Engaging & Activating
Event Attendees

A comprehensive guide to executing
successful meetings & events in the digital age

mci
Buil*d*ing Community

About MCI

MCI is an independent, privately held company with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and offices in 60 cities across 31 countries in Europe, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, India and the Middle East and Africa.

We help clients to engage with their target groups to activate them and to build their key communities. We believe in the power of face-to-face interactions and also embrace the digital world to ensure a seamless fusion between online and offline.

Since 1987 we have worked with leading international associations and global companies.

At MCI, we believe that when people come together, magic happens.

We are specialists at advising how to strategically build communities, executing live and online programmes to the highest standard and measuring the performance and impact of these events and projects. Every year we deliver more than 4,500 events and projects that grow membership and attendees, foster change, inspire target groups and educate audiences all over the world.

Understanding people, their drivers and how to build communities are the DNA of our company.

Methodology

To gather insights and tips for this paper, we combined the knowledge of MCI's global meetings and events team with a number of marketing and event experts from leading global companies.

Strategic Consulting

Association Consulting & Asset Development	Community & Experience Management	Strategic Event Management	Communication & Marketing

Solutions

Association & Community	Events & Production	Conferences & Exhibitions	Meetings & Incentives
Association Management & Consulting (AM&C)	Audio Visual Services & Technology	Exhibition & Sponsorship	Destination Management Services (DMC)
Community Management	Brand Experiences	Registration & Housing	Incentive Programmes
	Cultural Events	Global Congress Management (PCO)	Meetings & Conferences
	Production & Staging Events	Revenue & Audience Management	Strategic Meeting Management

Capabilities

Analytics	Content	Creative	Digital	Sustainability
Event & Expo Impact	Advocacy	Concept	Apps	Audit
Insight & Research	Public Affairs	Multimedia	Digital Marketing & Social Media	Content Development
Lead Management	Public Relations	Show Production	Gamification	Measurement
Sponsorship Analysis	Story Telling	Visual Identity	Online Community	Program Management
	Thought Leadership		Web Design	

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Glossary:
Engagement & Activation

The concepts of 'engagement' and 'activation' are core to this paper, so it's important to define exactly what we mean by these key terms.
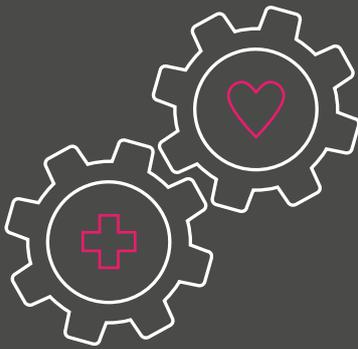
Engagement Someone is actively processing your message with both rational and emotional means.

Activation Giving people the tools and opportunity to act upon the message.

Engagement is all about actively processing messages. An engaged person is someone who is actively processing key messages, through both rational and emotional means.

Activation is about acting upon those messages An activated person is someone who wants to act upon these messages and who has been given the tools and the opportunities to do so.

Introduction
Face-to-Face Still Matters

When the words 'virtual' and 'digital' started floating around the meetings world, many worried that the need for live interaction would soon be greatly reduced.

Others gravely predicted that face-to-face events would become a thing of the past entirely, destined to the same fate as the fax machine or the once-loved mixtape.

Then there were the technophobes. They buried their heads in the sand, prayed that the new tech tools were just a gimmick and hoped that 'going hybrid' (whatever that meant) would never really catch on. Of course, those new technologies did catch on – and they caught on quickly.

"Face-to-face events – from events for 2,000 people to 10 people - are critical to our business success around the globe."

Amanda Whitlock
Global Strategic Events Leader EY

For the past decade, technology and the internet have been reshaping the events industry in dramatic ways and the technophobes have been left playing catch up.

But the pessimists who worried that live events were on their way out were also way off the mark.
In 2016, it's clear that face-to-face engagement still matters. And it matters more than ever.

While virtual meetings and digital touchpoints are becoming more and more important, they're not replacing face-to-face events; they're complementing them.

In fact, increased digital engagement is actually fuelling the desire for us to meet face to face, and online communities are being taken offline with great momentum.

At the same time, technology is activating even attendees to share their experiences online. Social media is taking some events 'viral' and spreading brand messages way beyond those who attended in person.

This paper shares the latest insights, real life examples and tips for meeting planners, event managers and marketing directors to successfully engage and activate their event attendees in this landscape – both online and offline - through the full lifecycle of their meetings and events.

"You can do a lot with digital, and the rise of digital means that people are really connected, but I think this even fuels the need for people to then want to meet the people behind some of those conversations. Meeting face to face creates a connection that you can't get from any other sort of medium. I don't think that will ever go away."

John Smith *Marketing Director, Large pharmaceutical company*

Our Theory:
Strategy Vs Execution

If you're an event manager, meeting planner or marketing director, you're probably got at least one event in the pipeline, and you're no doubt juggling a number of competing priorities.

With so much to do, it's easy to focus on the operational details of events – after all, the show must go on and an event can't take place if you don't find a venue, organise catering or book in the speakers.

Then there's the added pressure of 'being innovative'. With new event technologies and creative techniques popping up daily, it's difficult not to make hasty decisions based on the latest trends and tools. Because of these pressures, a lot of event managers start organising logistics before they've clearly defined what they want to achieve from their event.

While the temptation to jump straight in is understandable, this is one sure fire way of missing out on maximising the full potential of your event.

Creativity is not enough

Another common mistake is to focus on creativity above all else: using new methods, new performers, the latest trends and out-there technologies to dazzle your audience.

Sure, creativity and out-of-the-box thinking are vital when it comes to events, but an event should never be designed simply with the objective of 'being creative.'

All too often, events are extremely creative, with impressive stages and great entertainment in addition to outstanding logistics. But this doesn't necessarily mean that they will drive business results.

More often than not, these events fail because their strategy was weak, creativity distracted from key messages rather than supported them, objectives were not clearly defined and the audience was not successfully engaged or activated.

" 'Being creative' should never be your final objective. However, if you want to show the media that your company is financially strong, prove to customers that you're the most innovative brand in your industry, or inspire your employees with your new vision - then yes, creativity can be a great way to achieve those specific goals."

Antoine Painot *Director Meetings & Events MCI Geneva*

Too much strategy, not enough execution!

While jumping head first into logistics isn't advisable, you can also be faced with the opposite problem.

Here at MCI, we work with a wide range of corporate companies, delivering over 5,100 meetings and events in over 80 countries for corporate clients in 2015 alone, including 85 of the Fortune 500.

The companies we work with are incredibly diverse, from pharmaceutical industry giants to the smallest tech start-ups. As you can imagine, each of these companies faces their own very unique challenges. Yet time and again, we stumble across a common challenge: the inability to bridge the gap between strategy and execution.

So much time, energy and money is being spent on getting strategy just right, but across the board we're hearing that companies are struggling to turn those strategies into action.

Your company might have the best and most innovative strategy in your industry, but if you don't have the right people, tools, programmes or techniques to implement this strategy, then you'll never see the desired results.

When executed correctly, events are one of the most efficient and effective ways of translating business strategy into results. But getting it right isn't always easy.

To help our teams, we've developed a simple formula to show the necessary balance between strategy and execution:

$$R = S \times E \times A$$

Results   Strategy   Engagement   Activation

Execution

The following two scenarios break it down:

Scenario 1: Spectacular strategy, mediocre execution

You've developed an incredible marketing or event strategy. It's innovative, it's daring and it's in line with your organisational objectives. It's a perfect fit for your brand and it's endorsed by the C suite. It's a 10 out of 10! However, when it comes down to executing this strategy, something goes wrong. Execution is weak, and you score only 5 out of 10 for both engagement and activation.

Results: Strategy x Engagement x Activation
250 =   10 x 5 x 5

$$R = S \times E \times A$$

Out of a potential 1000, you only achieved 250

Scenario 2: So-so strategy, incredible execution

Your strategy has been cobbled together quickly due to time issues. You feel as if it's not quite there, but you don't have time to revise it. Overall, it's a 5 out of 10.

However, in terms of execution, everything runs like clockwork. Your engagement and activation are both 10 out of 10.

Results: Strategy x Engagement x Activation
500 =   5 x 10 x 10

$$R = S \times E \times A$$

Out of a potential 1000, you've achieved 500

Execution trumps strategy

We're not saying that strategy isn't important. It is. In fact, it's the first building block to event success. What we're saying is that you need much more than a good strategy to achieve results. You need great execution; and with so many potential touchpoints and with the need for seamless brand experiences online and offline, it's the actual execution of strategy which is so difficult to get right.

Great execution is even more powerful than a great strategy for the simple reason that your audience won't ever see your strategy, but they will remember how you made them feel, and how you engaged and activated them through its execution.
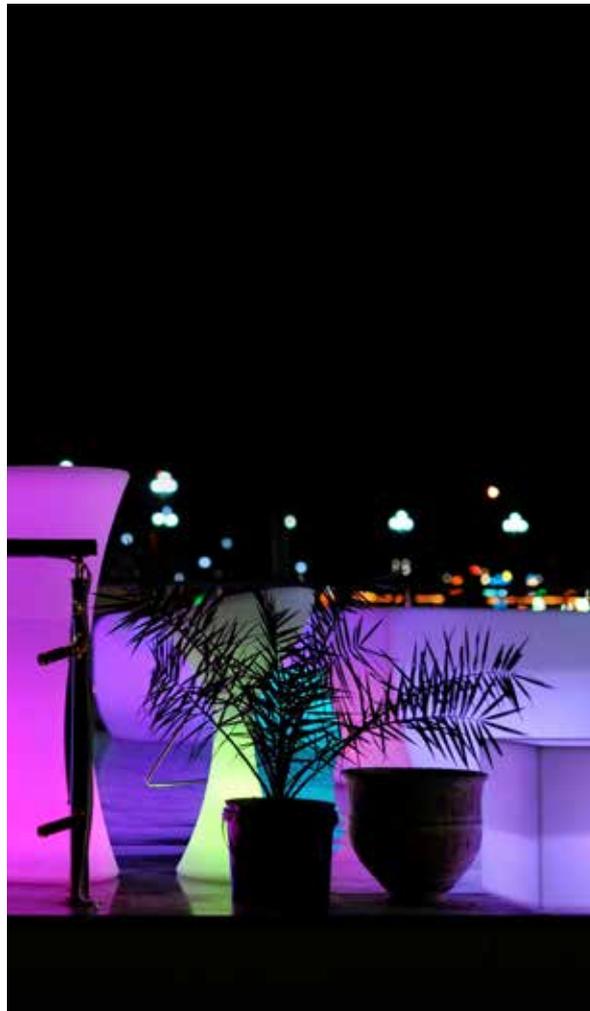
What about the third scenario?

