

BUSINESS EVENTS & HOSPITALITY

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INVESTMENT

Why you need to think beyond the event itself

Businesses are pumping increasing amounts of money into live experiences, but better measurement is needed to justify investment and maximise value post-event

Belinda Booker

Once upon a time, if an event ran smoothly and attracted enough attendees, it was considered a success. But with more marketing budget now being allocated, businesses need a better understanding of the return on investment an event delivers.

According to Damian Ferrar, innovation director at global experience agency Jack Morton Worldwide, his clients increasingly want event investment justified in the same way as digital spending.

“As event and experience budgets increase, there is definitely pressure to increase value,” he says. “Historically events and experiences have been quite practical and they haven’t necessarily been tied to a brand strategy, but they are becoming more sophisticated now.”

According to the *IPA Bellwether Report*, event budgets across the UK grew 3.4 per cent during the first quarter of 2019, while in America they are expected to account for at least 20 per cent of total marketing budgets this year, research from Bizzabo shows.

Capitalising on this investment is crucial, but to profit post-event, businesses need to change the way they behave pre-event and this starts with setting measurable objectives. After all, if you don’t know what success looks like, you can’t know if you’ve been successful.

Jack Morton Worldwide is working with clients, including Google, Reebok and Airbnb, to establish baseline measurements for things such as attendance, footfall, dwell time and even emotional response that it can benchmark for future events. Measurement also continues after the event, looking at the content attendees request post-event and how long they spend with it, for example.

“We’re building a platform where we can feed in APIs [application programming interfaces] from different partners that create a comprehensive dashboard of results,” says Mr Ferrar. “Before the event happens, each department needs to be clear on what data is valuable to them because it’s very difficult to analyse a set of data if you don’t know what you’re looking for. Clarity about the success criteria is the most important thing.”

Giving businesses the complete picture in terms of the return on investment their events have delivered means sometimes having to



find ways to quantify the intangible, such as the impact an event had on attendees. Luke Flett, client relationship director at events and communications agency Spark Thinking, believes defining the behaviour you want attendees to demonstrate post-event is integral to this.

“Things are complex and organic when you are dealing with a group of people’s intellectual and emotional response to what they are experiencing,” he says. “Value begins to appear when the commissioned agency can help the client to define what sort of outcomes are wanted from a session, meeting or series of events. The common phrase asked of clients is ‘what do you want your audience to go away and do?’”

John Fisher, managing director of brand engagement agency FMI, agrees that businesses must think beyond the event itself to really capitalise on it.

“We all know stories of companies who’ve had a big, flash product launch and then because they’ve spent so much money on it, don’t talk to the attendees for another three months,” he says. “The whole point is it’s a comms programme. It starts at the beginning of the process when you invite people to the event, through the event itself, then to the post-event survey and a sales analysis three months down the line.”

“Return on investment of events is at least a six-month process, with

the event being in the middle. If you don’t do all the things around it, you risk losing out.”

Mr Fisher, who works with clients including LG, Sony and Hotpoint, adds that all stakeholders in a business need to co-operate to maximise value from a live event. He says: “You have to talk to the marketing people and the market research people. You need to establish the expectations for the event and then look at whether those expectations were met. If they weren’t, you need to ask, what are we doing about it in terms of post-event comms?”

According to Jack Morton’s Mr Ferrar, input shouldn’t come from within the business alone. He advocates extending the lifespan of an event by getting attendees involved at the very outset.

“One of the things we’re trying to do is get events to last longer. Typically, it’s a finite number of hours or a number of days that your event lasts for, but you can extend the post-event experience by investing more in the pre-event experience,” he says.

