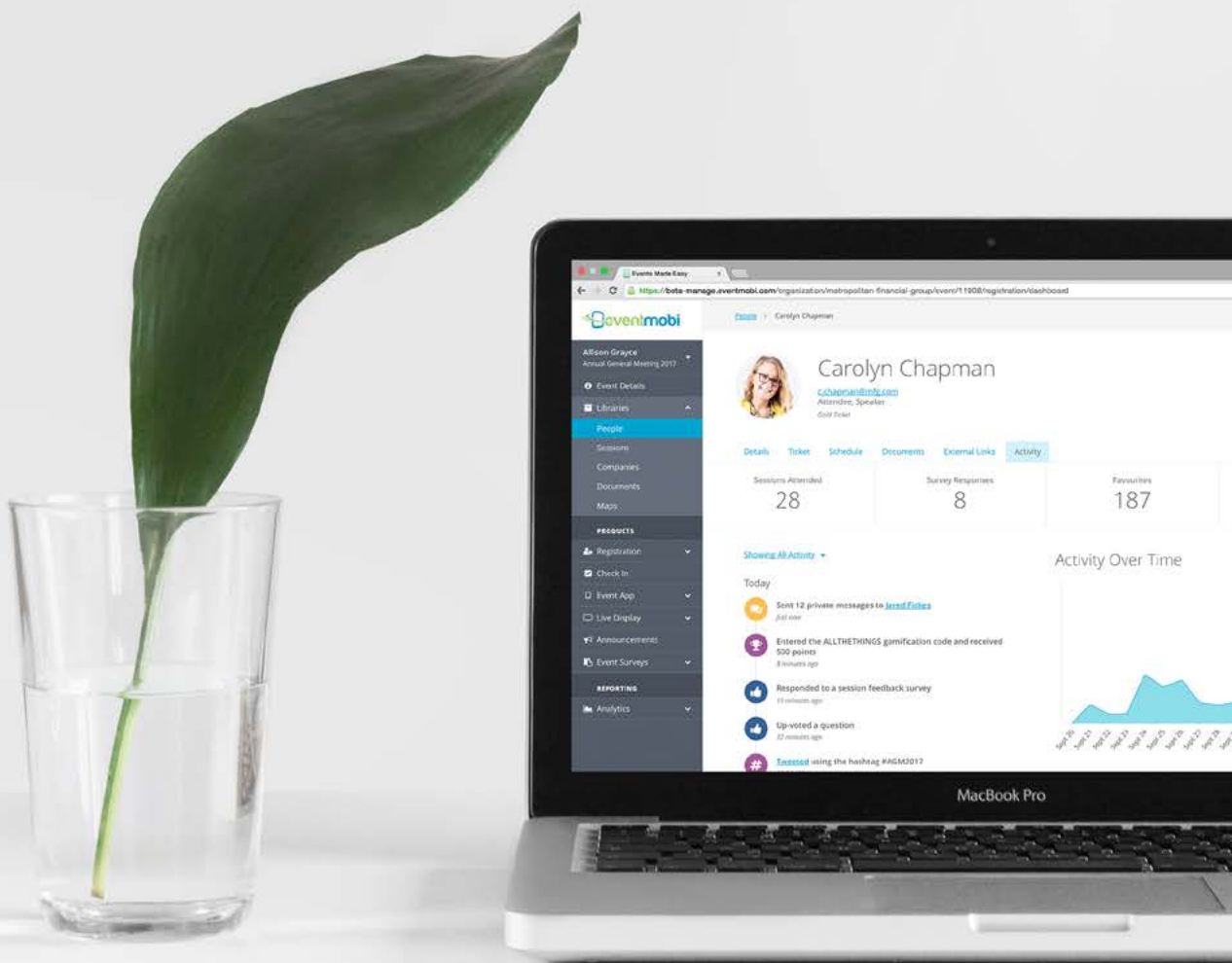
While we've covered drones in the past, the emphasis here is to give new viewpoints to remote attendees (but also to those watching on screens at the event) for very traditional conferences where no solution has been found yet to replace the usual speaker + presentation + huge audience format.

TECH PRODUCTS TO WATCH:

- ➔ <http://www.dji.com/mavic>
- ➔ <http://www.dji.com/phantom-4>
- ➔ <http://www.expertdrones.com/drone-events/>

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/8 **LIVE TECH**

Data will surely be the undisputed protagonist of 2017. It has been for a few years actually but the recent events with the US electoral campaigns being decided by (among many factors) a strong combination of data and events lay ground for the rise of live tech.

Live technology is geared at giving very real time feedback, analytics but also opportunities to sell. In this trend convey all those companies that with meaningful integration or innovative products give real time opportunities to analyze feedback or create merchandise sales otherwise almost unpredictable.

We are witnessing the birth of a new type of technology. Most event technology needs input before the event. It requires an incredible effort to be set up, hence the resistance of some busy event professionals. Live Tech is tied in the now. It is a thermostat that gives you the indication of the room temperature but also taps into the live analytics trends to create opportunities to generate more revenue.

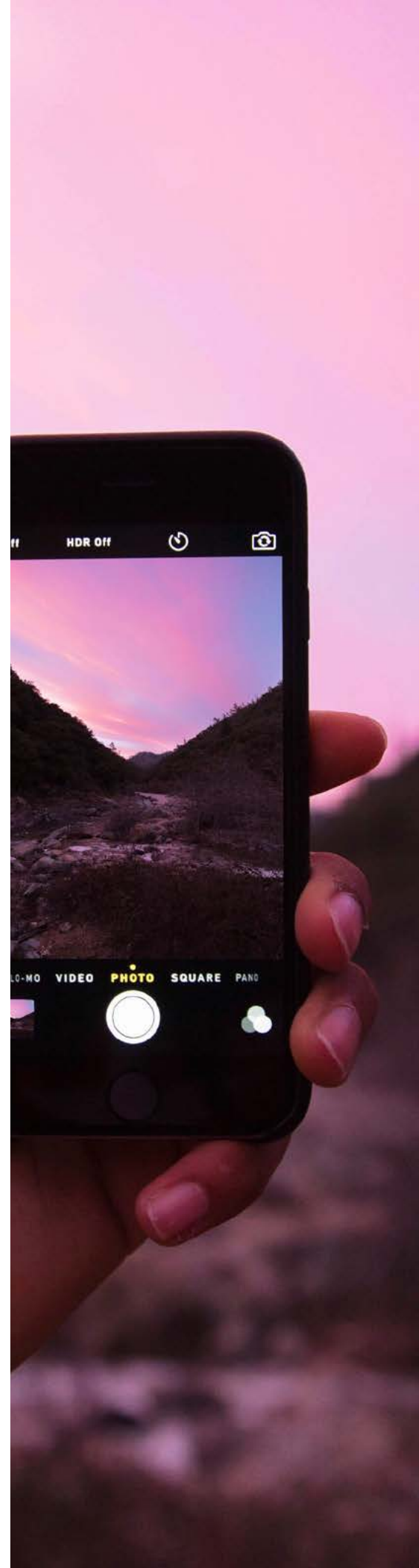
Live Tech encompasses tools that are engineered to empower event professionals to quickly act on what is happening at the event. Most event technology stresses the before and after, forgetting about troubleshooting common problems or taking advantage of recurring opportunities that happen during events.

The strong value of real time data, the narrative that artificial intelligence can create with real time attendee interaction, the opportunities in extra revenue generated are one of the most appealing items to look for in 2017.

Event professionals are masters of now and Live Tech is the tool to make the most out of it.

TECH COMPANIES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <https://imotions.com/>
- ➔ <http://www.livestyled.net/>
- ➔ <http://www.scanalyticsinc.com/>





Global Meetings Research eBook

Convene recently conducted a national survey that included over 200 meeting and event professionals, uncovering insights and preferences towards new meeting formats, venue types, and urbanization of cities.

SURVEY FINDINGS

52%

OF EVENTPROFS

are looking for
non-hotel
venues in 2017



70%

OF CORPORATE
EVENT PLANNERS

include corporate
networking as one of
their primary events

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/7 **SHARING IS CARING**

The sharing economy - a great buzzword for the industry everybody has been talking about for a while. While services like Uber, Lyft and Airbnb are increasingly looking at the event industry, they are still B2C services that little have to do with the intrinsic dynamics of our industry. Of course there is potential and a lot of capital but times are still not mature enough.

Times are mature for sharing economy, crowd-powered services created specifically for the event industry. Actually they have been mature for a long time. While most eventtech companies were concentrating on offering yet another mobile app or ticketing services, real problems of event planners were dismissed.

How do we get event planners to take advantage of the opportunities of the sharing economy, namely to save money while delivering a better service to attendees?

It is unbelievable how such pressing needs and macro trends that have been around for are being properly addressed only now. The companies in this trend offer well thought, industry grounded solutions that place sharing in the right context within the event planning process.

Event professionals in 2017 ride the opportunities presented by these macro trends that have been around for a while.

COMPANIES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <http://www.showslice.co.uk/>
- ➔ <http://www.bandwagon.io/>
- ➔ <https://www.sharethebus.com/>

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/6 MEANINGFUL TRADE SHOWS

Trade shows and exhibitions are bleeding attendees. More scarily so they are bleeding sponsors. Nobody wants to invest in a crowded, messy, shouty, ephemeral event that is pretty much unchanged since the 1800s.

There is a mass migration of sponsors and exhibitors investing in their own events. They don't believe in the promise of exposure. They want tangible ROI. Hence why in 2017 every technology geared at making trade shows more measurable and effective should be invested in.

It looks like we are finally getting to grips with the fact that collecting business cards in a bowl was a great exercise in 1999. Technology offers much better lead retrieval solutions that have been around for a while in event mobile apps. But the focus in 2017 is to step up the game and invest even more in tools that can make selling sponsorship easier.