Of course, there's also a third scenario, in which strategy, engagement and activation all gain full marks – and an event reaches its maximum potential.

Results: Strategy x Engagement x Activation
1000 = 10 x 10 x 10

$$R = S \times E \times A$$

Out of a potential 1000, you've achieved 1000

At MCI, we share the 'best practices' below with our event teams to help them strive towards this magic score. We hope you find them useful for your own events.

Best Practices
Strategic Event Design

While a focus on strategy alone won't bring you results,
strategy is always the right place to start.

Whatever the event and whatever its size, you should always start with strategic event design.

You might hear 'event design' and think we're talking about aesthetics – from flower arrangements, to table plans to booth design. *We're not!*

Event design is about much, much more than aesthetics. It's about shaping the form and the content of your meeting or event in order to deliver on crucial business objectives. And it's a must for effectively engaging and activating your attendees. The event design process starts with articulating what you and your company want to get out of the event, and setting up your key performances indicators (KPIs).

Do you want to enhance your brand? Gain 100 new leads? Increase attendance by 50%? Reward top customers? Engage employees in your new vision? Turn customers into advocates? Gain coverage in key media? Improve social media engagement? Incentivise your channel partners...?

"Creativity and logistics must always go hand in hand with strategy, so good event planners must always start by exploring what the objectives of the event are. Before offering any kind of solutions, planners need to focus first and foremost on how to ensure that the desired results of the event will be met in terms of return on investment, return on objectives, and overall impact. This approach is called meeting design."

Cathie Cusin *Vice President Meetings and Events MCI Group*

...the list of potential KPIs for an event is endless, and it can take a while to define what you really want your event to achieve.

However, setting KPIs is vital to proving that meetings and events are the effective marketing and business building channels that we know them to be, and to enabling you to defend your spend to your boss in times of budget cuts.

Define your KPIs

Look at your departmental and organisational objectives, and explore ways that your event can help meet these. Then answer the following five questions:

1 What are my organisation's main challenges right now?
2. How can this event address these challenges?
3 How should this event contribute to my department's overall strategy?
4 How should this event contribute to my organisation's overall strategy?
5 What impact should this event have?

Know your audience

Knowing who your audience is and how they behave is also vital to setting appropriate objectives.
There's a lot of noise in the events world right now about how to engage millennials1 versus Generation X and baby boomers.

Of course, attracting different age groups of attendees can play a key role in the success of an event. It also goes without saying that millennials and their particular styles of learning, interacting and engaging will impact on events more and more in the future.

Having a millennial on your event team is a clear bonus, and making sure that your event has a mobile friendly website, a strong social media strategy and an obvious focus on sustainability will help attract and engage millennials.

But there's more to consider than just the age of your participants.

"What really matters with any event is to have a defined strategy, know your audience and understand how to communicate with your defined target."

Dawn Collins *Director Device Strategy and Communication Orange*

You should also do a quick check list of the following:

- **Neutrality**

  Are your attendees likely to have a hostile, neutral or open and receptive mind-set? Will they be easy to engage from the outset, or will it take something really special to get them on your side?

- **Expertise**

  Is your audience comprised mostly of experts, or the uniformed? Do you need to simplify your content, or make sure you're not telling people what they already know?

- **Gender**

  Will your audience be mixed, or majority male or female? Are you in an industry trying to attract more female talent, delegate and leaders, and should your event engagement and speaker strategy reflect this?

- **Language and Culture**

  Will your audience predominantly be from one culture, or are you catering to a multi-lingual, multi-cultural crowd? Are there any potential 'culture clashes' that need to be avoided?

It's vital to be clear of these characteristics in order to consider potential pitfalls and possibilities right from the start.

[1] Millennials: the generation born between 1980 and 2000. Generation X : the generation born between 1960 and 1980. Baby Boomers : generation born between 1945 and 1960.

"63% of our staff are millennials, as are a growing number of our clients. They are a source of inspiration as they continually push us to do things differently – from understanding what it really means to take an event social, to ensuring that each event gives something back to the local community."

Reto Keller *MCI Group Operations Director*

10 Questions to Ask to Get into Your Attendee Mind-set:

1   What do I know about the attendee target audience that I should take into consideration?

2   Which social networks are my target attendees using?

3   How do my target attendees like to be engaged by brands?

4   What and who should the attendees influence when the event is over?

5   How should attendees activate new knowledge, competencies, networks and behaviours when the event is over?

6   What and how would I like the attendees to learn during the event?

7   What can I do to make sure that attendees remember the key messages once the event is over?

8   What barriers to attendee engagement and activation do I forsee, and how can I address them?

9   What do you want my attendees to feel during the event?

10 How can I make this a positive experience for all attendees?

With all of these questions answered, you can now confidently create your KPIs.

Tip: The most successful events only have between 3 and 5 clear KPI, so there's no need to create a lengthy list.

"A number of years ago, we organised a 'brand unveiling' event for two companies who were merging – one based in the German part of Switzerland and one based in the French part. The event's key objective, as well communicating the new name, brand and vision, was to make sure that both sets of employees left feeling as though they were part of one team. Understanding the attendee psyche on both sides was vital to getting the event right. It informed every single part of the event design, from choosing a neutral location (a bilingual area of the country) to ensuring that language barriers did not cause issues by using an inspirational jamboree-drum activity as a non-verbal means bonding."

Antoine Painot *Director Meetings & Events MCI Geneva*

Whether you're planning an internal sales meeting, a distributor conference for channel partners, a multi-event anniversary campaign, or a high-profile product launch, you can apply the same basic principles of event design to make sure that you're maximizing its potential.

1 Know your purpose
2 Know your audience
3 Know their preferences
4 Know what you want your audience to feel

Killer Content

Now that you've defined what you want your event to achieve (S) and who your target audience is, you can work on the building blocks of your event – starting with the content you need to engage (E) and activate (A) your attendees on to act upon your key messages.

The Medium is the Message

Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase "the medium is the message" referred to the world of advertising, but he could just as easily have been speaking about events. Whether you're organising an internal meeting for employees or an external event to activate a diverse audience, the medium through which content is carried plays a vital a role in the way it is perceived. Your message may be inspiring, unique and engaging, but if you're delivering it through the same tired old format, it's

"A sports association wanted to engage 16-18 year old athletes through a full-day conference. Based on our knowledge of attention spans and engagement drivers, we suggested an impactful two-hour event in which 'something new' onstage every seven minutes would keep them interested. All PowerPoint presentations were banned, and impactful video, visuals and audios were used as metaphors to reinforce speakers' key messages. Response rates to quizzes and app interaction showed that the audience were fully engaged, while feedback from the participant survey showed that the young athletes found the content to be impactful, relevant and extremely useful in helping them make well-informed choices for the future."

Barbara Martins-Nio *MCI Group Sports Business*

probably falling on deaf ears. Today's attendees have access to content anytime, anywhere, and most probably on at least two mobile devices.

With attention spans dropping to a mere 6 to 7 minutes before attendees start itching to check their mobile for something more interesting, the need to engage, and do it quickly, has never been greater.
Keeping your attendees' attention in a world that's filled with distractions means one thing: creating inspiring content that captures the attention, moves minds and stirs emotions. One way to do this is by looking to the latest technology for a helping hand.

Here are a few different types of technology that can make sure your key messages are delivered with a bang, not a whimper:

- **Magical Mapping**
  3D projection mapping onto multi-dimensional objects or structures is a great way for brands to bring content to life at events.
  Tech savvy organisers are using 3D mapping as a visually inspiring way to

tell any story, from showing customers the time, dedication and expertise that goes into a new product, to taking employees on a full brand journey, from origins to future vision.

- **Multi-Sensory Storytelling**
  Storytelling is another key way of engaging people of all ages and all nationalities. Attendees will quickly forget what you said, but by telling a powerful story and sharing relevant metaphors, you can ensure they never forget how you made them feel. Combining powerful stories with technology, for instance by showing a multi-sensory film to stimulate attendees' senses of touch, taste, smell and movements, is a dynamic way to surprise attendees and keep them engaged.

"The main use of technology should be to break the routine during the delivery of the event's key message. By grabbing the audience's attention with something surprising or unexpected, we can make sure that the message is memorable."

Olivier Croset *Vice President, Production MCI Group*

- **Holograms, Gesture Tech & 3D Screens**

While holograms are seen by some as a bit of gimmick, they can also be used intelligently to transmit memorable key messages, for instance creating a fictional dialogue between a hologram CEO and employee, or using a hologram speaker to deliver key messages up on stage. Gesture technology, slow motion technology and 3D transparent screens are also all growing in popularity, and, if used strategically, can significantly enhance the way a key message is communicated, perceived and remembered.

"Rather than a speech or presentation, we used 3D mapping and a storytelling approach to take executives at the SAP Executive Gala on a breath-taking journey through technology and knowledge. It was the perfect way to engage them in their brand story and the company vision."

Andreas Laube *MCI Group*

Engaging All Ages with a Heart-Warming Love Story *European Union Pavilion Experience, Expo Milano 2015*

Expo Milano 2015 took place in Milan, Italy from 1 May to 31 October 2015 under the theme 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life.' With 20 million attendees and over 1 billion online visitors, the Expo was an incredible platform for countries and brands to showcase their innovation in sustainable food production.

For the European Union (EU), it was a key opportunity to engage the public in its sustainability policies and global vision and inspire them to join the movement for a more sustainable future.

Clear and compelling metaphors

As the EU and its complex role are often misunderstood, developing clear and compelling messages that would engage people of all ages and nationalities was a must.

With a focus on wheat and bread (a simple, staple food for all of Europe), the EU created the theme of 'Growing Europe Future's Together for a Better World.' A heart-warming love story, with a simple metaphor showing that science and tradition both have a place in today's Europe, was then developed to emotionally engage visitors.

A Multi-Media, Multi-Sensory experience

The characters – Sylvia, a scientist, Alex, a farmer, and their dogs Coco and Alfred – gave the Pavilion a human face and guided visitors through the experience with a personal touch

Visitors were plunged into Alex and Sylvia's story through a multimedia, multisensory 20-minute journey, including a short story, a movie with some sensory surprises, touch screen educational content and fun games.