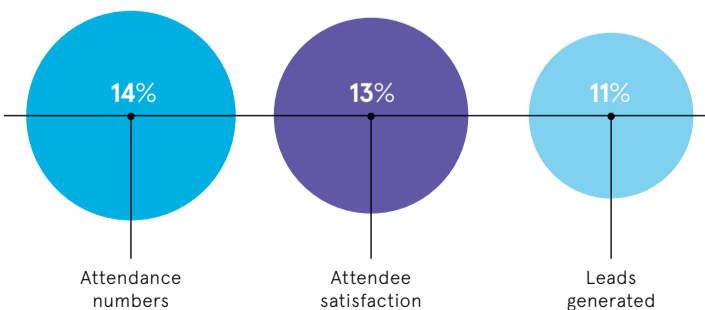
“We’re doing that by inviting attendees to participate earlier, asking them what kind of content they’re interested in, what’s the information they need from a particular event? Inviting them to shape the content not only makes the event more relevant for them, it means they’re more likely to engage with content post-event.”

This collaborative approach also makes participants more willing to share personal information, which can be a stumbling block for businesses organising events after the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation.

“Automation and artificial intelligence are great for gathering data, but there’s a massive lack of trust towards them. The challenge is how do you interact with a person and deal with that free flow of data in a very trusted way? You just need to be really clear about how long you’re going to have that information and what it’s going to be used for. Where possible, you always look at a very short-term requirement for data and use it as a separate data pool to the customer data the client already owns,” says Mr Ferrar.

While this makes it harder in terms of the delivery process, through embracing transparency, businesses can still gather the data they need to extract maximum value from their events. ●

TOP THREE FACTORS TO MEASURE EVENT RETURN ON INVESTMENT, ACCORDING TO EXECUTIVES



Cvent 2018

What makes a good speaker great?

Decades of experience and colourful slides won't count for a lot if you don't have the personality to engage your audience and deliver a memorable speech

Cath Everett

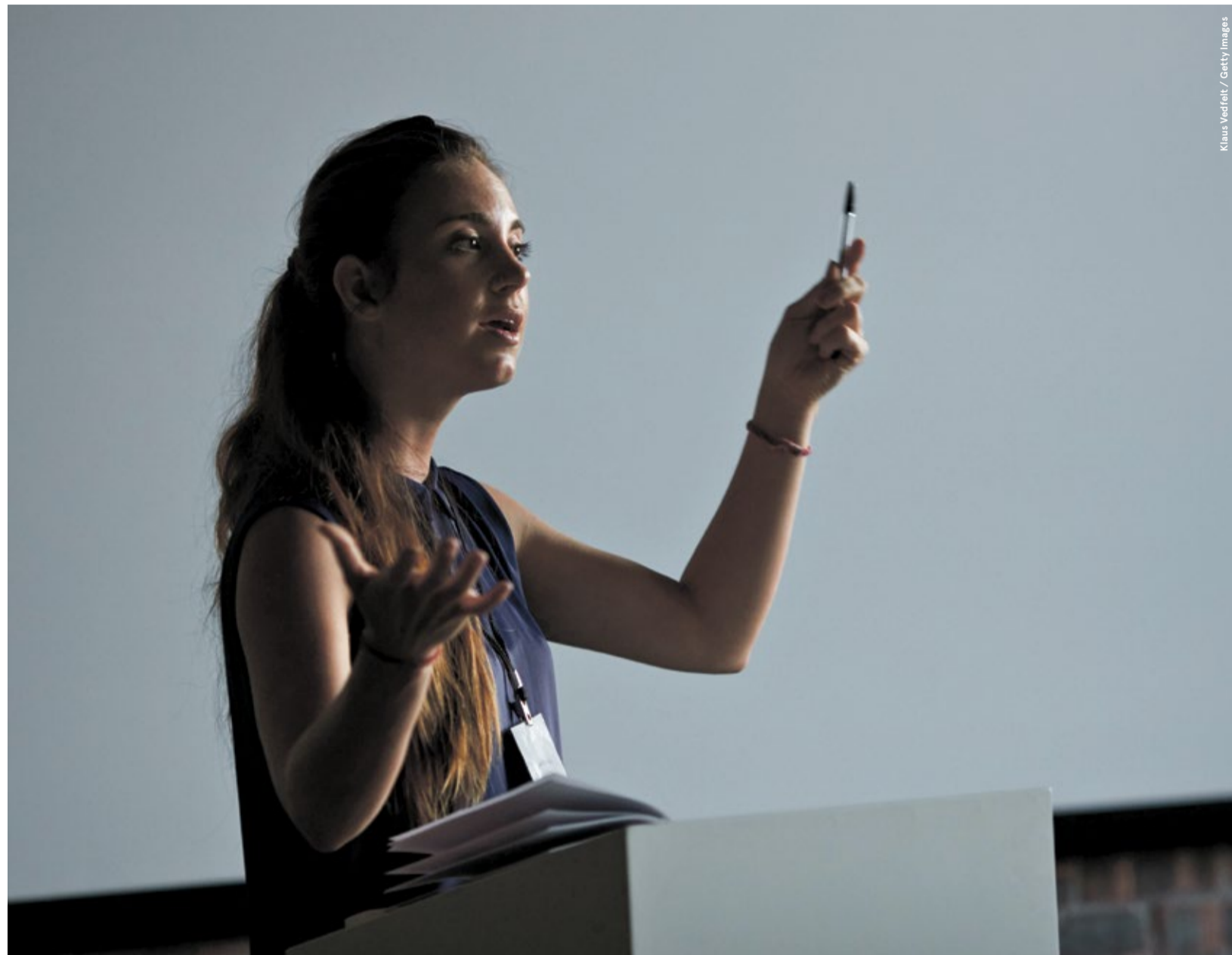
Public speaking commonly comes top of the list in surveys of people's fears. In fact, accepted wisdom says that a huge 75 per cent of individuals feel anxious to a greater or lesser extent when faced with presenting to an audience.