Eventually we require more real time analytics we can act upon. Simpler data to be presented to your sponsors. Better ways to keep sponsors returning the next year. While the technology in this space is not futuristic, what comes across is the positive requirement in this trend for grounded, solid, down to earth technology that conveys value in a very simple fashion.

The objective is to create more solid sponsorship engagements at trade shows and deliver the tangibility that companies are increasingly facing online.

TECH COMPANIES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <https://pipely.io/>
- ➔ <https://www.myfairtool.com/Home.html>
- ➔ <https://akkroo.com/>





/5 **CROWD THINKING**

Crowdsourcing and leveraging crowds to deliver solutions, content or services has been around for over a decade. Yet the event industry has seen technology more on content creation rather than on co-creation.

For years we've received desperate requests from event professionals looking for tools to allow co-creation with attendees. In a recent [publication](#), we've highlighted how the power of co-creation enhances satisfaction and perception of the overall event.

Yet up until today there has been a chronic lack of tools offering solutions to harness such incredible opportunity. This might well have been a trend for 2011. Yet it seems that more event tech providers are joining the bandwagon and are starting to offer better crowd thinking tools.

It must be said that the wisdom of the crowd has oftentimes been ignored by event professionals who feel challenged in their status quo. Allowing attendees to make decisions challenges the very role of the event planner, some may think. The event professional's role has evolved into more of a facilitator than a planner.

Details are important but experience is king. The pathway to positive experiences is channeled through co-creation. Event planners are the instigators, crowd thinking is the means.

TECH COMPANIES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <http://sharedxp.events/>
- ➔ <https://www.groupmap.com/>
- ➔ <https://myfriendlyreminders.com/>

/4 **DEATH TO EMPTY SEATING**

Scalping is the one plague that affects events that nobody talks about. With recent mega events selling out in few minutes, just to find the same tickets costing four times the amount on secondary markets, it is clear that something is broken. To add insult to injury some of these tickets will never be sold, leaving empty patches at events such as the Olympics.

How can technology help to solve the absurdity of selling tickets of sought after events and avoid the embarrassment of empty seats? In many ways.

First of all offering controlled secondary markets where attendees that genuinely can't make it can share their tickets safely and follow specific rules. Secondly by offering smart technology solutions that look at analysing and reporting ticket sales in real time, feeding back to event planners key performance indicators about the event.

Event professionals need to be involved with secondary markets, they cannot be cut out. Empty seating is damaging to artists and performers, at the same time things happen and some attendees won't be able to make it. These are problems inherent to events. We've all faced them. Technology has to, and can, help.

2017 is the year when event professionals take ownership of secondary markets and empower attendees to exchange tickets, while monitoring in realtime what is happening with their check ins and who is showing up at the event.

Tech companies to watch:

- ➔ <https://www.seaters.com/>
- ➔ <http://www.shareapass.com/en>
- ➔ <https://www.jamplify.com/>





/3 **ARTIFICIAL CONCIERGE**

Artificial Intelligence, mostly in the form of chatbots is on the rise and securing an incredible amount of attention from developers and venture capitalists.

It is very early days for the event industry and some pioneering companies are joining the bandwagon. The applications for events are immensely valuable. With a global trend in application downloads going downhill, event mobile apps need a new approach to entice attendees and increase downloads.

No question that most attendees would prefer a Cortana, Alexa or Siri style interface instead of hundreds of options and tiny icons to navigate the different aspects of an event. "Concierge, where is this room?"; "Concierge, what is the next session that could interest me?"; "Concierge, who can I meet in this room?" - you see where we are going.

The use of having on demand information that is targeted, relevant and to the point is potentially revolutionary for the industry. Event mobile apps as we know them could disappear in favour of a much simpler interface that reacts based on our needs.

The new user experience is no user experience. No learning, no multiple screens, hundreds of options. I ask, you answer and make me discover amazing things happening around me. The beauty of AI is that it solves actionable questions, it does not overload us with irrelevant information.

In a service oriented industry, artificial concierge services, aka chatbots, have the potential to change eventtech for good. This is a trend a in development and one surely to watch in 2017.

TECH COMPANIES TO WATCH:

Chatbots is a feature that modern mobile apps will have - for a list of all the companies offering chatbots services through mobile apps, refer to the upcoming edition of the [Event App Bible - 2017](#)

/2 **TOUCHABLE TECH**

The fastest growing tech solutions in the event industry have always been touchable. As masters of the live experience, event professionals love to touch technology. Whenever there is a physical product associated with an innovative technology, the event industry goes mental.

2017 will be the year where technology with offline, touchable products will make waves. Technology we can touch offline create that connection that we need when meeting. The awkward feeling of a 100% virtual experience is specially present with older generations. Why do I need to keep looking at my smartphone screen when I have people around me? Why can we not use tangible props to facilitate interaction or engagement?

Technology in this trend encompasses very different tools. It can reflect digital signs on a t-shirt, it may consist of digitally generated handwritten notes, or offer social media styled props.

Touchable Tech are very low (simple) tech solutions that appeal to the five senses, other than making us focus on our brain and our brain alone. They make us go back to when we were kids, they activate our playfulness, they are a nostalgic cue to our life as infants. When we are toddlers touching is a much more important experience than talking and reading and is virtually unexplored as a skill.

Embrace touchable experiences. Embrace touchable tech in 2017 and your attendees will feel engaged in a new way. A more primordial experience that appeals to our hearts, before our minds.

COMPANIES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <https://www.spectacles.com/>
- ➔ <https://crowdsigns.com/>
- ➔ <http://www.broadcastwear.com/>





/1 DIVERSITY

We live in interesting times. With the world changing at a fast pace, diversity in conference line ups is a necessity rather than a hippy practice.

White male line ups are the oldest residue of very old event concepts. The worst of the worst. All white man panels are as bad as throwing glass bottles in general waste, as bad as smoking indoors, as inappropriate as driving without a seat belt. All things that have been acceptable at some stage 20 or 30 years ago but that most of civilised society has left behind.

Yet this is a very real and present problem. The tech community has finally come together to offer tools to event professionals to tackle diversity. From online pledges to diversity calculators, we are witnessing the pioneering steps of individuals that have decided to take action against injustice.

These tools are very basic and sometimes not even software based. Their message though is more powerful than any of the trends above. The problem we are tackling here is way more sizeable than what color our centerpiece will be or how attendees will see their schedule on their smartphone.

Diversifying our performer line ups means changing the way we do events. It means advancing our industry, it means changing behaviour of our attendees with a positive message. It also elevates the profession of event planners from mere executors of tasks to agents of change.

2017 is the year when diversity will be a given, not a luxury.

SERVICES TO WATCH:

- ➔ <http://aanandprasad.com/diversity-calculator/>
- ➔ <http://minimumviablediversitypledge.com/>
- ➔ <https://diversitytickets.org/>

10 TRENDS IN EVENT DESIGN

Ruud Janssen

If good design is neutral and the hallmark of great design is a smile in the mind, then what is Event Design?

Let's find out by digging into 10 examples of the direction in which Event Design is moving in 2017. By sampling innovations and citing innovators across the spectrum of worldwide events you can now discover what may happen across the event design landscape in the coming year.

If behaviour change is what creates value at events, we need to first figure out how to bring participants **"into the moment"**. Author Dave Gray reminds us to shut off our autopilot to be in the moment. The good news is, events can do this very effectively when they are well designed. On top of that, travel has the unique capacity to open up the mind, because it enables us to switch off that very autopilot.

So be in this moment and join us on a journey of exploration and discovery.

/10 **SENSE OF PLACE - HOME MEETS** **EVENT**

The best event designs play into our dear sense of belonging. Loyalty can be achieved from participants by catering to this sense of being at “home”. Home is where your family and friends are, so how do you include these in Event Design?

Consider the changes that have occurred in your home in the past years. What would those look like in your event?

We seem to come from an era where event design seemed to be synonymous with alternative room setups involving bean bags and skippy balls and changing the colour of the linens on banqueting rounds. Well It’s time to move on. 2017 is definitely the year to move on from these basic logistical alterations and approach Event Design strategically. More about that later.

But first, consider this: successful event owners are continually looking to evolve their business models and everything that comes with that. From formats to ingredients, from destinations to venues. and let’s not forget music, to satisfy our sense of curiosity.

FAR FROM FREE

Some events encourage travel from afar. Capped at 100 participants, the [Dive:Event](#), a French conference testing the limits of modern event design, literally offered a sliding scale for registration fees based on how far people have to travel to attend the event. Anyone travelling over 930 miles could attend for free. It’s all about making you feel welcome in a customer centric world.

Other events reward speed over hesitation. Progressive pricing is a yield management mechanism rewarding early bookers instead of the classic “Early bird” deadlines. The registration price incrementally increases per ticket sold to amplify the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and rewarding early adopters. This mechanism has been successfully applied to sell out the innovative [Content.NL](#) event where 75% of the registration revenue funded the [Keynote challenge](#).

The inaugural College of Extraordinary Experiences was so confident in its event design that the event owner promised a 100% Money Back Guarantee if you were not satisfied with your experience. Would you dare to do the same for your established, let alone inaugural, event?



WHAT'S ON YOUR EVENT PLAYLIST?

What tunes are playing at your event? Does your event have a Spotify or Apple Music playlist? The [Risk Management Society's 2016 conference did as](#) I'm sure many will in the near future. If not, have you considered asking your venue or vendor to create a bespoke pre-event playlist for you? Or what about [making your own music with your participants](#)? Music anchors emotion and is definitely something to keep on your innovation radar because it will be back by popular demand.

Participants are demanding from their event experiences the same comforts they find in their homes. Not just in seating and linens but more so in connectivity, food choices and networking options. Empathise with these specific needs and consider how it will change their behaviour. In a world where the little black screen has taken over the role of the formal desk in the office, work is no longer a place we go but a thing we do (in many knowledge-based professions that is).

The ability to create a smile in the mind of the stakeholders you need to delight will ultimately drive the success of your event design.