Content that Keeps on Performing

The EU Pavilion Experience was enjoyed by an average of 4,000 visitors a day. Children, teenagers and adults were all charmed by Sylvia and Alex's love story, and with an approval rating of 97%, visitors left feeling positive about the EU.

The film itself was nominated for and won numerous awards, meaning that its messages will live on much longer than the Pavilion itself, inspiring audiences and activating them to learn more about the EU and its role in sustainable food production for years to come.

Speakers that Shake Things Up

While technology can take your content to a whole new level, it's also vital to remember the impact that the human touch can bring.

If you're using presenters and speakers for your event, a combination of inspirational people and innovative technologies can be the perfect formula to engage (E) your attendees in a compelling and memorable way and inspire them to action (A).

It's all about immersion

Over the last few years, we've seen a clear shift in the way that good speakers are engaging with their audiences. And it's all about 'immersion'.

You should look for speakers who will create fully immersive experiences for event attendees through simplification, visualization and creative formats.

Today's best speakers are using powerful visuals to share their key messages, and bringing innovative presentation methods such as story boards and storytelling, discussion type formats without slides and powerful 'Ted Talk' type presentations to the table.

Creative formats should reduce the time taken to present a topic or core idea, based on the increasingly limited attention spans of delegates. As well as Ted style 18-minute sessions, top speakers are dabbling in integrating PECHA KUCHA style (Japanese for 'Chit Chat') presentations and the even shorter 'Ignite' sessions which shaves the Pecha Kucha concept down even further.

"Today, being a good speaker is less about being an ego or a 'sage on stage' and more about acting as a 'guide on the side' who facilitates knowledge transfer, audience engagement and immerses delegates in a powerful experience."

Avinash Chandarana *Director Learning & Development MCI Group*

Eight Tips for Picking
Pitch Perfect Speakers:

1   Don't forget about diversity
    When you're putting together a
    speaker panel, remember to use a
    diverse range of speakers. It's 2016,
    and all-male panels are definitely
    out, especially 'male, stale and pale'
    panels comprising only of white
    men. These are bound to receive
    negative feedback, particularly from
    millennials, and don't give off a good
    image for brands who want to position
    themselves as forward-thinking. Want
    your events to be inspiring, engaging,
    sustainable? Then they also need to
    be inclusive!

2   Think outside the box
    This goes for speakers as well as
    methods of presenting. Just as you
    shouldn't go for tried and tested
    methods of presenting, you shouldn't
    always look to the most obvious
    speakers.

3   Make sure they put away
    the PowerPoint
    Make sure that the speakers you
    choose know that PowerPoint is
    completely out.

4   Ask your networks
    Ask your networks, employees
    and social networks for ideas.

5   Use YouTube
    If you do have an idea of who you'd
    like to speak, check out their style on
    YouTube to see if they will be a good fit
    for your brand and event.

6   Find social speakers
    Speakers who use social networking
    sites, who love to share and who have
    influential connections are perfect
    – they'll automatically want to self-
    promote and promote your event at
    the same time.

7   Beware of big-budget celebrities
    Celebrity speakers and performers
    can add real value to an event, but
    only when used authentically. Before
    blowing your budget on a big name,
    make sure that the celebrity has a
    real connection with your brand or
    the theme of event, and that their
    attendance adds value to your
    objective, rather than diluting your
    key messages.

8   Use onsite event tech to track popularity
    You can measure speaker success
    onsite using the latest event tech. RFID
    tracking can show not only which were
    the most popular rooms, but also how
    long attendees stayed in each session.
    Mobile apps can also be a great way
    of asking for feedback about speakers,
    and ensuring that the best speakers
    make the cut for your next event.

"I worked on TedX Singapore 2015, and it was fascinating to be part of their completely unique approach to sourcing speakers. They asked for nominations from the local community, and the wording used made sure that they got really unique, inspirational and passionate individuals: "We seek people who will inform and inspire, surprise, delight. They could be thinkers or doers, or both. They could be performers in the arts, have an inspiring story or interesting life experiences to share. They could be people who started innovative organisations, invent world-changing devices, create ground-breaking media, or pioneered social change. They could have a new way of looking at things or done something that made a difference. They could be geniuses, icons, famous, or not at all." I think we're going to be seeing much more of this in the future – with communities recommending inspiring speakers before they become mainstream, and event attendees getting an exciting glimpse of tomorrow's leaders."

Nisha Mullatti *Regional Sales Director MCI Asia-Pacific*

Experiential Approaches & Emotional Connections

So your content is coming along nicely, and your inspiring speakers are booked. But what about the rest of the event? Getting back to the (E) and (A) of engagement and activation – now's the time to think about experiential initiatives and building emotional connections with attendees. There's a lot of noise in the marketing world right now about experiential events and experiential marketing.

And that's because they work!

With so many similar products and services available today, and with such a competitive market, sometimes the only way to differentiate your company is through emotional connections with your brand, and brand experience.

That's why live interactions with your target communities are so vitally important. The 'experiential' concept is simple: experiential marketing (also known as engagement marketing) is marketing that you can touch, feel, or interact with. It breaks down the barriers of traditional advertising and makes the target audience a part of the marketing story.

An experiential event follows the same idea. It's about breaking down barriers between organisers and attendees, and making attendees active contributors to your event – not just passive viewers. In terms of psychology, experiential events work by creating a closer bond and a stronger emotional connection between your event, company and attendees.

By immersing attendees in your event story and giving them an engaging and memorable experience, your event is more likely to create genuine positive emotions in your attendees. In the future they are then much more likely to associate these positive emotions with your brand.

"Instead of your guests just looking at your new product, they need to live it."

Sophie De La Traz *MCI Group*

Putting the 'experience' in experiential

The easiest and most obvious type of event to turn into an experiential event is a product launch, as they lend themselves so perfectly to the concept.

Instead of your guests just looking at the new product, or being presented with its new features on stage, they are invited to touch, try, interact with and 'experience' the product in innovative and exciting ways. A great example is taking journalists on an epic road trip on one of your region's most beautiful routes to show them the features of a new car. Not only will they test out the car in a real life, magical setting, they will also enjoy different activities along the way.

However, the experiential concept can be applied to all different types of events. For instance, instead of simply presenting data to a room full of medical attendees, why not plunge them into an experiential crisis scenario, in which they have to use data strategically to plan a health crisis response? This is a much more valuable experience for attendees than simply passively listening to data, as it allows them to test out skills that they need in real-life settings, and shows them how they would react, and communicate, in a real life emergency.

If you're hosting a tech festival, think about immersing attendees in a real festival atmosphere, for instance by enabling attendees to camp overnight in the event location. Merging work and play, day and night, will bring your brand up close and personal with attendees, breaking down barriers and enabling them to have a more authentic experience.

However you decide to incorporate an experiential aspect, it should reflect your brand, it should be linked to your key objectives, and it should be crafted with your target audience in mind.

"Rather than deliver just another sales incentive in which participants were jetted off to some exotic location and pampered, we helped Orange and key sponsor Samsung create a whole new kind of incentive experience. The attendees weren't just given the new Samsung phone as a gift. They were split into teams and had to film a 30-second advert for the new phone, one of which Samsung may use! It worked amazingly, the attendees were even more inspired to learn about the new product and be a part of its marketing history."

Laurence Julliard *ICT Director MCI*

How many breakdancers can you fit in a BMW? *An experiential media launch for the BMW 2 Series Gran Tourer.*
The launch of the new BMW 2 Series Gran Tourer - the brand's first seven-seater people carrier vehicle - was a significant step into a yet uncovered vehicle segment for BMW.

A decentralized, experiential concept Instead of a classic press conference, BMW decided to engage journalists in the International Media Launch in a more memorable way – through an experiential, decentralized media event in the beautiful historic town of Zadar, Croatia.

BMW wanted journalists to see the product in an innovative way, so the vehicle's main features were shown off through different experiential concepts, "Connected Drive", "Design" and "Functionality."

These different concepts were emotionally staged, right in the middle of the urban setting, allowing journalists to touch, feel and understand the product features. A number of fun techniques were also used to convey key messages, including a troupe of seven breakdancers spinning out of the car to showcase the concept of space.

Interactive Learning
International media loved the experiential approach. They noted the exceptional charm of the destination and the interactive

product information which allowed them to process a maximum amount of information in 24 hours. The exhibitions in the old town of Zadar were also left open to the general public for three weeks. Informative and barrier-free, they allowed the BMW brand to present itself up close to the public, brand fans and potential clients.

Award-winning Experience
The experiential approach proved to be a great way of engaging the media – with press coverage analysis showing 98% positive press coverage in key media. BMW also took home Gold in the Galaxy Awards Special Events Automotive and Silver in the category PR Product Launch for their work on this inspiring press event which purposefully broke with familiar press event routines.

Sustainability as an Engagement Tool

Meetings and events have incredible potential to drive change. They inspire, educate, and build communities needed to turn business strategies into action.

But as meetings and events by their very nature are transient, and as large events undeniably produce waste and add to CO_2 emissions from thousands of flights - can they also be sustainable?

To survive, they're going to have to be.

"Sustainability is becoming more and more important to event attendees, and our clients now understand that it's no longer enough to have a 'bolt-on' approach to sustainability for events. Attendees are looking for integrated sustainability initiatives at every touchpoint of their event, from locally produced organic food, to carbon offset programmes for flight emissions, to skills based volunteering to give something back to the host community. As they're willing to pay more for a more sustainable product or experience, we're going to see millennials shaping the future of sustainable events, and we'll soon see many more events using sustainability as a key engagement tool to attract and keep attendees. "

Guy Bigwood *MCI Group Sustainability Director*

Survival of the sustainable

Ninety-three per cent of today's consumers want to see brands they use support worthy social and environmental causes. Three out of four teenagers say they want to buy more sustainable products, and 90% of professionals feel that CSR is a moral responsibility that companies have towards the local community.[2]

Leading brands are recognising that sustainable products, behaviours and services – including their meetings and events - are the future.

So if you want to keep on attracting audiences to your events, particularly millennial audiences, you're going to have to use sustainability as a key engagement (E) and activation (A) tool.

[2] *Futerra & BSR, Value Gap – The changing value of changing consumer behaviors*

Top ten tips for a sustainable event

1   Incorporate sustainability from the start
    and communicate early
    Don't just look at sustainability as an
    'add-on'. It should be a holistic part
    of any event strategy, with a focus
    on three core areas: creating as
    environmentally-friendly an event as
    possible, ensuring a positive impact on
    the host city or country, and ensuring
    that your event itself is 'sustainable' by
    encouraging diversity and attracting
    new audiences.