But exactly what is it that makes a good or bad speaker and what key qualities, characteristics and skills are required to wow listeners?

In the view of Bradley Mauleffinch, portfolio director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa at event organiser Imago Techmedia, it comes down to content and style, both of which are equally important.

"People want to feel speakers know what you're talking about, but 'personality' is the secret ingredient," he explains. "If you can't make the session engaging, you can have the best content in the world, but you'll be in trouble."

It also helps if presenters are famous in their field, while being controversial and even somewhat opinionated often adds a bit of spice too. More inexperienced speakers in the form of young social media influencers or entrepreneurs are also an increasing draw but can be complemented by veteran subject-matter experts



Klaus Vedfelt / Getty Images

to ensure the programme is a balanced one.

As to what having 'personality' actually means, Mr Mauleffinch describes it as "being able to bring your knowledge to life in some way". This is important because "the ability to relate to people at a human level is crucial", he believes.

Jay Sutri, a business presentation coach and author of *Ultimate Presentations*, agrees. "You can be the biggest expert in the world in

your subject, but if you don't think about how to put your content across in a way the audience can process, it undermines your credibility," she says. "So it's about being natural and connecting with people by being yourself."

Major no-nos include never looking up from your computer screen, reading from a slide deck, giving meandering speeches that overrun, and doing anything that distracts the audience from the message being discussed, such as gesticulating or moving around the stage too much.

Moreover, while props can be useful, it is crucial that they have a clear function and enhance an

individual's presentation rather than detract from it. For instance, slides should not be covered in wordy bullet points that people will inevitably read rather than focus on what is being said. Instead they should include visual images and no more than three words to help illustrate an argument.

Paul Russell, managing director at soft skills training provider Luxury Academy, explains: "It's about the message and people connecting with the message, and everything else, including body language and visual aids, should enhance that message. The aim is to bring the audience along with you on the ride, and to do that involves showing you are confident in both yourself and your subject – and that you don't take yourself too seriously."