/9 **TIME SHIFTING - EVENTS (CAN EVENTUALLY) MAKE HISTORY**

The concept of time is a popular mechanism and tool used in Event Design.

Sometimes it just takes a (long) time for an event to eventually make history. Take the COP series of events to get a grip on Climate Change. After 21 years of conferences, a tipping point was reached at [COP 21 in Paris](#). The number of pre-, -post, and bilateral conferences required to align the stakes of 196 parties from 55 countries is a sign of our times. There seems to be a desire and need to meet and be heard. It takes a village to pull off an event and in this case it took over 20 years of UN negotiations to come to a binding universal agreement.

Whatever the time or time zone you choose to host your event, time travel always makes for great event design. The Back to the Future trilogy has inspired many events to do flashbacks (and forward) to enable participants [to envision the future state](#) of their organisation. Inspired themes can even lead to the creation of new products people didn't know they needed. Consider Nike & BMW's separate initiatives to launch "laceless" shoes inspired by the epic "Back to the Future II" blockbuster.

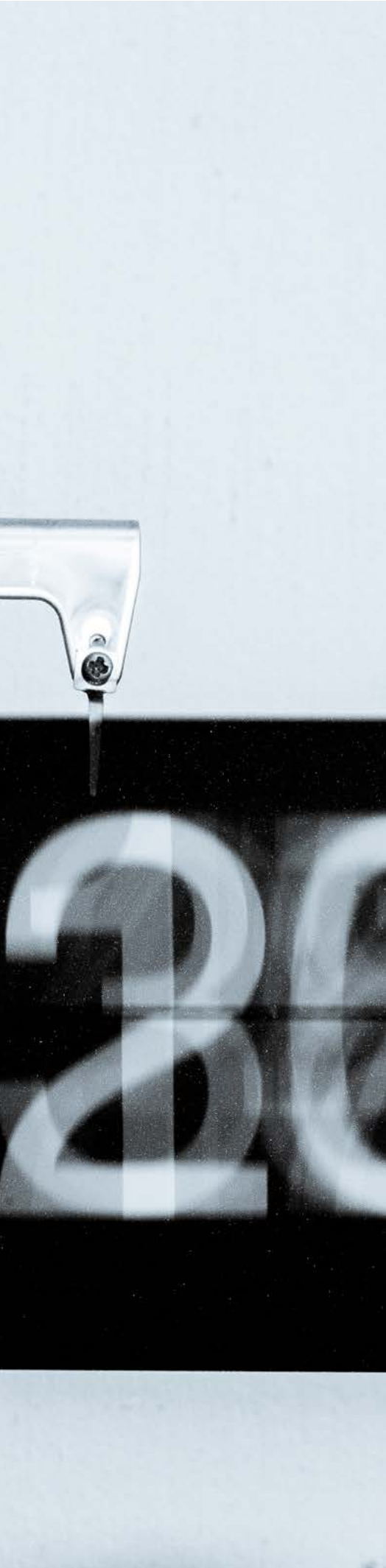
In other cases the time gap makes for interesting event design. Consider Chanel's Cruise from Florida to Cuba to celebrate restored diplomatic relations. The main [event made global](#) headlines when Chanel staged the first international fashion show since the 1959 communist revolution in Cuba on Paseo del Prado in Havana. VIP's from across the world used the iconic once in a lifetime invitation to visit Cuba for this high profile events.

Karl Lagerfeld's initiative to bring this high end fashion show into the Cuban vintage cultural richness makes for a big contrast in a country, where the Chanel collection is not even for sale. A vast majority of locals saw the event as disruptive with extreme security measures for this historic televised event. A sharp contrast of stakes where time and timing play a vital role.

Going From Reactive To Real Time

Live right here, right now. It's in the understanding of time that lies the key to future Event Design success.

The ability to code and decode in real time what is happening. Use



past experiences to prototype in real time the future scenarios for the event as it unfolds. Right here, right now, where speed is much more important than a polished production quality. This is what needs to become a core skill. A prerequisite to become the best design talent in the Event Industry. “Predictive Service Delivery” and being able to react at the speed of light is amongst the most critical assets any team can develop.

It requires a predictive Event Design mindset at all times, when creating, when delivering and when looking back. And, last but not least, with so much seriousness and gloom, let’s keep a good sense of humour to deal with challenges. Turning situations into the opposite truths really demonstrates understanding. Not just keeping up but creating the next up. Some destinations and events just get it. For those of you who may not have seen this yet check out this videoclip on the Pokemon Go Revenge made by Basel Tourism (who get it) as a counter reaction to the Pokemon augmented reality craze that was so 2016.

/8

STARTUP HACKATHON OR INDUSTRY RHINO? SIZE MATTERS

Lately everyone wants to be in a perpetual startup and lean mode. Is it the fall out of the banking crisis or does it just seem like everyone is in startup mode? In a world that is saturated by the terms “experiential” and “innovation” how do these words convert into action? What does it actually look like? When do I know that I have experienced a behaviour change?

Insecurity Checkpoint

Let's check into Industry Rhino [“Burning Man”](#) to sample some eclectic event design that sparks the imagination. Started as a bonfire ritual by 20 initiators on a San Francisco beach, burning effigies of a 9 foot wooden “man” in a spontaneous act of “radical self expression” back in 1986, this annual event has gone from startup on steroids turning into a structured non-profit in 2011. In 2016, “Burning Man” attracted 70,000 “burners” who take over Black Rock Desert and host a temporary city in the Nevada desert. The height of the “Burning Man” bonfire has grown 5 fold to 43 feet. The yearly theme for this most recent edition was “Da Vinci’s workshop”. A latest interpretation of the Vitruvian man. The cult like experience’s ultimate goal is to encourage the culture of creativity.

100,000 Pound Hand Luggage and Check Your Emotional Baggage At The Door

By [bringing your 747](#) into your event, the experiences are becoming more radical and sizeable whilst remaining conscious of the emotional baggage that every participant burns at the door.

Before passing through the “Insecurity Checkpoint” and boarding the [Indieegogo crowd sourced](#) 747 art and music project, passengers were asked to create an ‘Emotional Baggage Tag’ by writing down an answer to the question, “What baggage do you need to lose?” There is also a boarding pass component that asks, “Where are you going?” Burners write down their answers with a marker and post them up on a wall with the others.

Being able to keep your scale human and the experiences real, whatever your event size, will determine whether you are the rising star or the endangered species of events.





/7 EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES = SEE X THINK X DRAW

Live labs to create extraordinary experiences are the lifeblood of innovation. Here are 3 events that caught our attention as event designers and involved us in their conspiracy.

Intellectual Adrenaline Shot

Now that everyone has finally arrived in the Experience Economy (a term coined back in 1998 in an [HBR article by Joe Pine and James Gilmore](#) and later in their epic book) everyone knows that work is theatre and every business is a stage. When we asked him to describe how this relates to Event Design, Joe Pine states that “The best events are not merely engaging experiences, they are transformational”.

Their annual thinkAbout^{EM} is an intellectual adrenaline shot only open to Experience Economy alumni (and their guests with a special password) and delivers on its promise to be the [“dress rehearsal that will never be performed”](#). This goes to show that great event design implies that there is a distinct boundary box or frame around what the event is and isn't. Events can be made more desirable to its stakeholders when the promise is aspirational and the fear of missing out (#FOMO) gets amplified over time.

Drawing Everyone In

Unless you've been under a rock, I'm sure that by now you must have experienced what happens when visual notetaker doodles their way through a conference or event in public. Applying visuals to your Event Design Process can draw out the needs and help you prototype your event designs and ultimately see it come to life.

Indeed, people get sucked into the picture and want to take its picture, Instagram it, Tweet it, Periscope it and Facebook live stream it whilst it's being drawn. Subsequently the hashtag is on fire because visuals cater to our need to enhance our understanding and connect learning to text, images and structure.

So what? I hear you think. Well, most visual notetakers feel undervalued and that is a tremendous opportunity for innovation. Hand your participants a sketchbook and encourage them all to draw.

“The Big Draw” event in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam believes that drawing changes lives. If that isn't transformational, what is? Whilst I am not a great artist by any measure, I personally got drawn into



such an event recently because it allows anyone to contribute to their mission by organising a “Big Draw” event. Similar to how independently licensed local [TEDx](#) events liberalised TED’s ideas worth spreading back in 2009, but now for those who can and can’t (yet) draw. Starting from a collective drawing where everyone is [encouraged to contribute](#) in a huge mural in a small studio, to a fully fledged “Big Draw” event in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam which created the museum’s longest drawing (beating the size of Rembrandt’s Nachtwacht).

#CoEE - College of Extraordinary Experiences Alumni

Much like a restaurant critic, I suppose that as an event junkie, I become increasingly critical of events over time. On top of that, since becoming an entrepreneur I have committed myself to regularly going back to school. This year for four days, we left normality behind and ventured into a space that fosters creativity with no room for fear, arrogance, ridicule or distrust.

Participants at the College (staged in a Harry Potter castle where Live Role Action Play - LARP - is the medium of choice) indulged in a curriculum driven by rapid prototyping, flexible focus and co-creation. With no divide between speakers and listeners, a multidisciplinary group of 70 experts ranging from world class game designers, developers, food creators, movie producers, toymakers, LARP’ers, authors and academics were immersed in a fictional frame.

Divided into team design houses, everyone learnt the ways of the great enemy, the many-headed and powerfully destructive Design Hydra, and equipped themselves with the tools to fight it. Heads of the Hydra include not only fear and arrogance, but also conservatism, complacency and other things holding us back from staging truly extraordinary experiences.

Hard to not be curious right?

/6 CLOUD PROPHECY

From pre planning [bespoke snapchat event geofilters](#) (if you cater to the early innovators and youngsters) to sharing in the cloud. Learning does not happen in isolation and, as the black screen is omnipresent, let's inspect the digital realm up close for trends.