    You should also make sure to
    communicate your sustainable
    initiatives at the earliest opportunity
    so that event attendees are engaged
    in your initiatives from the outset,
    and activated to find out more and
    get involved.

2   Make it fun
    Bring your sustainable initiatives
    to life and inspire attendee action
    by designing fun and inspirational
    programmes, and using engaging
    facts and human impact stories in any
    communications. Make the most of
    social media to get attendees engaged
    from the outset.

3   Be authentic
    Of course, aside from just being fun,
    you should be authentic and strategic
    about your sustainability focus. If you're
    raising money, think about streamlining
    any donations to one or two key charities
    with clear links to your brand values and
    culture or to your event theme.

4   Link attendees' skills with local
    community needs
    A great way of making a lasting impact
    and giving back to the local community
    is through skills-based volunteering -
    matching the very specific skills of your
    attendees to local charity or business
    needs and creating a platform for
    valuable exchange.

5   Offer delicious dishes
    The demand for locally-produced,
    organic, healthy meals might be à la
    mode at the moment, but it's definitely
    not a passing fad. Fairtrade, vegetarian
    and sustainable options will continue to
    grow in popularity, with new research
    showing that sustainable menus
    can even improve overall delegate
    satisfaction. What's more, this growth
    in demand will cause prices to fall
    and supply to increase, helping make
    sustainability a key criteria when
    selecting caterers and restaurants.
    Good news for your budgets, for the
    planet, and for attendee waistlines!

6   Create healthy experiences
You should also think about making sure that attendees can access healthy experiences, and not just food, during your event.

For instance, using innovative RFID bracelets for attendee tracking can help them track their steps and make sure they're keeping active, or adding a fun 'walking desk' in a networking zone can help people do some light exercise while they're catching up on emails.

Why not think about organising active and inspiring ways for attendees to reach your meeting itself? A great example is the British Society of Gastroenterology, who organise a 3- day GastroCycle for attendees to reach their event, and raise money to support Core's research in the process.

7   Go mobile
Mobile event apps and digital technologies can massively reduce pre and onsite printing, so make sure your mobile app is paving the way to an entirely paperless event.

You could also consider introducing a hybrid element - potentially reducing carbon emissions from travel and opening up meetings to those who would otherwise have been unable to attend. Sustainable events are also inclusive, so opening up your event to previously underserved communities by adding a hybrid element is vital to the continued success of your events.

8   Consider Standards & certification
Consider adopting the ISO20121 sustainable event standard, which provides the building blocks of a sustainable event management system and applies to all types and sizes of event. Leading brands are already implementing this standard, with some impressive results.

9   Cut the waste
Think "cradle to cradle" and integrate sustainable principles into your initial design concepts, ensuring that event structures are made from materials that can easily and cheaply be reused, recycled and repurposed. Think about phasing PVC out, and look to more bio-materials, eco-substrates and new modular display systems.

10 Use Sustainable destinations

Currently, only a handful of cities such as Bangkok and Orlando can boast a multi-year destination sustainability strategy for their events industry. However, as sustainability becomes a motivating factor for event venue and location choices, leading convention bureaus will start bringing together key stakeholders to develop a shared vision for the sustainable development of their city. While it might be too late for your upcoming events, look into the sustainability of every potential host city before deciding on the location of future events.

Symantec's Sustainable Events Story

Symantec has been working on aligning its global Corporate Responsibility commitment with its events strategy and operations since 2012.

Involving all stakeholders

As a first step, key suppliers, partners and staff were engaged to uncover and define the key material issues and opportunities.

Following an Event Sustainability Assessment of Symantec's flagship "Vision" 2012 conference, Symantec then addressed areas for improvement and took significant steps to implement better environmental event practices.
A Global Sustainable Events Programme, applying a systematic strategic approach from three core international standards, ISO 202121, APEX/ASTM, and GRI EOSS, was then adapted to fit the company's specific needs.

Symantec Vision 2014 Symposium

Symantec Vision 2014 Symposium was a series of events in Dubai, Munich, Paris and London. Based on the Sustainable Events Programme and insights from the previous Symposium, Symantec was able to implement a sustainable event strategy to improve the delegate experience and to address the environmental, social and economic impacts of the Symposium.

Great Results

Thanks to increased efficiencies and improved community engagement, the 2014 Symposium generated at least €25,427 in sustainability related savings and had a total direct and indirect economic benefit of over €2million to local economies and communities.

There was an 88% reduction in waste, 89% waste diversion rate and 67% reduction in CO2 emissions. 19,228 trees were pledged to be planted and 43 children trained as Climate Justice Ambassadors.

85% of attendees were aware of and engaged by the event's sustainability initiatives, with a 49% increase in audience perception of Symantec as a brand that is committed to sustainability compared to the previous year.

Symantec has won a number of awards for its sustainable events programme, including the ICARUS award for professional collaboration and the IMEX-GMIC Green Meeting Award 2015.

Adding Value through Technology

Today's event tech is changing the very structure of events and making them more sustainable, more personalised, and more inclusive.

Looking back to our formula for success, when aligned to your strategy (S), the right technology will engage (E) your event attendees in an active way, give them the tools they need to act upon your messages (A) and provide you, the event organiser, with powerful data to take your future events to the next level.

Here are the top technology trends to consider to get great results (R):

"Events are an investment, so the desire to extend the life-cycle and the associated investment of events and conferences is a common aspiration. Technology is a great way to do that."

Sylvia Andre *MCI Group Marketing and Communications Director*

Going Hybrid
A hybrid event involves both a physical, onsite event complemented by online viewing: either through live streaming, on-demand video access following the event, or both.
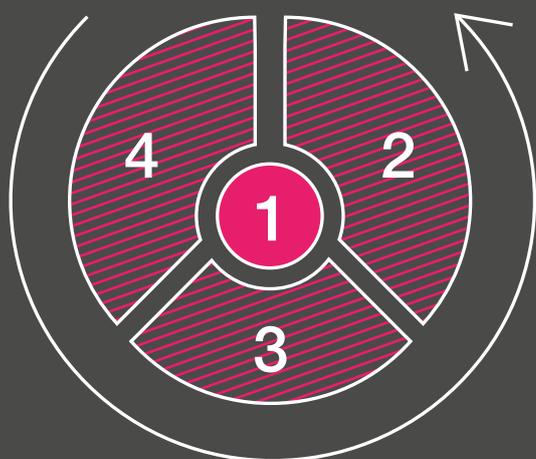
1   Conference
2   Attendees
3   Non Attendees -
      Primary Markets
4   Non Attendees -
      New Markets

Research into hybrid events is showing two key things:

1 Tomorrow's most successful events are going to be a strategic mix of both live and online experiences.

2 Contrary to certain beliefs, adding a hybrid element will actually increase face-to-face attendance at your event, rather than tempting attendees to tune in from home.

Engage new audiences

A hybrid element can open up your event to two new audiences – audiences from your target markets who weren't going to attend your event in person, and audiences from new markets. Whole communities unable to attend an event whether that's fashion brand fans missing out on a product launch in a different country, or scientists from low-income countries without the budget to attend a key healthcare meeting - can be provided with powerful brand experiences or valuable learning opportunities that they would previously have missed out on. By adding a hybrid element, you're ultimately making your content and your brand more inclusive and more accessible to those who want to engage. In terms of the sustainability of your event – this is absolutely vital.

"When delivering a hybrid event, it's vital to make sure that the event space will work for both the onsite and online audience. This sounds simple enough, but can actually take a lot of careful planning depending on the venue. We recently worked with FIBA, the International Basketball Federation, on the first official draws to take place at its headquarters, 'The House of Basketball. The building is a fascinating hand-shaped glass structure, but the space, the angles and the reflections made it rather challenging in terms of the filming. It took some really innovative stage design to create both an engaging environment for participants tuning in at home, as well as those onsite. Of course, the results were worth the extra effort. Live streaming provided uninterrupted coverage to over 4,200 viewers tuning in through the official FIBA YouTube channel, and the online viewers played a key role in taking the evening's results social, with high engagement on social media."

Barbara Martins-Nio *Sports Business Director, MCI Group*

Engage existing audiences – for longer

While hybrid events are great for engaging those who could never have attended your event in the first place, they're also perfect for engaging and activating attendees long after the event is over. Attendees themselves also benefit from a hybrid element – whether that's through accessing material they've missed onsite, revisiting sessions they particularly liked, or simply reliving their favourite moments of the experience.

Top 5 Practical Tips for Going Hybrid

1   Think about the online perspective
    You need to factor in the online perspective right from the start, making sure that the event space is going to work – and will be as engaging as possible - for an online audience.

2   Plan carefully – and inform speakers well in advance
    Make sure you inform any presenters and speakers of the hybrid element well in advance, and clearly communicate deadlines to avoid last minute panic.

3   Rehearse
    Even veteran speakers can get a bit nervous the first time they 'go live'! Work with your technical team to ensure that presenters and speakers know where the cameras are and where they should be standing. Give speakers the chance to practice the first five minutes of their presentation with the tech team on hand to iron out any potential issues in advance.

4   Acknowledge your online audience
    This might sound obvious, but a common mistake many presenters make is forgetting to acknowledge the online audience. Welcome your virtual attendees and let them know that they're an important part of the event. If you're live streaming, then why not continue to show the online audience they're a key part of your event community by sharing online viewer stats in real time.

5   Use social media to engage
    If there's a question and answer session, always include questions from the online audience. Using Twitter, for instance, is a great way to connect online and live attendees and facilitate conversations and feedback.

Mobile apps

Mobile technology is part of our everyday lives, and its influence is growing daily. Over 1 billion smartphones are currently in use and around 1.5 million mobile apps are available on the Apple Store.

Your event attendees use mobile apps in their day-to-day lives, so when in a new location, meeting new people, and wanting to make the most out of their time and money (for instance, at your event) their 'app needs' are even stronger than ever. If correctly aligned to your event objectives and attendee needs, an app is the ultimate way of efficiently engaging and activating your attendees.

Dos and Don'ts for Mobile Event Apps

Dos

- **Align it to your strategy**
  An event app will only be successful if it's aligned to your objectives. If your objective is to make a buzz on social media, make sure that the app is integrated with social channels. If it's to motivate and reward employees, ensure to add gamification and built in reward systems.