As a result, he recommends that presenters start with an anecdote based on self-deprecating humour – rather than a gag, which may prove unwittingly offensive to different demographic groups. Asking the audience questions in a mini-quiz or taking a straw poll of opinions related to the topic

32%

of an events budget goes on speakers and talent

Eventbrite 2018

in hand can also be useful tricks to grab people's attention and engage them quickly.

As for controlling the inevitable nerves, it is worth bearing in mind that obsessing about it only makes things worse and a speaker's anxiety is always more noticeable to themselves than others.

Ms Sutri advises: "Nerves are just an adrenaline rush resulting from your fight or flight mechanism, so focus on feeling confident rather than scared as your brain will go where you tell it to and your body will follow. Remember to breathe and adopt a confident body posture and you'll start to feel more confident

PROPORTION OF EVENT PROFESSIONALS WHO CONSIDER SECURING TALENT AND SPEAKERS A BIG CHALLENGE



2017

2018

Eventbrite 2018



People want to feel speakers know what you're talking about, but 'personality' is the secret ingredient



The speaker diversity challenge

Lining up a diverse range of speakers is essential these days in order to create a progressive and insightful event. But in a business world where white, middle-class males continue to hold the majority of senior management positions so often favoured by audiences, the talent pool can be limited.

Furthermore, this situation also creates a Catch 22. Jay Sutri, a business presentation coach, explains: "If you don't see people like you, there are no role models and you don't feel like you belong. But taking a risk and going with less experienced speakers from outside the usual sources – such as book publishers, for example – means you can help inspire the next generation."

Chelsea Cox, founder of Well Defined, agrees that a 50:50 split in terms of using established speakers and "new faces" can often take you a long way down the diversity path.

"Nine times out of ten, 'new faces' come as recommendations from the established 50 per cent after they've come cross them on social media or at other events," she points out. "But at networking dos, it's also worth looking for young, up-and-coming people, who are entrepreneurs or just out of university."

Bradley Maule-ffinch from Imago Techmedia likewise recommends interacting with "grass roots" social media influencers as they tend to come from more diverse backgrounds than boardroom members or speakers on the books of talent agencies.

"There are lots of people doing everything from podcasts and blogging to Twitter," he says. "I'd recommend engaging with every medium you can and really understanding your market as it'll help you recognise who's doing interesting stuff on the edge."

– and the more you do it, the more it'll happen."

In fact, rehearsing as much as possible to iron out both content and style issues is a must – even for confident speakers – and event organisers' speaker relations teams have a useful role to play here.

"It's important to treat speakers like skittish racehorses, which means ensuring they feel well prepared, confident, comfortable and ready to go," explains Mr Maule-ffinch.

But as well as more formal run-throughs, Mr Russell also recommends that presenters practise their speech repeatedly in front of patient friends as doing so means constantly having to find new ways of saying the same thing so that they remain engaged.

Another tip is to keep everything as simple as possible, which includes avoiding big words and complex sentences, in order to make content "relatable and understandable".

"The very best speakers look as if they're doing it ad lib while standing having a chat, but that level of effortlessness takes days of practice in front of the mirror," Mr Russell says.

Put another way, preparation and planning are key to success. In a content sense, before doing anything else, it is imperative that speakers come up with an engaging title and summary for their presentation as it is these commonly overlooked elements that act as initial bait for the audience. Event organisers' speaker relations teams can provide invaluable support here.

But they also have a useful role to play in helping presenters understand their audience, and what is likely to interest and, even more importantly, constitute 'value' to it in presentation terms.

According to Ms Sutri, the best place to start when preparing a speech is at the end, perhaps with a call to action or advice point, and to "reverse-engineer it from there". She also advises against including too much content as most listeners can absorb on average up to three core messages. This means prioritising and structuring the presentation around these points, which should be illustrated with stories and case studies.

But it is also vital that speeches do not end up being "too regimented", warns Chelsea Cox, founder of events organiser, Well Defined. As a result, she advises: "Figure out what topic is likely to have the biggest impact, work out a framework for your talk, and plan for flow. Create a start and an end, but ensure there's space for flexibility in between, so you can change tack if the engagement isn't there."