Cloud Notes

A good place to start is when learning is actually recorded digitally. A realtime library of learning created collaboratively by everyone in the room. So what does that look like? [Digital Festival Zurich enabled a collective notebook to grow in the cloud](#) which was shared perpetually as the festival took place.

Mix-Act-Draw

Challenge the high tech founders and Venture Capitalists to build in real time on what is being addressed and shared and [publish it as the conference comes to a close](#). This is the premise of involving an idea DJ, (Mix & Link) with cross innovation experts (Act & Think) with Visual Thinkers (Draw & Share).

Fly a Paper Airplane (Leave Your 747 at Home)

How do you organise an event for the internet on the internet without everyone having to get on a plane? InterCommunity is a sunchaser event created by the team at the Internet Society to enable a worldwide community to [connect using affordable connectivity tools](#) and creating a remarkable event that doesn't require cumulative jet lag. This event was created to test the boundaries of the Internet and its resilience when being used by many types of bandwidth across the globe. A precursor of the liberalization of online events in our not too distant future. And yes you can ask them questions by floating paper airplanes, providing you tweet the photo with #icomm16.





/5 SHARING ECONOMY AND TRADITIONAL EVENTS RUBBING SHOULDERS

Many consider sharing economy options in housing as the “release valve” when city wide conventions take up all the space, and demand exceeds supply. But beware, [Dreamforce, the Salesforce conference](#) that takes over San Francisco was surprised to learn that most economy sharing demand came from Asian and European participants, as was the case with the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

When 5,000 AirBnB hosts swarmed on Paris on the eve of last year’s terrorists attacks with their very own event, they announced that it is [business traveller ready](#) with a special offering. They are now hosting the next largest festival for hosting ever, called [AirBnB Open](#) in Los Angeles.

In a more niche segment, Zenith Watches and Uber are captured digital natives by creating the world’s first [vintage classic car sharing service](#) at the BaselWorld trade fair for watches and Jewelry. #BaselWorld visitors could order a vintage car on demand through the Uber app and arrive in style at the evening functions. The buzz around this innovation to travel for free, in a classic car, driven by styled chauffeurs, whilst having the opportunity to win an original 8,900 Euro watch seemed compelling enough to turn this service into a styling item for the brand in future.

At the College of Extraordinary Experiences, organisers picked up participants from 3 airports with costumed private chauffeurs playing bespoke audio tracks to surprise participants during the ride with audio instructions prior to arriving at the castle.

How about your event transfers, are they playing your tune or are they up for a fresh 2017 approach?

/4 Tell No One!

The unknown is a good place to start. It creates a gap between those in the know and those who have no clue. In a time with constant access to information, secrets are the magic ingredient that can catapult imaginary worlds only seen in film sets, into event reality.

Some exemplary forms like the [Secret Cinema](#) which, since launching in 2007, have sparked a flurry of experiences of forgotten pleasures by unlocking secret worlds you already know.

In the age of binge watching series on Netflix, what if your Event Design could transform your participants from passive viewers to co-creators of their very own experiences.

Which do you think creates a transformative experience?

- A.** Watching 10 episodes of Downton Abbey on Netflix
or
B. An invitation to personally leap back 100 years into a past where class and social status was everything and participants are immersed into a Nordic style LARP (live action role play) set in England around WW1.

[Fairweather Manor](#) promises 10 episodes crammed into a weekend at an Edwardian Castle. During the event, the participants leave their normal lives behind for three days and step into the lives of servants, nobles, artists and local guests at a great house during the Edwardian period.

Some very private events are keen to not just let anyone be in the know and are, for the most part, to remain a secret altogether. Allow me to spill the beans on the [Bilderberg Meeting](#). Named after the venue of its first edition at Hotel de Bilderberg in 1954, this event is keen to foster speaking and debating candidly in order for key players to say what they really think without the risk of good conversation ending up in the media. The private annual conference of 150 persons is “by invitation only” whereby all participants are so called steering committee members. The content is only known to past participants and has been strictly confidential since its inception. Mysteriously exclusive with criticism for its lack of transparency and accountability where the undisclosed nature of the proceedings have given rise to several conspiracy theories.

What secrets can you lock up in your events? Design them with the end in mind.





/3 **WHO DO I TRUST MOST?**

In a world where explicit [distrust for room block poachers](#) and [trusting a stranger with your home](#) live side by side, we are seeing some interesting developments that impact on your event design options. We came from a world where trust was implicit and it seems like there is a growing tendency where we feel a need to be explicit about trust. Trust is a basic need in the service rich industry of events, and specific offerings are growing out of this need for trust and security. Consider for a moment how safe and reliable your event promise is?

Can participants, speaker, sponsors and other key stakeholders trust what you say and do when it comes to the experience you deliver through your event? From the very first touchpoint in your marketing to the very last touchpoint of your content and experience journey, are you honest and authentic about what you deliver and how you deliver it?

Hollow promises will ultimately be unmasked by the real experience at your event. Experiences are staged, personal, memorable sensations revealed over the duration of the experience.

When you have a very clear picture of the event design you need, you will be making quick decisions on what setting is required to stage that experience. A stadium, conference centre, hotel or event venue? Or something completely different that you build from scratch? With so many options, what environment and stage do you choose to establish that necessary trust? In an everlasting quest for event organisers to create a more reliable experience, some are turning their brand propositions into turnkey solutions.

Take for example the new trend to be able to do [exclusive buy-outs of luxury resorts](#). Meetings on the water where cruise ships are chartered for a specific event or community. Or exclusive aspirational moments in silence and seclusion at [Richard Branson's hideaway Necker island](#).

Our experience economy is driving us towards creating event design sweet spots where your participants can be both passive and active at the same time. Where brands and venues are being commoditized, complete villages are now starting to collaborate to create extraordinary experiences. Wouldn't it be much more compelling if you could just [rent a full mountain village](#) complete with the mayor, local band, restaurants and hotels instead of putting on your event production from scratch. Would you be up for that?

/2 PERSONABLE + IN PARALLEL

In the race to making experiences explicitly personal, event owners and speakers are turning to more drastic measures to personalise the experience.

In a world of big, bigger, biggest for staging, events are trying desperately to remain at the forefront of innovation. The once powerfully simple TED conference, was eager to claim the bragging rights for organising the [largest collective virtual reality viewing in history](#). Different indeed, but does “watching something at the exact same time together” require you to be at the same event?

Other event owners are joining the collaborative conversation frenzy. The World Economic Forum for one, is breaking complex issues into compelling challenges in Workstudios and Workspaces. I am delighted to finally see proper [emphasis put on understanding the difference between Moderation and neutral Facilitation](#).

Silent Conference - Choose your Channel

The ability to choose is a big need for participants. What if your parallel sessions could all take place in 1 room?

Welcome to the world of participants in charge. Participants decide what to eat, what content to spend it on and zap content through multichannel presentations. [Content.NL](#) not only promised that content was driving the program, the designers also put the participants money in the pocket of the speakers that were delivering the best content in a live audition. On top of that, the runner up speakers in the parallel sessions were not hosted in separate breakout rooms. The parallel presenters were presenting simultaneously in a matrix of 2 x 2 stages repurposing regular translation audio sets to enable the participants to choose which channel to follow.

If that doesn't make you thirsty, have the crowd takeover your music experience. Heineken is allowing festival visitors to do just that [at the click of a bottle](#).

How much is your participant empowered to choose at your next event?





/1 EVERYBODY IS A DESIGNER

So who is in charge of making these experiences engaging and even transformational? You and I both know that good intent alone does not always equal a good event. The best event designs are not mere serendipitous sequences of brilliance waiting to happen.

Time, Space, Team

The best event designs are mini crowdsourcing exercises with 3 basic ingredients. First, by claiming the right amount of **time** to design prior to starting the execution. Next, successful event designers assemble a multi-talented diverse **team**. A team that is deeply involved and committed to join your event design conspiracy and able to solve the most wicked Event Design challenges. They use design thinking and doing. They use dedicated **space** and as of late, Event Designers can now apply proven visual methodologies to design their events with the end in mind.

Democratising Event Design Thinking and Doing

New methodologies are democratising Event Design for teams. In the recently published Event Design handbook a visual framework called the [#EventCanvas](#) is used to systematically design innovative events. The process is outlined with team roles in an Event Simulator Facilitation KitSM and in some instances combined with other approaches to design thinking. Innovators can even become Certified Event Designers.

Other recent initiatives we have seen include a card deck based approach for knowledge intensive events and a meeting design game to improve the planning of meetings. At the [Lego Serious Play Facilitator conference in Billund](#) we are now seeing combined approaches when prototyping using lego blocks as a common language. And we are even seeing events created to learn and experience what extraordinary experiences look like in an immersive way.

Event Design = NOT a Solo Sport

The best events are designed by teams in a collective effort using proven processes involving their stakeholders and focusing on each of the stakes and required behaviour changes. As Elling Hamso likes to say: ***“Change of behaviour is the only mechanism known to mankind that creates value in the event.”***

So equip you and your team with the powers of Event Design. Check normality and your autopilot at the door, the best events change behaviours in the desired direction of change.

Are you ready to Design your 2017 Event? Thank you for being in this moment. I can't wait to see what the future has in store!

10 TRENDS IN DESTINATION AND VENUE SELECTION

Pádraic Gilligan

It was originally coined by the US military to describe the extreme instability in destinations like Iraq and Afghanistan but, more recently, was borrowed by the Harvard guys to describe the business environment in these more recent unsteady times.

I'm talking about **VUCA**, of course, the **V**olatile, **U**ncertain, **C**omplex and **A**mbiguous market environment in which we now live and which shows no signs of abating. It's the over-riding, mega trend in destination and venue selection - and indeed across the entire events industry - as we head into the late teenage years of this new millennium.

But what other trends are emerging or re-emerging in this dynamic, ever changing, kaleidoscopic era? Here, in reverse order from 10 back to 1, are the top 10 trends in destination and venue selection for 2017.