- **Define Success Metrics**
  Before you start, define what success will look like. Will it be based on engagement, interaction, live polls,

content downloads? Think about your KPIs and how the event app can help you measure their success.

- **Appoint an app 'expert'**
  Make sure that one person on your team is responsible for the app. From uploading content to encouraging engagement to monitoring in real time for tweaks and improvements onsite – they should be responsible for ensuring its value and uptake.

"All-in-one apps are perfect for fuelling hospitality guest engagement. In addition to the basic features of an event app, hospitality guests increasingly expect to have access to exclusive content and features to make them feel as VIP as possible. Examples include an app-driven concierge service, using leading personalities as 'iPad hosts' to guide guests through the experience and giving guests the option of ordering drinks and merchandise directly to their seats."

Dev Sharma, *MCI Group Vice President Global Account Management*

- **Decide what content is important**
  The app should provide attendees with all of the most important content, from the programme or agenda to speaker bios to tips about the host city. However you should also be selective, don't overload the app with unnecessary information – make the content as streamlined as efficient to process as possible.

- **Think about sponsor options**
  If your meeting or event relies on sponsorship, you can use the app to add value to your sponsors, from engaging attendees in their brand and onsite presence, driving traffic to their websites or exhibition stands, and generally increasing their brand exposure. The app could also be funded by one of your sponsors – a perfect way of getting their key messages into the hands of each and every attendee.

- **Tailor it**
  The best apps are customizable to not only to your brand or event, but also to your different attendee profiles: your staff, attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, VIPs, media.
  With targeting available for different groups, an app is also a great way of making some attendees feel as VIP as possible, through access to exclusive content or features.

- **Make sure attendees know that you have an app**
  This one might seem obvious, but you'd be surprised by how many attendees can turn up an event without knowing there's an app. Promote it in on your website, social media, onsite signage and ask hosts and hostesses to ensure attendees are aware of the app onsite.

- **Make sure there's a networking option**
  An app is perfect for networking, so make sure that there are functions including chatrooms that encourage this on your app.

- **Use it for real time engagement and feedback**
  Make sure the app includes a feature for surveys and live polling to allow real-time feedback. That way you can nip any problems in the bud, and fine tune your event when you're still onsite.

- **Integrate with social channels**
  An app is a great way of giving your attendees the chance to be social and share their experience with their networks. An app that offers social media opportunities and integration is a must if enhancing social media engagement is one of your KPIs.

- **Evaluate**

  An event app can provide powerful metrics, so make sure you use the data to your advantage, measuring not only your KPIs but seeing what else the data can tell you to help you improve your next event.

Don'ts

- **Don't design a one-off**

  We wouldn't recommend starting from scratch – there's usually no need. Customise some of the great apps already on the market, don't waste time designing and building your own.

- **Don't be distracted by features**

  Thousands of features doesn't necessarily mean a better app. In fact, they can end up cluttering up the user interface and creating confusion. It's much better to have a simple, clear app that's easy and intuitive to use for your attendees.

- **Don't just launch it onsite**

  If you can, launch the app in advance of the event. Not only will attendees be more comfortable with the app once onsite, this can also help generate a pre-event buzz and get attendees connecting in advance and itching to network onsite.

"We're seeing that mobile apps are excellent enablers to listen and to observe attendee behaviour for both logistical and strategic optimisations. By monitoring engagement and attendee activities, we can continuously fine tune events as they are happening, rather than simply waiting for feedback at the end of an event."

Dev Sharma, *MCI Group Vice President Global Account Management*

Crowdshaping for success

While mobile apps are personalising event content and experiences to different types of attendee, 'crowdshaping' directly onsite is taking event personalisation – and ways to measure the engagement of individual attendees during events - to a whole new level.

Crowdshaping for events is all about collecting personal, real-time data from attendees in order to shape their onsite experience.

Of course, you can use social media and surveys to try and crowdshape your event in advance, by asking attendees who'd they'd like to hear speak, what hot topics need to be addressed, and what type of food they'd like to see on the menu.

But the most powerful and most accurate data driven use of crowdshaping is happening onsite, in real time.

There are several ways of capturing attendee data, from incorporating additional software into an event app, providing each attendees with an interactive wristbands, or giving them RFID (Radio Frequency IDentification) event badges and adding i-beacons throughout your event venue.

Whichever way you choose, here are four reasons why crowdshaping could take your engagement strategy to great heights:

1   Crowdshaping streamlines onsite experiences – and makes them safer
Tracking how your event attendees move in real time can streamline their whole event experience, as well as improve the safety of your events.

You can tell attendees where the nearest coffee stand or toilet is, let them know when transportation is available if they're waiting to leave, and avoid overcrowding in key areas by warning attendees and providing alternatives before overcrowding even occurs.

2   Crowdshaping personalises the experience for each attendee
Crowdshaping can further personalise the attendee experience as they walk through your event, allowing you to interact personally with visitors and attendees by triggering location-specific content and alerts to their mobile devices.
By crafting specific, targeted messages to attendees based on their behaviour and location, you'll significantly enhance the satisfaction and engagement levels of individual attendees.

3 Crowdshaping shows you care

Crowdshaping shows you care – about the overall attendee experience, as well as about sponsors, exhibitors, and any other key audience you're engaging with onsite. This is because you can show that their experience is important to you by tracking it, and making real time adjustments to reflect their immediate needs.

If you have sponsors and exhibitors, you can provide them with powerful data about how their stands are performing, meaning they can improve their presence directly onsite.

Going one step further - getting attendees to wear wrist bands means you can measure anything from their temperature to their movements – so you know when to turn the aircon up or down, but you also know when they're fidgeting, uncomfortable – and generally not engaged.

"Crowdshaping and the concept of the 'quantified self' are dramatically changing the way that organisers engage and activate attendees at their event. We're seeing concerts in which the crowd are all given interactive wrist bands to wear, which measure and monitor everything from body temperature to movement to sound levels. By receiving this information in real-time, DJs can then change their playlist to get people dancing more, as well as tweaking the lighting and sound levels to make people more comfortable. In the future, we're going to see this more and more not just at large scale concerts, but also in smaller meetings and events. We'll see speakers and presenters receiving real-time data about their audience which will let them know almost immediately whether they are engaging their audience – or falling flat. This means that event organisers will look for speakers who can adapt to the data they're receiving on the fly!"

Kim Van Der Does, *MCI Group Creative Director*

4 Crowdshaping is powerful tool for auditing purposes

For certain industries, in particular the healthcare industry, personal attendee tracking can be extremely useful for gaining continuing education accreditations, for instance Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits, as attendee tracking can prove attendance for auditing purposes. It's a much more powerful way of proving attendance at key sessions than producing a receipt for meeting registration.

Integrated technology

As an event planner, you're constantly juggling competing priorities, and the last thing you need is to spend hours integrating different technology tools from multiple vendors into your various events.

An integrated system that can streamline websites, abstracts, housing, registration, communications and marketing, data collection, budgeting and whatever else you need is therefore the obvious choice, right?

Right. Yet many of you are still working with multiple technology vendors.

And we understand why.

The event managers we've spoken to who use multiple technology vendors do so for a number of good reasons, from valued relationships with current vendors, to lack of time to research integrated options, to fear of disruption in service.

At the same time, many of you are keenly aware that a key disadvantage with these multiple technology vendors is that their tools can't be integrated. When you receive reports and data back from these vendors, you often have to sift through silos of information, which makes it difficult to put together the big picture.

The use of technology across your event life-cycle is only going to grow, so as you begin adding more systems based on the latest trends and tools, and collecting more data, it's going to become even more time consuming and confused.

We're not saying ditch your multiple vendors directly, but we are saying that it's worthwhile to take bit of time to research an integrated system.

From our experience, a powerful integrated technology system will automate the process of attendee engagement, personalisation and data collection – as well as improving your bottom line.

Finding an Integrated Event Technology Tool

If you do take the plunge and decide to opt for an integrated system, you need to

make sure it's the right one for your needs. Make sure you ask potential vendors the following four key questions:

How can this tool create more powerful and personal connections with my attendees?

Implemented correctly, integrated event marketing technology is a really powerful way of building up your digital communities. You should be able to create separate, targeted communities of customers, partners, staff, sponsors, exhibitors, and other stakeholders, share timely and personalised communications with these groups before, during and after the event, as well as receive targeted data about each specific group.

How will this tool help me reduce costs?

An integrated event management technology should provide significant cost-savings, while real time budget reporting should also help you keep spend on track. Ask the vendor for clear business cases of how they've reduced costs for companies of your size with a similar number and size of events.

How can this tool provide me with powerful attendee data?

A good integrated event technology will be able to provide you with immediate access to incredibly detailed information about your attendees – what their needs are, what their expectations are, and how well you're doing in terms of meeting them. It should also provide real time insights during your event, meaning that if there's anything that needs to be optimised, you can do it onsite.

How will this tool help me improve my event's ROI?

Aside from making the whole event process easier for you and your attendees, integrated event technology should also help improve your bottom line by creating real efficiencies and economies, as well as helping you grow attendance and revenues through targeted marketing.
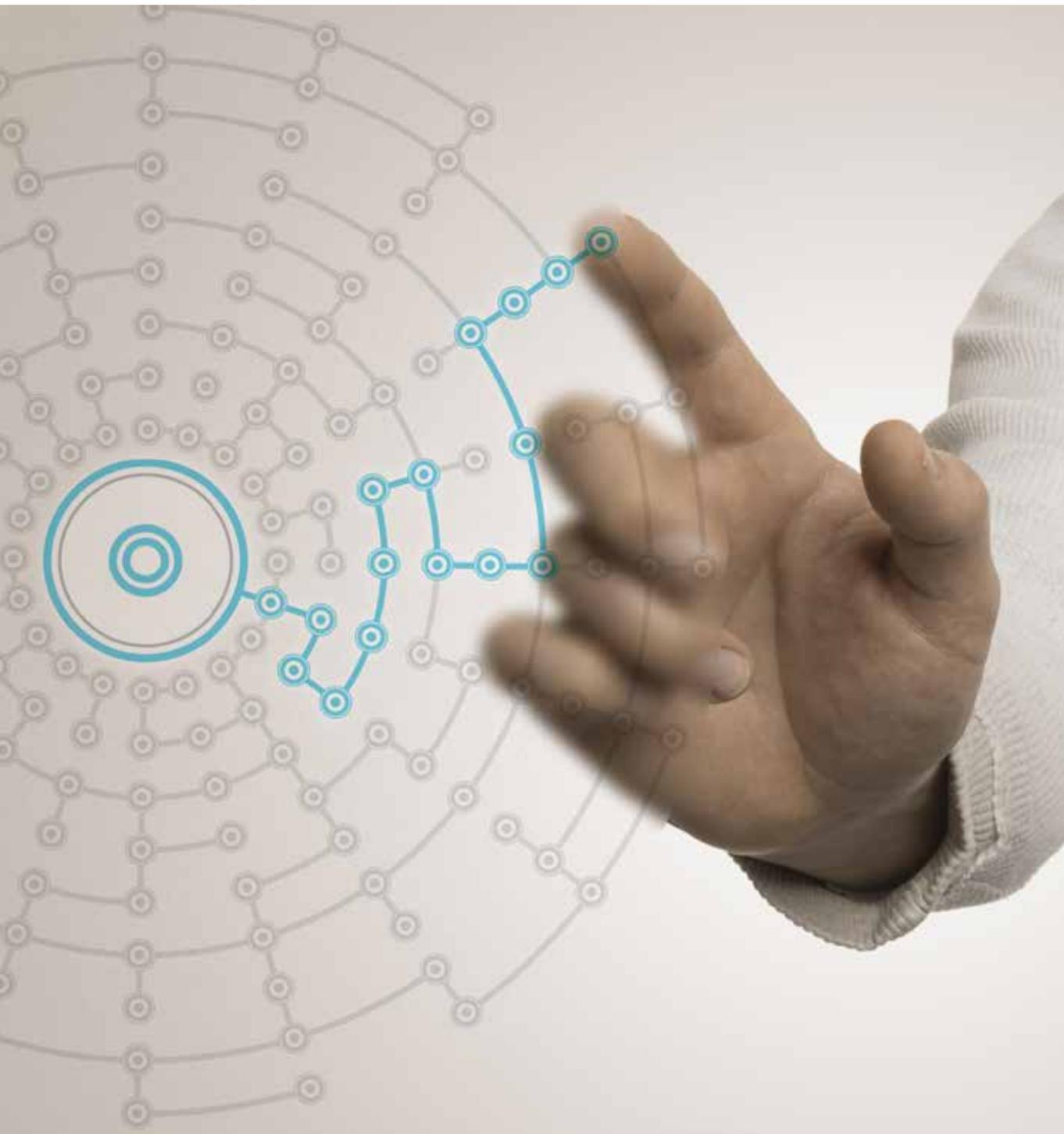
Gamification

Gamification – the concept of applying game thinking and mechanics in non-game contexts – is a great way of using technology to encourage desired behaviours and motivating event attendees.

Some event organisers believe that by introducing a mobile app, they've automatically incorporated gamification into their event. That's not necessarily the case! There are some great apps that 'gamify' meetings, but if want your event app to spark engagement with fun challenges, rewards and leader boards, you need to design it for that specific purpose!

Gamification provides competitive motivation, which is recognised as a key factor for increasing active vs passive participation, whatever the audience's age.

Your strategy will show you what behaviours you would like to change or encourage, and you can link these back to your overall objectives for the event. Based on your objectives, you can then develop a creative and thoughtful game that stimulates interaction and fits perfectly into the overall event.

Gamification Educates Delegates at Key Healthcare Congress
Live Disease Outbreak at World Hepatitis Summit

World Hepatitis Summit, a joint World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) and World Health Organisation (WHO) event, addressed the overwhelming global burden of viral hepatitis.
With over 70 countries represented and with varied understanding and experiences anticipated among 500 attendees, WHA/WHO sought to share learnings and practices in a new, highly engaging and multilingual format.

Devised to help attendees assess a level of threat and potential burden on a country, key facts and figures would guide attendees to propose an outline national response and introduce key WHO guidelines and resources. Organisers decided to optimise the power of immersive experiences by designing a live simulation exercise and gamification approach to capture the imagination and stimulate the emotions of participants.

Breaking News
A breaking news story during one of the conference's main sessions revealed how a leading national football player had been taken ill with suspected viral hepatitis.

This highly innovative gamification approach ensured that all participants felt immersed from the very outset.

The breaking news film supported by personal video addresses by the Minister of Health provided the storytelling structure; two fictitious countries' demographic and economic profiles coupled with hepatitis assessment and burden reports provided the game play detail and live interactive tablets ensured that organisers could involve, receive and process, in real time, game play data from 50 participating teams and reflect upon interactive content during the post-simulation learning session.

First-of-its-kind simulation
Engaging 100% of conference attendees, organisers hailed the National Planning Simulation a huge success. This 'first of a kind' simulation has never before been achieved at such scale, with over 8,650 interactions using digital tablets in just 3 hours. The National Planning Simulation attracted widespread television, online and print media attention helping to raise global awareness and give hepatitis the priority it deserves.

Going Social

Use of the latest technology should also go hand in hand with social media.

Generating engaging social content and creating active online communities is a powerful way of engaging (E) and activating (A) your attendees before, during and after your events.

And if you're looking to attract a significant number of millennials, getting your social media presence right is a must.

Social Strategies

Which channels are most appropriate for your particular event and your target audience is something you'll need to adapt based on your target audience, but there are some general tips that apply to most events.

Tip 1   It's about engagement, not marketing
Remember that social media should never simply be used as a marketing tool. Yes, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter all offer a number of ways of promoting your event and reaching a targeted audience, but do not only use these platforms just to spew out advertisements about your event.

Social media is a two-way conversation, so use your channels intelligently to start conversations, engage with attendees and potential attendees and build an online community.

Tip 2   Use a multi-channel strategy
A multi-channel strategy is more effective than a single channel strategy. If you're just getting started, choose two or three key channels that your target audience are using, and adapt our messages to these channels appropriately.

"We are seeing a cultural shift in the way people use and engage with technology. Events are physical engines to enhance the brand….but they should be combined with digital channels and social media to be really successful"

Janneke Patje,
Cororporate Communication

Tip 3 Don't bite off more than you can chew!

That said, definitely don't sign up to more channels than you can manage. There's nothing worse than a company or event that creates a social community and then doesn't engage it. Choose your channels wisely, and make sure you have content to keep them regularly updated, and a community manager who is social media savvy and skilled at tailoring content to specific channels.

Tip 4 Add social sharing buttons to your site

Add social sharing buttons to your event registration page, so that people who sign up can share with their networks that they're attending. This is a great way of getting your attendees to effortlessly spread the word about your event.

Tip 5 Make sure you have a social media expert to monitor and manage

When things go well, it's great to have attendees sharing their experiences with their networks. Of course, this also means that they will have their mobiles at the ready if things take a turn for the worse. Make sure you have a communications strategy in place

to anticipate any potential crises, and make sure that you have savvy social media strategist on your team to monitor and manage your channels.

Social Media 101

Now that we've got the basics out of the way, here are some tips on using some of today's most popular platforms.

Twitter

With 2 billion tweets shared every year (that's 500 million per day, and 6,000 per second) Twitter leads the social media world in terms of real-time marketing. It's the most effective channel for engagement in real time and it's immediate, news-breaking style makes it the fantastic platform for live events.

"Social media channels are not simply platforms to push messages out and market your events. They're there to help you build the communities and the dialogues that today's attendees crave."

Sylvia Andre, _MCI Group Marketing & Communication Director_

Top 10 Tips on Using Twitter for Events

Pre-Event

Tip 1　Choose the right hashtag

Getting the event hashtag right is crucial, as it allows your attendees and target audience to stay connected before, during and after the event. It also allows you to monitor and track engagement and spot and resolve any issues quickly.

Your hashtag should be unique to the event, so be sure to check in advance that your selected hashtag is not already taken.

It should be short, logical and easy to remember. Here are some examples from events we manage:

Nordiskt Forum Malmö 2014: _#nf2014_

European Union Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015: _#EUEXPO2015_

World Hepatitis Summit 2015: _#Hepatitis2015_

Eular 2015: _#EULAR2015_

Campus Party Brazil 2016: _#CPBR9_

Tip 2　Communicate the official hashtag early

Make sure you announce your hashtag officially, and do it early! Otherwise, attendees will often take it upon themselves to create one, and you could end up with two or three different versions, which makes it more difficult to track engagement. You should also add the event hashtag prominently on the event website, your social media profiles and of course use it in all of your tweets about the event.

Tip 3　Follow attendees and speakers

Follow your key speakers, any influential organisations or individuals that could be interested in your content, and all the tweeters that follow you or who are tweeting using the event hashtag.

Tip 4　Show attendees that their input counts

If you start engaging an audience on Twitter early enough, potential attendees can even help you shape the event itself. After all, you're organising an event for attendees, so why not ask them what they would like to see from your event, what topics that they want to hear addressed, what's important to them in terms of sustainability, and so on.

Tip 5   Generate and follow the buzz

Keep people up to date with the latest news, from registration dates to confirmed speakers. If this event is one of a series, post engaging best-of videos from the last event to pique people's interest. Engage with followers by responding to their tweets, liking and retweeting the most interesting posts.

Onsite

Tip 6   Share valuable, multi-media content

Live-tweet multi-media content and inspiring quotes from your speakers. Tweets which include images get 150% more retweets and 90% more favourites than text-only tweets, so make sure to include high quality photo and video content. (This goes for all of your Tweets, but onsite, with so many interesting photo and video opportunities this is absolutely key.)

Tip 7   Use Tweet Walls

Add TweetWalls around your event to display all conversations around your hashtag. They instantaneously display the very latest tweets, encouraging Twitter users to join the conversation and showing attendees the latest buzz.

Tip 8   Engage attendees with a live Q and A

TweetWalls also offer a great opportunity for attendees to interact with speakers in real time. Attendees can tweet questions and get live responses – a great way to involve participants and make sure they're shaping some of the content.

Post

Tip 9   Keep the conversation going

Make sure you thank your attendees for their attendance, and ask for their feedback! What did they like? What would they like to see more of? Also share some 'best of' photos and videos of the event, and any fun facts. Did it break previous records in terms of attendance? Let your attendees know the impact of the event they attended!

Tip 10 What's next

Now that they're engaged, tell your attendees what's coming next from your organisation. Will you be hosting another event next year, are you taking the event to a new region? Keep them informed, and engaged… hopefully until your next event.

Facebook

Over one billion people are active on Facebook, so it's definitely worth promoting your event and engaging with your audience on this particular network.

3 Facebook Tips for Events

Tip 1   Hold a Facebook contest
Holding contests on Facebook is a great way to drive engagement.