/10 THE RISE AND RISE OF BYO

We all recall when the meetings and events community first embraced the brave new world of handheld technology. After registration you'd get in line to pick up the piece of hardware on which the latest technological development would be delivered to you – a polling keypad system to allow you vote in live polls or a matchmaking system for perfect networking. We've all heard the stories of these devices buzzing embarrassingly outside bedroom doors indicating that your work colleague was not sleeping in the room he was assigned to!

The “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) phenomenon is having a huge impact on the digital infrastructure that venues invest in, putting the focus firmly on wireless speeds and connectivity and on power supplies to facilitate easy charge of mobile devices. Many venues have signed up to this and can now deliver adequate bandwidth and speeds to exceptionally large numbers of delegates. Many, however, still have not and need to look at the digital infrastructure in award winning venues such as the Austria Centre, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre and Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre and Hotel.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the BYOD trend is from the airline industry – that great mobile venue in the sky! Many airlines now are eschewing the back seat screen in favour of offering access to their own online “infotainment” portals via high speed WiFi at 35,000 feet on your own tablet or smartphone.

The biggest implication of BYOD is, of course, on WiFi consumption and many venues are now calculating their broadband requirement at a factor of 3 times the delegate numbers (many delegates travel with a laptop, a tablet, a smartphone, a watch and maybe other wearables). Darmstadtium, a large conference venue near Frankfurt in Germany and a recent winner of the INCON award for digital infrastructure makes its calculations on such a ratio. [Darmstadtium](#) has also radically increased the easy availability of power outlets in its meetings and events space to facilitate the charging of multiple devices.

But BYOD at meetings and events is also helping to reduce meeting costs. By using audience engagement platforms on their own devices, delegates can quickly and efficiently ask questions at conferences, reducing the need for hand held microphones and, even more importantly, in-room assistances to pass them around. And, of course, we now have a plethora of clever apps to turn every smartphone into a talk-back microphone!





/9 **VENUES NOW OFFERING A TOTAL EVENT SOLUTION**

The meetings and events industry has been experiencing a kind of reciprocal colonisation over the past decade with key players along the supply chain eating into each other's traditional territories as disintermediation continues apace. Now, to secure their own positions, venues too are extending their product and service palettes beyond only selling space and AV and including services not traditionally associated with venues. Large convention centres have been doing this for some time but now smaller venues are winning business in this way too and becoming a "one-stop-shop".

[Croke Park Meetings and Events](#), a stadium venue in Dublin, Ireland, for example, offers corporate meeting and event planners a total event solution that includes AV, catering, entertainment, eventtech and activities. This makes it very easy for a corporate or association client to select the venue as the process has been simplified to one single choice offering the maximum range of services.

[Convene](#), a network of high end meetings and events venues in New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC also offers a total event solution that combines prime locations, aesthetically pleasing space, advanced technology, award winning gastronomy and bundled pricing, but it goes one step further. It anchors its business proposition in a company culture that's committed to the transformative potential of meetings.

Along similar lines, [Chateauform](#), at its unique venues around Europe (and now China), promulgates an entirely new meeting and event proposition that's rooted in a clearly articulated philosophy of the value of bringing people together to meet, connect, interact. The Chateauform' approach is way beyond transactional dates, rates and spaces by providing a fully integrated meeting and event solution designed to bring about real personal and organisational change.

/8 **EXPLOSION IN USE OF NON DEDICATED MEETING SPACES**

Changing workplace demographics are also having an impact on destination and venue selection as the “command and control” approach of the past yields to collaborative consensus. Formality has given way to informality in how communication takes place in the workplace and this, of course, is now spilling over into how meetings and events are conducted and the selection of location in which to conduct them.

While not yet entirely banished, this means the “talking head” with a massive PowerPoint deck at the top of the room is increasingly a thing of the past. It also means that venues designed with meeting rooms to maximise classroom configurations are also away with the dinosaurs. In 2017 we’ll see a further shift as traditional meeting and event locations like hotels continue to reinvent themselves and to offer casual, informal and multi-purpose gathering spaces.

This is most strikingly illustrated by reference to the veritable explosion in Sharing Economy platforms that offer new locations for new generations. Banished are the beige sterility of hotel meeting venues while the dynamic excitement of private lofts, photo studios and rehearsal rooms are decidedly in. And these spaces are being booked not just by creative types but by VC guys, medical consultants and accountants!

There’s an interesting parallel between the workspaces favoured by tech companies and start ups and the meeting spaces increasingly sought out by meeting planners today. The fixie bicycle + bean bag + hot desk + magic fridge workplace setting of, say, HubSpot is mirrored in the dockland + warehouse + exposed redbrick + high tech setting of the “new” meeting and event spaces enthusiastically chosen by today’s meeting and event organisers.

An increasingly popular global drinks brand, having identified its target audience as 25 – 35, male, well educated and discerning, likely to read Wallpaper or Monocle, stages top secret “experiential” events only in disused, unknown warehouses that it spends weeks meticulously transforming into “brand homes”. “Pop up” is decidedly “in” as planners seek to surprise and delight delegates with quirky, unusual venue selections.





/7 **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FOOD**

The explosion in the search for authenticity, a macro-trend that's increasingly influencing the selection of destinations and venues, is bringing considerations around food, its provenance and sustainability, front and centre for meetings and events organisers.

Venues are responding by hiring executive chefs from the restaurant sector and turning meal breaks into gastronomic experiences that reflect the authenticity of the destination and become fantastic talking point amongst attendees.

If you work for Google or Facebook then you're used to top quality artisan food served on demand and at no cost to you in your workplace. This fact alone is putting huge pressure on venues used for company meetings or away days – if you're out of office on a work related meeting and event then you'll expect food at least as good, if not better, than the workplace.

With clients from such companies and circles, the [WebSummit](#) knew that its food offering needed to be top drawer and "different". Thus for its last two years in Dublin, the WebSummit partnered with Good Food Ireland to create the Food Summit and thus meet two needs – provide another compelling content piece for delegates, while also delivering to them a high quality food experience.

The [Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre](#) has built its entire reputation around its food offering to the point of creating a brand "culinaria" to highlight its differentiation. Over the past number of years the centre has won numerous awards for the quality of its food and has used this fact to win conference business for the city. Other convention centres are now emulating its successes.

Many venues are also building interactive, team building style activities around their food offerings and getting chefs out of the kitchen into attendee facing roles. The Lane End Conference Centre, an upscale residential facility in the UK, even has a Cooks Academy as an integral part of its delegate programming.

/6 24/7/365 - YOU'RE ALWAYS ON!

The new technological age we live in provides us with access to limitless data and information and, essentially, makes everyone an “expert”. This applies to destination and venue selection too and means that destinations and venues need to work super-hard to ensure their web presence and online real estate are as cutting edge as they can possibly be.

In the past we relied on a carefully structured web of intermediation to deliver best-in-class service to our clients. If I worked for a corporation in Berlin but wanted to deliver an event in Barcelona I'd need at least 2 points of contact to make this happen – an event specialist in Berlin with global experience and her “ground agent” in Barcelona whom she trusted as they had worked together before.

Today with a couple of mouse clicks I can find the best lighting designer in Barcelona without any reference to a Berlin based agency and her Barcelona counterpart. The power of choice is in my hand directly and, once I've identified the players in the destination, I can cross reference my choice on social media to be sure that I've chosen wisely.

When discussing target markets with the award winning [Austria Center](#) in Vienna I discovered they host many important US conferences but do not have a US sales presence. This business is contracted “site unseen” with the meeting planner conducting all her research online and approaching the venue with substantial venue knowledge, needing minimal input as everything is presented so well on the website.

The same process applies to destination choice too with #eventprofs now expecting to find everything they need on the DMO's site. Planners will often spend a couple of days deep-diving on the official site before cross-referencing with others' experience via LinkedIn groups or other online forums.

Search and online research will become even more intense in 2017 as the supply chain becomes more and more diversified with home workers, hot deskers and road warriors working at times that suit them, from places that suit them, in ways that suit them. Juliette Glasheim, a highly experienced venue sourcer in the UK explains: ***“I have limited time to pull together a full proposal for my client. At the research stage I need key data like access,***



no. of hotel bedrooms, transport links with airport etc. If I can't find them on the DMO site, then that destination is out".

The sales and marketing director for a large stadium venue in London was pleasantly surprised at the recent IMEX show when an association planner requested a meeting and 10 minutes into the meeting confirmed a conference of 300 people.

"I did my preparation online using your website and the site of VisitLondon. Once I clarified those final matters with you face to face I was all set to confirm".





/5 **VIVE LA DIFFERENCE!**

In 2017 we'll be seeing a further shift from "globalised" tier 1 destinations to destinations with unique, unusual, different and differentiated profiles. We're moving finally from the pursuit of standardised, homogeneous experiences where destinations were chosen specifically because they were similar to our own to the search for new, unusual encounters where we come face to face with difference.

A Meeting Planner for a US based Insurance Company recently operated the company's annual conference in Taormina, Sicily. When I asked her why the destination was selected she replied that her CEO was committed to taking his qualifiers to places they couldn't easily go to on their own dollar. He believed in the difference that travel experiences can make when folks are taken out of their comfort zones.

Another striking example of this phenomenon was Wikipedia's choice of a [remote Italian town](#) for Wikimania, their annual gathering of global contributors to their sites. They took over Esenio Lario in the Valsassina Valley near Lecco in Northern Italy, tearing up the rule book for conference and event organisation in the process, but making a destination selection entirely based on the belief that interaction between people from different countries and backgrounds is fundamentally good, promoting good relations through diversity. Living out, in fact that powerful Mark Twain dictum ***"Travel is the enemy of bigotry"***.

The same philosophy influenced the destination choice for a UK financial services firm that brought 30 clients and their partners to Morocco. They spent 2 nights in a 5 star hotel in Marrakech but then did a night under the stars at a desert location with no electricity and included a traditional tea ceremony with a Berber family in the programme. Everyone loved the unabated luxury at the 5 star Mandarin Oriental hotel but the lasting memories were generated by the visit to the remote mountain villages where a truly different lifestyle was encountered.