Of course, you'll need to make sure that your competition is relevant to your event strategy and objectives, but there are a few easy and obvious ways to get people posting that can work for most events.

Think about a best photo or best video contest to get people really engaged.

Using contests before the event can drum up interest and boost registration, and giving away free tickets or a free registration to your event to the winner is an obvious way of attracting people to participate.

You can also launch a competition during the event to encourage as much user generated content as possible onsite. This also gives you a great reason to reconnect with attendees when the event is over – by announcing the winner.

Tip 2   Use Multi-Media Content
Just like Twitter, multi-media content is far more likely to receive likes, shares and comments on Facebook, so make sure that you've got high quality photos and video to share on Facebook during and after the event.

Tip 3   Monitor and Engage
Make sure that your posts are engaging, that you're answering questions, monitoring opinions, and responding to your attendees.

Facebook: Fan Page, Group Page or Event?

Because of the different options available for promoting events, brands or services on Facebook, some event managers are confused about which ones to go for. Here's a rough guide:

1   Fan Page

We suggest setting up a Fan Page for any large event or a regular event. Fan Pages have access to Facebook applications and are well set up for sharing and posting. Your attendees and communities can become fans and then post content to your wall.

2   Group Pages

If you're throwing an exclusive event, you may consider setting up a Group Page. However, you should be aware that the Group Page has to be linked to an individual Facebook account and that instead of becoming a fan by liking the page, people must choose to become members. This works well for internal events for employees or reward events for VIP clients, for instance.

3   Create an Event

The Facebook Event application allows both people and Fan Pages to create event listing and invite followers to join. If this is a public event, then followers can further spread the word by inviting their own friends. This approach tends to work well in conjunction with a Fan Page.

Instagram

Boasting over 300 million users, photo sharing site Instagram is increasingly being used by marketers and event managers to build brands, promote events and drive engagement.

It's a particularly good for channel for product launches and brand campaigns, and a must for events in the fashion, luxury and fast-moving consumer goods industries.

4 Tips to Engage Attendees on Instagram

Tip 1   Choose the right Hashtag, and communicate it early
Just like Twitter, Instagram allows you to tag your photos using hashtags. See tips from Twitter section above, about choosing the right hashtag, and communicating it early.

Tip 2   Incorporate a live Instagram feed
A live Instagram feed lets your attendees interact with your event and brand in real time. They'll love seeing their photos up on the big screen - it's a unique way of engaging and involving your crowd, particularly the selfie generation!

Tip 3   Show what's going on behind the scenes
Social media is all about sharing authentic content, so there's nothing better than showing your attendees what's going on behind the scenes. Use Instagram to show the planning that goes into an event, the set -up, your team hard at work, your VIP guests and speakers preparing to go on stage. These images create an emotional connection to the event and help build a buzz. By showing the organiser hard at work, it also puts a human face to the organisation of the event and blurs the barriers between organiser and attendee.

Tip 4   Incorporate a photo contest
An easy way of boosting engagement through Instagram is to create a photo contest – asking users to upload photos tagged with your particular hashtag. Announce the winners onsite, or directly following the event to keep the buzz going.

YouTube

YouTube has over a billion users, and every day people watch hundreds of millions of hours of video on this site.

If your event will lend itself well to a video format – if it's got some incredible shows, creative use of technology and visually inspiring content – then you should definitely be looking to produce video content to engage your audience, and use YouTube to share it.

Top 4 YouTube Tips for Events

Tip 1   Get some good quality video footage

If you want to use YouTube as part of your social media strategy, you'll need good quality video to populate your YouTube channel. To keep costs down and quality high, make sure you have a clear idea of what kind of footage you want to capture from your event, and give your videographer and video producer a clear brief.

Tip 2   Create a pre-event buzz

Generate interest in your event by uploading teaser videos to your YouTube channel, and if the event is part of series, share the 'best of' video of the last event.

Share short interviews with key speakers or VIP guests. Time-lapse videos of the build-up are also impressive to show the scale of event set up and take attendees behind the scenes.

Tip 3   Reach a wider audience during the event

If you have a significant online audience who would love to attend but can't, think about live streaming.

Whether you're recording a sports event, a concert or a healthcare meeting, you can now stream your event live on YouTube.

Tip 4   Share the best-of

Depending on how long your event is, you can also upload short highlight videos during the event to keep the audience engaged. After the event, put together a sleek video of the all the highlights. If anyone missed out, they can still get a flavour of the event.

LinkedIn

With over 300 million members, LinkedIn is the platform for professional connections, and chances are most if not all of your attendees are on here.

Five Tips on using LinkedIn to drive attendee engagement

Tip 1   Create a showcase page

For your event, it's a good idea to create a showcase page (a subsection of your company page)

and ask your target audience to follow it, keeping them updated with regular posts.

Tip 2   Create or join a group

Groups on LinkedIn can be a great way of publicising your event. While you can create a group specifically for the event and invite people to join, it's often easier to join existing groups and start a conversation there. Of course, you need to join a relevant group and add real value to the conversation. Why is your event relevant to these people? What exclusive content can they learn at your event?

In the early stages of event planning, you can also use groups to ask for input. What would people like to see at your event? Which speakers would they suggest?

Tip 3   Targeted Messaging

Linkedin is great for promoting your event to key audiences, as it can target your messages to a very specific audience, based on company, job function, industry and much more. Invest in some targeted messaging or sponsored content to reach the right people. Keep your message short and sweet, with a clear call to action and a link to your event registration page.

Tip 4   Social Speakers

If your event involves speakers, then encourage them to get active on LinkedIn. You could ask them to write an overview of their talk to get people interested, join relevant groups, and share your updates – with links to your registration page. Of course, this will work best if your speakers are already social sharers, so make sure to factor this in when you're finalising your speaker panel.

Pinterest

This can be a tricky one for events. Pinterest is a growing social network (it currently boasts 100 million users) that allows users to visually share and discover new interests by 'pinning' images to boards of different themes.

It's a totally different platform to Twitter and Instagram in that it's not really a real-time platform. Pins in fact tend to generate traffic for weeks after they've been posted, rather than hours. It's also not really conversational – you won't be looking to engage attendees in conversations as you would on Twitter and Facebook, and it doesn't need the same amount of monitoring once it's up and running. For most events, we don't push Pinterest, however Pinterest has substantial potential for a specific type of event.

Five Reasons to Consider Pinterest

1 Your primary audience is young women

The vast majority of Pinterest users are women between 25 and 40, so if you're looking to attract a predominantly female audience of this age, then Pinterest could be useful, with the right strategy

2 You've an e-commerce, lifestyle, food, fashion or design-based brand

If you're an e-commerce, lifestyle, food, fashion or design-based brand then Pinterest can be a great channel, especially if you have some very sleek professional style photography.

**3 You can sell a lifestyle, not just a product**

To make Pinterest work for your event, you have to sell a lifestyle, rather than just your product, or your event. Think about the lifestyle of the attendees that you're trying to attract, and how your event could fit in with this.

4 You've got some inspirational speakers

Inspirational quotes are extremely popular on Pinterest. Do you have any inspiring speakers, who'll be sharing emotionally engaging content? If so, you can consider turning some quotes into visuals to share on your channels, including Pinterest.

5 You can share some 'how-to' tips

'How to' guides and tips on Pinterest are some of its most popular content. If you can turn some of your event content into 'how to' content – for instance how to create the delicious cocktails from your apéro to how to dress like one of your VIP guests, you'll definitely get some clicks!
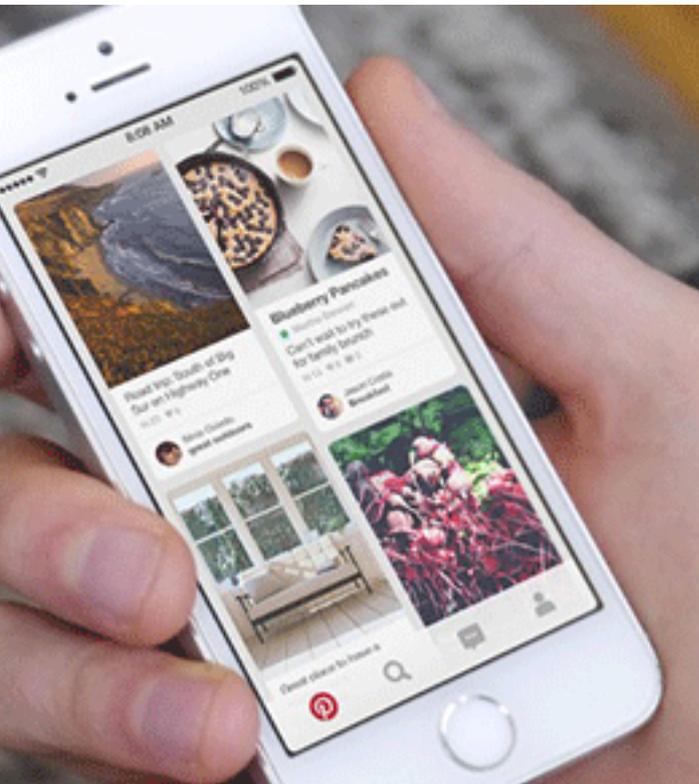
Creating a social buzz with the world's biggest 'Haka'
A Record-Breaking Experiential Event for Mazda

Mazda Automobile France wanted to use its sponsorship of leading auto show Mondial de l'Automobile to increase brand awareness.

Inspired by its partnership with CA Brive Rugby, Mazda decided to organise the world's biggest ever "Haka" – the All Blacks' famous 'war dance.'

Engaging fans both live and through social media

Rugby fans were encouraged to participate through flyers distributed in their stadium and a comprehensive social media campaign put in place to build awareness and anticipation.

During a TOP14 match in September 2014, organisers made sure that the over 4,000 participants needed to break the record took to the pitch.

At the entrance, a Chronotrack device counted each and every participant, ensuring that the number of people was reported precisely and that the Guinness Book of Records would be sure to accept the count.

4,028 participants helped Mazda break the record and earn its place in the Guinness Book of World Records. Engaged by their experience and activated by Mazda's strong social campaign, the participants took to social media to share their stories.

1.6 million social media users reached

Social media tracking and sentiment showed that the Mazda brand was significantly boosted during the Mondial de l'Automobile

The story of the world's biggest haka reached over 1.6 million people through social networks alone, while over 22 million people were exposed to the content through the various online media which published the news.

Onsite

If you're a seasoned event professional, we know you can handle almost anything that a live event can throw at you, so we'll keep this section simple.

However, we do have one key tip to make sure that you execute your strategy in the best possible way.

Share your strategy with the event team

Earlier, we showed that execution is even more important than strategy when it comes to maximising results, so this means that your event team are absolutely vital to success.

Whether you're using an internal event team or an agency to execute the event, you need to make sure that the people on the ground know what you want to achieve with the event.

A common mistake is to talk solely logistics to these teams.

Remember, an event is not a single project, it is one touch point of an overall strategy and just one of the tactics to reach and engage with your target audience and build communities.

To make the most out of this touch point, you need to make sure that the team working on the event understands what you are trying to achieve.

Do not underestimate the impact of sharing strategy. By providing your event floor team with strategic direction and insights into the bigger picture, you can turn them into strategic brand ambassadors and ensure that they are engaging with your audience in the right way and at the right time.

"Each attendee, spokesperson, journalist and CEO is also a consumer and will remember the emotion and experience they had while interacting with you."

Melissa Noakes, *Head of Experiential Marketing, Sony Mobile*

Measuring Success

The speakers have spoken, your killer content has delivered, and your attendees have been engaged and activated to the max by the latest technologies, social media channels and experiential techniques.

But before you start thinking about your next event, it's time to measure your success (R) – and use insights from your event's performance to improve future events in terms of both strategy (S) and execution (E&A).

Although, there isn't a universal model to track your event success, a standardised approach has been developed from the market research firm FairControl to enable you to translate your business needs into key performance indicators. This allows you to measure your respective target achievements and to get a holistic view on the strategic alignment of the event towards your goals. Since your KPIs can be incredibly diverse, it is essential to create your customised measurement strategy around them.

Some quantitative KPIs are much easier to measure than others. For instance, if your objective was to attract more attendees to your event, attract more senior level attendees, or attract more millennials, then this data should be relatively easy to extract from your event registration system.

"59% of marketers claim they have no way to measure event ROI."

"The State of Event Marketing",
Hubspot and Eventbrite 2014

If you wanted to attract a certain number of leads, you'll be able to monitor your pipeline and track data based on pre, during and post event.

More qualitative KPIs can be more complex to measure, such as those focused on attendee experience, brand sentiment and engagement.

However there are a number of techniques to help with measure these important KPIs, while also crunching pure data.

"There are still clients who don't believe that you can measure the success of an event. You definitely can. Today, we have the instruments, the tools and the methodologies to measure."

Jakov Cavar, *Managing Director FairControl*

Top Five Measurement Tools for Events

1   Interviews and surveys

Face-to-face interviews with participants and online surveys (pre, during and post event) are a great way of gaining both quantitative and qualitative data about your event.
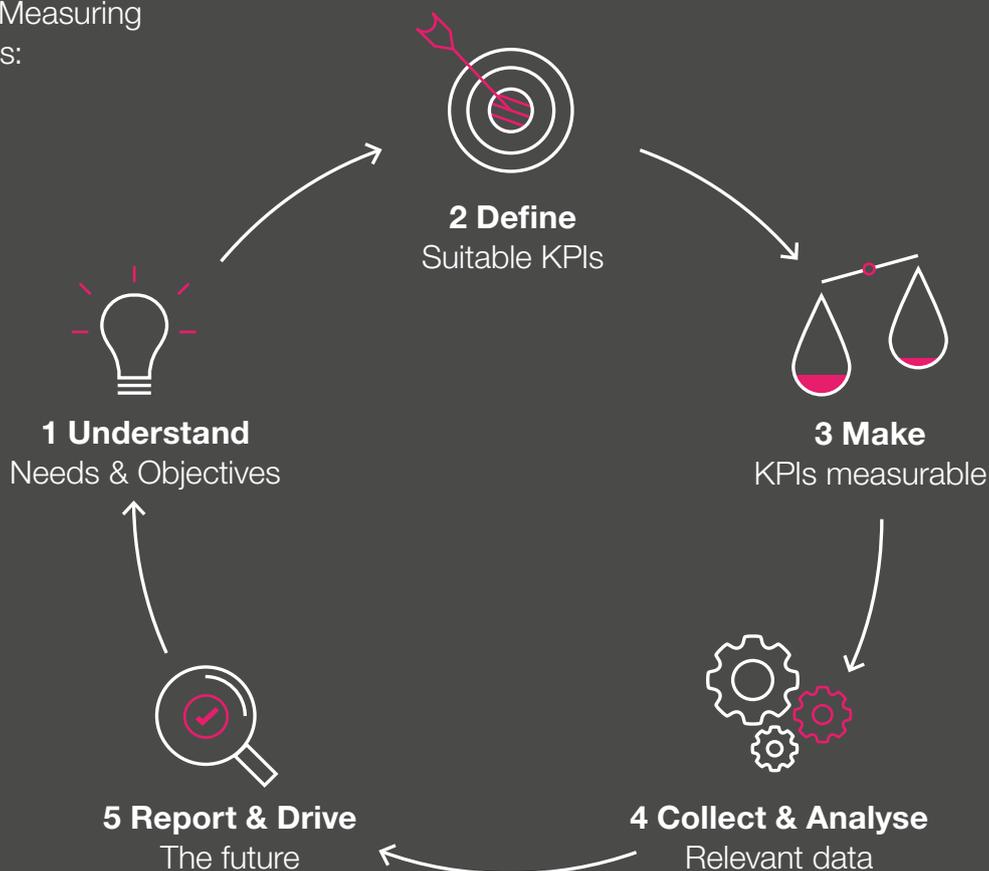
Using state of the art survey technology or mobile apps will help you understand specific attendee preferences and experiences, whether that's event sponsors, VIPs or exhibitors, to better target the different audience needs.

Additionally, you can get deeper insights into brand and communication perceptions as well as program and content engagement levels, which will unveil improvement potentials for future events.

2   Attendee Tracking

If you've been using crowdsourcing techniques such as real-time attendee tracking, your attendees' will be able to show you what they think about different aspects of your event, rather than just tell you through a survey.

Five Steps to Measuring
Event Success:

2 Define
Suitable KPIs

1 Understand
Needs & Objectives

3 Make
KPIs measurable

5 Report & Drive
The future

4 Collect & Analyse
Relevant data

You can see which stands were most popular, and which engaged attendees the longest; which sessions attracted and retained the highest number of attendees. You'll see which networking areas were the most popular, and how people moved through and engaged with your event as a whole.

If you're using innovative RFID wristbands, you can even check which speakers got people's pulses racing, and which ones left them flat!

3 Social media engagement and sentiment

Based on your channels and content, you can track social media sentiment, social media engagement rates, number of #impressions, and number of shares from your mobile app.

4 App insights

If you used a mobile app, you'll have a whole host of attendee activity that you can export to provide data-driven insights. You can track popular content through number of downloads, as well as tracking usage of networking or chat services and other popular features.

5 Gamification

If gamification has played a key role in your event, this will also provide a wealth of data, from engagement levels, to understanding of key messages, to 'super users'.

Tip: Complementary data that doesn't at first seem tied to KPIs can actually provide interesting insights. Check out all of the data from your integrated event technology or event app, and see what it can tell you.

Where Next?

From Online to Offline to Online

We've just shared our best practices for engaging and activating your attendees in today's meetings and events landscape. But what about tomorrow's trends, and what new opportunities should you be looking to take advantage of sooner rather than later?

In the introduction to this paper, we explored how technology and the internet have profoundly changed the way we interact, but haven't removed the basic desire for people to meet face to face.

In fact, around the world, communities that were built online are now being brought offline.

This trend is one that's going to grow and grow.

It will gain significant momentum in the coming years, and will completely reshape the way events are organised, designed and managed.

What's in it for your brand?

There's a huge potential for companies and brands to facilitate the development of the offline, physical events that many of these communities crave.

By helping online communities come offline, brands can become the common factor that brings people together.

Don't just think about the traditional events that you've been hosting – think about the potential that you have to bring communities of people together, for both their and for your brand's benefits.

You need to find out where your target audiences are congregating online and where they are creating communities online, and think of the interesting ways you can facilitate their offline relationships.

"The world of e-sport is a great example of the potential of bringing online communities offline. Impressive communities of gamers have sprung up online, and today those communities are now meeting offline – in huge numbers. Earlier this year I attended my first ever e-sport event – ESL One Frankfurt 2015, a record-breaking 2-day event held in Frankfurt's Commerzbank Arena, a football stadium with a capacity of more than 52,000. The event attracted more than 15,000 fans on each day of the event (with foot traffic hitting over 30,000 across the whole weekend) and became Europe's most-watched Dota 2 tournament of all time thanks to a peak concurrent viewership of over one million. I was captivated. E-sport fans are creating their own communities, their own tournaments, their own events. Imagine the potential for brands to start facilitating these types of offline gatherings?"

Barbara Martins Nio *MCI Group Sports Business Director*

Here are some obvious examples:

- Food and beverage companies working with online culinary communities to create food blogger events and competitions.

- Healthcare companies working with patient groups to develop patient-only events, with very different content and networking from events targeted for healthcare professionals.

- Publishers working with online book clubs to develop physical events including book groups and readings.

- Baby product companies working with networks such as 'Mumsnet' to bring users together offline.

- Brands with feminist messaging working with online feminist groups to create offline events on women's rights and issues.

- Rather than being the main 'organiser', your brand will act as a facilitator, with the communities themselves defining the content of these events.
  By helping your communities really connect offline, they will become even more invested in your brand and the other members in your community.

This will create the positive cycle of 'online to offline to online' - with members first connecting online, then meeting in the flesh during your events, then reconnecting online after the event, and so on.

Niche Events

We'll also be seeing a rise in niche events.

As people are able to get more and more information from the internet, when they do connect offline, it's going to be around more and more specialist subjects, or the niche topics that they feel very trongly about.

Instead of general cardiology events for instance, we'll see more and more niche sub section events springing up, from electrocardiography to invasive cardiology and so on.

Think about your company's very specific specialities and its opportunities to develop these type of niche events.

Building Community

In conclusion, tomorrow's most successful brands will be those that engage and activate their target communities by leveraging the exciting synergies between people, technology and face-to-face connections that our modern landscape offers.

They will build upon the engaged communities of people that already exist online to develop incredible offline events that further drive these communities to engage online.

It's an exciting time for the meetings and events industry, and for those of us who embrace the new concept of 'building community' in 2016.

Contact us on:
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to find out more.