Innocent, the UK based smoothie company with a conscience, has been disrupting the notion of corporate meetings and get-together for some years now and continued their pursuit of "different strokes for different folks" with an inspiring festival theme in 2016 that took their entire workforce and invited bloggers and guests for a "weekend off the grid". It was called ***"Innocent Unplugged"*** and that's just what it was: no phones, no internet, just human, face to face connectivity.

/4 LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

The word “authentic” and its derivations appear frequently in this trends report. That’s because it’s an over-arching trend, defining behaviours in society at large and, obviously, trickling down to impact the meetings industry too. In relation to destinations and venues it’s a priority filter that’s applied from the outset but, more and more these days, is defining all choices in the meeting or event planning process.

The search for authenticity is even impacting on large city wide conferences and having some unintended positive consequences for budget too. A large European city-wide event recently selected London as its host destination but, instead of organising shuttle transfers to and from the convention centre they provided delegates with Oyster Cards for the super-extensive London transport system. Result: a huge saving on conference budget, a super-efficient mass transfer of delegates (can you imagine coaches negotiating rush hour traffic in London?) and a unique, authentic delegate experience in the city. For 4 days, they lived like Londoners!

Sharing economy platforms like airbnb are tapping into this current obsession with authenticity by helping visitors to destinations to “live like a local”. When airbnb organised its own European hosts conference in Paris last year they wanted a special destination experience and worked with Vizeat, the platform that offers shared dining experiences, to send over 1,000 delegates to Parisian homes to experience a home hosted evening with locally sourced and cooked food.

But the focus on “living like a local” is also central to the new, emerging philosophy around a city’s investment in large venues. Previously cities invested in convention centres in order to attract overseas conference delegates and often these centres were constructed on sites far away from the life of the city itself. But the ICC Sydney, a hugely ambitious convention centre project that opened in December 2016, is located at the beating heart of the city. According to the architects, Hassel + Populous, a key driver of the project was to provide a nexus point for visitors and locals to meet and interact.





/3 **RISE IN SECOND AND THIRD TIER DESTINATIONS**

There's a nice symbiosis between the availability of airlift into previously "off line" destinations and our third trend – the substantial rise of second and third tier destinations. This is being driven by many factors.

Capacity issues in tier one cities, particularly in the US where demand has outstripped supply for a few years now, is causing #eventprofs to look beyond the tried and tested to discover the delights of Raleigh or Tampa or Oklahoma City. Demand in tier one cities like Chicago, San Francisco and New York is also pushing up prices, another compelling reason to look beyond these usual suspects.

But it's not all about capacity and price. There's a change in the zeitgeist too that leaves delegates ready for new and different experiences and open to check out the paths less travelled.

Always ahead of the herd, Google brought its EMEA meeting to Killarney in the South West of Ireland, some years ago having eliminated several mainstream European cities from the selection process. Getting there involved planes, trains and automobiles but the destination experience inspired more stories and forged more connections than any previous event.

Subaru, the Japanese automotive company, passed up on Chicago, San Francisco and Miami for its recent Annual Business Conference and instead choose Indianapolis as it offered "something new" along with great infrastructure and affordable rates.

The availability of low cost carriers on routes has been a key factor in destination selection for the association sector for many years. With delegates at association conferences generally paying registration, accommodation and air out of their own pockets, the presence of a low cost airline always boosts delegate numbers.

While the corporate meeting and incentive sector has tended to despise the low cost | poor service model that too is changing now and will continue to do so in 2017. Low cost carriers are now proactively targeting the MICE sector with the launch of a business and group product and that's set to have a big implication on destination selection.

Low cost carriers are now opening up access to hitherto untrodden paths, particularly around Europe where Ryanair, EasyJet, Vueling and others have grabbed so much market share and are connecting meetings and incentive participants to multiple second and third tier destinations.

/2

IT'S ALL ABOUT INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL, NOT PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Destinations have now transitioned from feature slinging to benefit highlighting as, finally, they learn Marketing 101. For decades, destinations have pushed physical infrastructure as their key reason for selection ***“we have an humongous convention centre and a big ass hotel, bring your event here!”***

Now there's a realisation that physical infrastructure is a sine qua non – if you haven't got it, you shouldn't be in the business at all! These days smart destinations are telling folks exactly how smart they are i.e. they're touting their credentials as intellectual capitals and attracting meetings and events business as knowledge hubs.

Vancouver in Western Canada was one of the first cities to take this new approach to destination marketing positioning itself as a highly diversified urban economy with “growing knowledge-based sectors and strong global links”. In messaging it further underlines the contribution of its universities to global research and sets out its key industry sectors as Life Sciences, Digital Media & Tech, Forestry, Fishing and Mining.

This approach plays in the “only do what only you can do” space - other destinations have great convention facilities, hotels and access but ONLY Vancouver has expertise in the highlighted industry sectors so this now becomes the compelling reason for selection.

Australian cities, too, have been vaunting their destinations as knowledge hubs for some time. Melbourne, in particular, has been joining the dots between various state agencies - tourism, FDI, education etc - to market the city as a knowledge incubator and attract inward investment, overseas students and conference delegates there on that account.

Smaller, emerging destinations are catching on too. The capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, recently launched itself on the meetings and events marketplace with the tagline “Surprisingly Close, Exceptionally Smart” supporting its campaign with futuristic images from the high tech VW plant rather than its mediaeval castle. When it comes to mediaeval castles, you see, Bratislava competes with Prague, Tallinn, Ljubljana and a host of other fairytale like cities. The best-in-breed manufacturing and assembly that takes place at the VW plant, however, is unique to the city and therefore sets it apart.





/1 **MAKE IT SAFE**

The terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 and subsequent attacks in Brussels, Nice and Istanbul in 2016 make SAFETY the key priority in destination and venue selection for 2017. Since the early 1990s corporations have been including their Health and Safety team in deliberations over destination selection but now these guys are front and centre, often making the final call. By nature Health and Safety people are super-cautious and this is steering many corporations away from high profile cities.

One US insurance company, for example, having decided some time ago to go to France, chose Bordeaux over the more high profile Paris and Nice as a safer, more off the beaten path option. The cost of another flight was compensated for by less expensive hotel accommodation and cheaper in-destination activities so there was no negative budgetary implication.

Another global enterprise that often brings its top qualifiers to bucket list destinations like Machu Picchu in Peru or Kruger Park in South Africa has elected to take the 80 strong group on a European River Cruise as a means of mitigating risk and keeping participants in a more controllable environment.

But there are also the pioneers and outliers who buck the trend. Having confirmed Paris as the destination for its 2016 meeting Dan Young, Senior Meeting Planner at Thrivent Financial in Minneapolis went ahead with the event, determined not to allow random acts of terrorism interfere with their plans or their commitment to the destination.

Trends in the meetings and events industry will always reflect macro and micro realities, i.e. happenings, occurrences, phenomena both external and internal to the natural confines of our industry. Huge, macro geopolitical matters will always dominate and then when these matters impact directly on attendees, as in the case of real concerns around personal security and safety, then these trends will tend to rise to the top. Thus in this VUCA world of ours characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, safety is our top trend for 2017.

10 TRENDS IN EVENT SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Nick Borelli

Trends in social media marketing for events have less to do with new technologies and everything to do with content creation strategy. Events can no longer rely on just one person to reach all your goals. As events are inherently a team effort, so is social media engagement of attendees. These are the 10 most powerful digital marketing strategies being used by the most progressive events today.

/10 **BE ENTERTAINING TO BE HEARD**

Most people do not go to social media sites in order to make a direct purchase. Especially on destinations such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, users intend to be entertained. This is why, in general, social media is not often a fruitful place to hard sell. A strategy that continues to increase long-term effectiveness is to incorporate entertainment into your campaign strategies. While you are asking yourself if your messages are speaking to the right personas, on-brand, and actionable - make sure they are fun.

Mimic User Behavior

Most event marketers are not paying enough attention to how their attendees communicate on social media. Emoji, .gifs, and Snapchat lenses might seem silly to you but major brands are finding success in these [lighter ways to communicate](#).

Contests

Online contests can drastically increase engagement through behavior modification. Steer clear of contests based on likes and comments because they are easy to cheat and are not very creative. Instead, consider [contests for registering for your event or a specific sponsored presentation](#).

Contests centered around 3rd party content creation are also both valuable and fun. Ask previous year's attendees to submit creative videos explaining why they love attending your event. Incentivize strategically to meet your goals.

Use Your Personalities

Show how fun the team behind the scenes of your events are by embracing whimsy and remembering that events are celebrations. Look at Halloween, April Fool's Day, and funny online holidays and prepare content for your calendar that gives your team an opportunity to let their [unique personalities shine](#).





/9 **ON-SITE CONTENT CREATION**

Digital content creation during live events can no longer be ad hoc or reactive. Just as there are timelines for your audio visual team, caterers, and entertainment, you also need to storyboard your event for content creation toward your marketing goals. In order to meet your upcoming marketing goals, determine the pieces of collateral you would use over the course of a year and what pieces you need from the event in order to create those campaigns.

Branded Designs

This year's Dreamforce event from Salesforce featured the [best branded collateral](#) I've seen for a live event. Design for daily announcements including lunch being served, contests, and sponsor acknowledgements were created and scheduled. Complimentary design templates for speaker quotes and even the day's weather were created and were then edited and published during the event for seamless integration of branded messaging.

Daily Video Wrap-Ups

For multi-day events, nothing is more engaging to reinvigorate an audience than a dynamic [wrap-up video](#) featuring moments from the previous day. Shoot B-roll of show floor movement, ask key stakeholders about what they learned, include clips of presenters, and remember to show plenty of crowd shots of attendees having fun. These videos are engaging during an event and very impactful once released online for attendees to share with their followers.

Sponsor Content

Your content creation team needs to get photos and video of your [sponsors' contributions](#) to your event. Publishing this content gives your most important stakeholders added value and are also highly likely to be shared by their teams.

/8 **STAKEHOLDER GENERATED CONTENT**

Events are being asked to do more with the same budget due to the increased number of channels required to market to potential attendees. In order to compete competitively everyone who invests time and money into the success of the event should be leveraged for marketing purposes. Every speaker, sponsor, exhibitor, and contributing supplier of an event should be given branded collateral, copy, and coaching on ways they can draw attention to the goals of your event.

Suggested Tweets

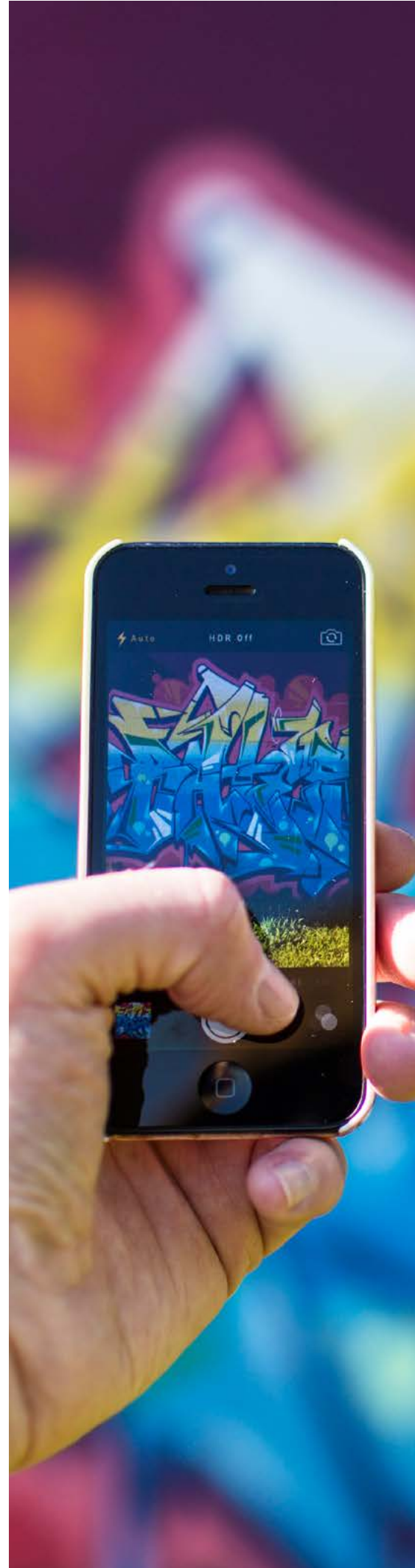
Send [suggested copy for social media](#) to stakeholders of the event. This makes it easy to copy and paste the content to social media and increase the conference's reach to like-minded followers of speakers and sponsors.

Official Banners

The NFOC Conference for Communications Technologies [created impactful branded social media images](#) optimized for each platform and issued to stakeholders to show off their position at the conference. Trade show exhibitors were given banners with their booth numbers while sponsors were given images that displayed their contribution levels. This strategy makes it very easy for those contributing to your event to seem like coordinated extensions of your marketing efforts and to reach an extended network.

Presenter Twitter Q&A

Events like the CRTC Content Discoverability Summit leveraged their speakers in their marketing while creating valuable content through [Q&A sessions on Twitter](#) leading up to their events. These scheduled Twitter events tease the topic being presented at the event and build anticipation.





/7 **NEWSJACKING**

Newsjacking is a high risk, high reward social media engagement strategy that leverages the subject of breaking news and injects your brand's message into the story while it's still hot. Since the topic is something high on people's minds, engagement can be very high but misjudging how to properly incorporate your messaging into the story takes exceptional intuition and understanding of the story being leveraged. Especially when it comes to marketing one annual event three hundred and sixty five days a year across multiple channels, newsjacking offers an opportunity to create content that is highly engaging in order to reduce the likelihood of messaging fatigue for potential attendees.

Politics

While political issues often dominate news cycles, they are incredibly polarizing and could come back to haunt you over time. If you are comfortable enough with the subject matter, [bi-partisan messages that](#) are above the fray have a chance to succeed without the negative drawbacks.

Entertainment

These are the least risky and easiest types of stories to tap into. [Sports especially provide opportunities](#) for event brands to co-opt excitement. Pay attention to the trending topics on social media and entertainment news sites and determine where the overlap is within these stories and your event.

Issues

News items around issue-based news are often even more of a tight rope walk than politics. Avoid jumping on the latest issue based hashtag unless you completely understand the intentions. Sticking to [issues that are central to your brand](#) is just as important because it is easy to turn people off with disingenuous messaging.

/6 VIDEO FIRST

All social media outlets are transitioning to video as their priority over all other content. Facebook, Twitter and Google are all prioritizing the placement of where their video tools are because that's where consumers are driving them. Photos and words are not nearly as powerful as video when marketing experiences but many event producers have resisted embracing video, even as their attendees embrace it more and more.

Facebook Live

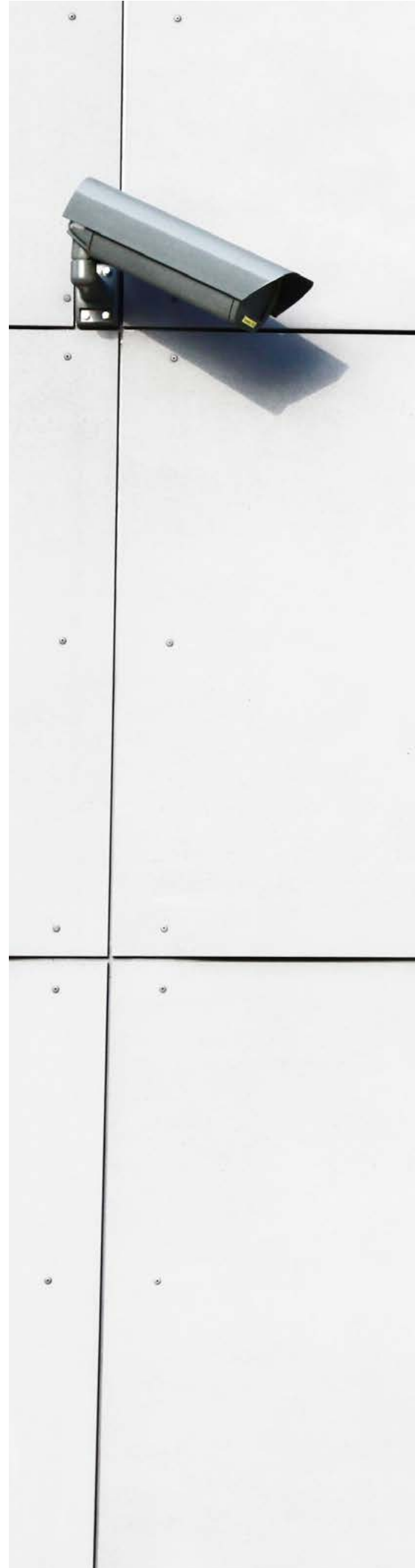
Dedicated live streaming portals still have their place because of sponsorship opportunities and web embedding but these are both rumored to be coming to Facebook Live as well. What [Facebook Live](#) has over traditional streaming right now is access to their network's users that can be reached organically or to a greater extent through paid targeting. Presenter Q&As, FOMO moments, and fireside chats are perfect for Facebook Live. The optimal engagement length for Facebook live videos is between 10 and 20 minutes which is even more exciting because it's the longest sustained engagement sweet spot in social media right now.

Snapchat

[Snapchat strategies](#) for events require a personality as the guide to your event from behind the scenes to the red carpet. No other video engagement opportunity is designed better than Snapchat for in the moment coverage of events. Instagram Stories is also being explored by many brands.

Video Testimonials

It's a crime to not capture testimonials from attendees and stakeholders while they are at the height of excitement around your event. The emotional connections that can be made from [seeing and hearing from those involved with the event](#) while they are in the midst of the event can be powerful collateral in which to build a drip campaign for your next event.





/5 **SOCIAL PROOF CONTENT**

From shopping on Amazon, where to eat via Yelp and to choosing what to watch on Netflix, consumers make decisions through testimonials. While a faceless quote with a first name and last initial might have been the norm for event website recommendations, attendees want 3rd party, peer-written information before they make decisions.

Social Media Wall

Part of the digital strategy for the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission Content Discoverability Summit included [social media walls in every room](#) of this multi-track and multi-day event. Social media walls act as a behavior modifier that spurs attendee content contributions. These screens ensured that the event's official hashtag became the number one trending topic in Toronto for two days straight.

Event Ambassadors

Creating an event ambassador program leverages the 3rd party credibility of individuals who can influence others to attend while humanizing your brand. When putting together this team, aim for diversity and a representative of each buying persona you are marketing to. Think about whether you should choose ambassadors located in the host city for their local influence or [ambassadors from a mix of locations](#).

Moderated Social Media Website Embedding

Utilities to embed third-party social media content you've cultivate from various channels can give your website a testimonial section with verifiable merit. Events like the ASCAP EXPO in Los Angeles have dedicated a page of [attendee social media generated quotes](#) that let people know what to expect before they sign up for the next year's event.

/4 **ACCOUNT TAKEOVERS**

Having your event brand's social media temporarily "taken over" by a specific individual brings a lot of added benefits, not the least of which is an authentic voice. This is a strong form of influencer marketing as well because the contributor will likely bring their audience to your brand's account too.

Choosing who will take over your account is an important decision. A few things to consider are: their knowledge of your goals, understanding of your audience and brand guidelines, their strengths and credibility on the platform they are taking over.

Founder

If your event has a founder who is engaging, unique, and credible with your base, consider giving them the reins of your account for a day or week. Content Marketing World's founder, Joe Pulizzi, is an excellent example of an engaging leader who explains what his day is like and why he loves what he does.

Diversity

One of the biggest drawbacks to event brands having a singular voice is that it never reflects the sensibilities of all of your attendees. Cleveland.com's coverage of the Republican National Convention featured a [Snapchat take over](#) by personalities from all over the US with their own loyal followers. Having your brand's social media channels curated by those from different backgrounds, ages, and interests will help you connect with different segments of your fans.

Youth Demographic

If your event has content that particularly speaks to or impacts those between 13 and 20, consider a teen takeover on Snapchat. This will give attendees a totally different perspective from an emerging influencer and will lend credibility to those followers who dominate Snapchat. [TEDxLSU gave the reigns of their account to a high school student](#) resulting in a totally different take on their presenters and the overall event.





/3 DEMOGRAPHIC-BASED MULTI-CHANNEL STRATEGIES

As digital engagement evolves, different groups with different expectations have found their primary home for very specific reasons. Knowing your audience isn't enough, you have to know and plan for a number of different consumer personas and write unique strategies for each.

Younger Attendees

Modern attendees are the vanguard of the latest in event trends because they adopt early. Much is written on how to uniquely communicate to them through Snapchat, text alerts, and gamification strategies. [Bonaroo created a lot of FOMO through Snapchat this year](#) by giving an audience that craves behind the scenes raw content a window into the festival.

Alumni

Keeping your repeat attendees coming back each year deserves its own strategy. The CodeMash event [treats returning attendees like VIPs](#) by giving them access to register before anyone else, badges that say alumni, and access to an exclusive networking event by way of email segmentation. While they may feel that coming back to you again will have a diminished return, reminding them of the previous year's best moments (such as Throwback Thursday posts on social media) will use nostalgia to your benefit.

Traditionalists and Late Adopters

Even if you invested in the newest social media, a comprehensive event app, and beacons you should also let those late to adopt know that your event caters to them as well. The [Austin City Limits Music Festival](#), for example, makes heavy use of Facebook and email because it has a more age diverse audience makeup than many of the larger festivals in the US.

/2 DATA OVER GUT

Not only is it no longer an option for events to sell exhibitors and sponsors on participating in their event without data, attendees are now demanding data before they are willing to register. Stats like percentage of exhibitor types, educational topics discussed, and attendance increases let attendees know if the event is a good fit. Your elevator speech should include analytical data because those recommending you (or not) already are.

Identify Influencers

Using [social media analytics tools](#), you can determine who posted about your event the most, who has the greatest influence amongst your attendees, and who can reach the largest number of impressions. This data can be used for influencer marketing campaigns as well as determining who could be part of your event ambassador team.

Infographic Wrap-Up

An [infographic that proves the value for attendees and different stakeholder types](#) is an invaluable sales and marketing piece for your event if backed up by real data. Include the bottom-line driven statistics like exhibitor closing percentages (obtained through post event surveys) as well as big picture numbers like carbon footprint and wellness initiative results.

Executive Summary

Often times, your attendees need to prove to their superiors that attending your event is best for the company. Creating black and white data-driven tools that potential attendees can use to sell participation in your event to executives increases their likelihood for closing. Make sure your event webpage has an [impactful 'Why Attend' page](#). Create copy and collateral they can easily email or use in a meeting to sway a decision.





/1 FOMO

or ear fissing it is the driving force for event attendance right now. In an increasingly experienced-based economy being driven by a younger generation investing less in material positions and more on events and travel, competition for their time has become fierce. Personal metrics on social media such as post likes and comments are motivating consumers to share their experiences with their friends and followers. Whichever events have the most shareable moments gain the most traction because they are being pushed to new potential attendees who feel left out of the excitement.

Niche Celebrities

Knowing your audience is everything when creating FOMO moments that will likely be shared through social media. The autograph has been replaced by the selfie and taking pictures with individuals who have credibility within a community offer enviable experiences.

Giant Props and Backdrops

For attendees to want to include elements of your marketing into their shared photos across social media, you have to create obvious photographic backdrops that contextualize an experience they are having in a way that a photo without the props would not. A trend within CVBs right now are giant letters with the name of a city or campaign around the city that move to different locations for different events.

Build Anticipation

Every single element of your event benefits from asking the question: "Do attendees have another opportunity to experience this somewhere else?" Even the catering can benefit from FOMO's impact by creating faux food trucks of your own design only available once and never again.

/ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Julius Solaris

Julius Solaris is the editor of EventManagerBlog.com. Started in 2007, EventManagerBlog.com is the number one blog worldwide for event professionals, covering topics such as event planning, social media and events, event technology and event trends.

He has been named one of 25 most influential individuals in the Meeting Industry in 2015 by Successful Meetings Magazine.

Julius is also the CEO of Showthemes.com a premium event WordPress theme shop with thousands of customers around the world.

Julius is the author of The Event App Bible, The Good Event Registration Guide, Event Trends, Social Media for Events, Engaging Events and The Venue of the Future. These books show the results of unprecedented research efforts into eventtech. More than 100,000 readers have downloaded these resources.

In 2008, Julius started the Event Planning and Event Management LinkedIn Group. Now with more than 330,000 members a team of 12 moderators, it has become the de-facto largest gathering of event professionals online.

Julius is a speaker for the event industry. Events he has spoken at include CIC Conclave, Global Event Forum, Meeting Innovation Summit, Event Tech Live, EventHeroes, HSMAI Annual meeting, Event Solutions 2014, Confex 2014, EIBTM 2013, Event Technology Conference, IMEX Las Vegas, Dubai ISES talks, Tech Fest 2013, Cvent's Corporate Meeting Summit 2013, Event Tech Circus Amsterdam, event 13, SMAU 2013, MPI Belgium Conference, EIBTM Barcelona, IMEX Frankfurt, Social Media Week Milan 2012, SMAU 2012 and he's been returning guest lecturer for Dublin City University's Business School, Amsterdam Inholland University and Westminster University.

Before becoming a 100% dedicated blogger and speaker, he worked as Social Media Consultant for FTSE250 companies in the UK. His last campaign won Econsultancy's The Digitals for Best Multichannel Marketing Campaign.



Ruud Janssen

Switzerland based Entrepreneur Ruud Janssen, CMM, DES (1970) has been an innovator and game changer in the Hospitality and Meetings & Events Industry since 1994.

Ruud is the founder of TNOC The New Objective Collective, a creative collective of visual thinkers, moderators and specialists at the intersection of communication, technology and strategy.

He is also the co-creator of the Event Canvas with Roel Frissen with whom he founded the EventCanvas.org Foundation and Event Model Generation (the event design consulting & training firm). He wrote the EVENT DESIGN handbook with Roel Frissen and Dennis Luijter aimed at creating a common language for Meetings & Events.

He is an active member of PCMA Professional Convention Management Association, Internet Society, Cornell Hotel Society as well as MPI Meeting Professionals International. For MPI he has served as a certified MPI Global Trainer, MPI Chapter Chairman in the Netherlands and on the International Board of Directors for MPI Meeting Professionals International. He is currently active on the Advisory Board for the Virtual Edge Institute and a long time jury member of the IBTM World Technology & Innovation Award.

Ruud speaks English, Dutch, French and German. He is a sought after speaker and facilitator around the world and has authored a number of publications and research papers on Event Design, Event ROI, Virtual and Hybrid Events and Event Innovation. Having lived and worked around the globe he can relate to the everyday challenges faced by professionals when innovating and organising events across complex decision making units for Corporate, NGO's, Government and Association clients.



Pádraic Gilligan

With his business partner Patrick Delaney, Pádraic is currently Managing Partner at SoolNua, a boutique marketing consultancy helping destinations, hotels and venues with marketing, strategy and training for the MICE marketplace. Prior to founding SoolNua, Gilligan was Vice President of Ovation, MCI's global DMC network and Vice President of Industry Relations at MCI.

He has written and spoken all over the world on many aspects of meetings and events, regularly contributing to SITE, MPI, FICP, ICCA, IACC, ADMEI and other industry bodies. Areas of interest include Workplace Culture, Digital Marketing, Branding and Service Marketing. His interests in these areas and in destinations in general are reflected in his award winning blog which may be accessed on www.padraicino.com. He also blogs regularly on destinations and venues at EventMB.

Gilligan holds BA and MA degrees in Italian and English literature from University College Dublin and a post graduate diploma in Marketing from Boston College.

Following a 13 year career in education, teaching at second and third levels, he started Delaney Marketing Consultants in 1994 with Patrick Delaney. In 2002 Delaney Marketing acquired Ovation and re-branded as Ovation Group. In June 2007 Ovation was acquired by MCI Group and commenced a robust global expansion programme which saw the establishment of offices at 100 global destinations under the Ovation Global DMC brand.

In 2004 he was elected to the International Board of the SITE and served as international President of this global organisation in 2008. He has won many awards including Industry Personality of the Year from Meetings.net in 2009 and Destination Management Professional of the Year from ADMEI in 2012. He currently serves as a Trustee of the SITE Foundation.



Nick Borelli

Nick Borelli, President and Strategist of Borelli Strategies, has been in the event industry since he was 14 years old. He specializes in digital marketing strategies through consulting, coaching, and brand communication management for events and event companies.

Nick has been awarded CBC Magazine's Networking Star of the Year, Smart Business Magazine's Social Media Impact Award, and the ISES Ohio WOW Award for Best Marketing Campaign over \$75,000. In 2015, Nick was selected by Special Event Magazine as one of the 25 Top Young Professionals to watch.

He has held multiple positions with the International Live Events Association (ILEA) including Chair of Digital Strategy, Midwest Brand Champion, ISES Live Conference Technology Chair as well as Cleveland Chapter VP of Communication and President. Nick is the Chair of Public Relations and Marketing for the SEARCH Foundation and speaks internationally on marketing for small businesses. Follow him on Twitter and Snapchat - NickBorelli.

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