In other words, preparing for worst-case scenarios, which includes



It's about the message and people connecting with the message, and everything else, including body language and visual aids, should enhance that message

timing errors and malfunctioning technology, is imperative.

But Ms Cox also notes that over time, most speakers "evolve through experience, and so it's important to create a community to support that growth".

To this end, she arranges a dinner every quarter to provide her speakers with a forum to discuss trending topics and build relationships both with herself and peers. Ms Cox also regularly attends networking events, such as launches and book signings, to both show support and spot potential new talent.

"People feel more supported if they have a say and feel involved in helping to put a content plan together or suggest an idea for a panel they'd like to host," she says. "There needs to be constant engagement and if you keep people close, it all makes for better events – for everyone." ●

OPINION

'This is a diverse industry which needs to make the most of tech and every asset it has'

What are the forces currently driving progress and change in the events industry?"

Reflecting on the answers, I observed a striking common factor: they are all based on leveraging organisational assets, from data to human or artificial talent, to sustainable materials and care for the Earth's resources.

Event creators, strategists and planners the world over are under more pressure than ever to conjure up ideas and activations that ignite a 'wow' from their audience. Dozens of exhibitors in the Live Zones at IMEX events showcase their creativity and provoke attendees to consider 'how to wow.' The demand for creativity is here to stay.

This demand brings a new challenge. "The pressure to delight" as it was described by one event planner recently: the need to keep on coming up with new ways to spark that precious 'wow' as events become more varied and experiential. This pressure to delight is driving the industry to seek out even more new creative – perhaps sensational – ways to excite and impress audiences.

For many years at events such as the IMEX Policy Forum, this industry has been working hard to persuade governments to invest in and support the industry as a major sector, directly and indirectly making a large economic contribution. What the industry lacked was strong, striking financial data to quantify it and put its power into perspective – until now.

Business events, including meetings, are now proven to generate \$1 trillion in direct spend alone worldwide every year, according to the Events Industry Council's (EIC) Global Economic Significance of Business Events study. This ranks the business events sector alongside consumer electronics in terms of size and scope.

This research is a powerful and priceless asset that the whole global industry should be sharing and highlighting to influencers outside the market. The EIC's recent study is thought to be the result of the biggest collaboration on a single project that the meetings industry has ever seen.

An EY report asked: "Is collaboration the new innovation?" It says: "In a world of digital disruption and industry convergence, companies now often find they must collaborate to secure the skills, assets and support they need. Successful innovation, in particular, is difficult for any organisation to achieve alone." The events industry has grasped the benefit of this concept and is making the most of it.

The growing use of 'Instagrammable' and 'Snapchatable' moments defines the social media-led mindset that is driving a new approach to event marketing, design and planning. Many event planners' first thought now is, "how will this food, this table, this stage set look on Instagram?" The result? Social media is now leading the design of events and activities, not just the reporting on them.

Facial recognition is another technology that is starting to be used widely in the industry. We're about to use at IMEX in Frankfurt for check-in at an event.

The industry, like the world, is now focused on action on sustainability. Replacing single-use plastic drinking bottles and straws is a start. Through its own waste donation programme and the responsible recycling systems at Messe Frankfurt, the IMEX Group now sends zero waste to landfill after IMEX in Frankfurt.

The use of vinyl banners when non-vinyl is also available is an opportunity for change that has been gaining awareness through IMEX chief operating officer Nalan Emre's presentations at major industry conferences. I expect industry contractors will soon start encouraging event organisers and exhibitors to specify non-vinyl banners and other sustainable materials.

This is a diverse industry which needs to make the most of technology and every single asset it has, while continuing to encourage social responsibility, inclusion and environmental awareness. Overall, they present exciting opportunities to take our industry forward.

IMEX Frankfurt 2019 takes place on May 21-23 at Messe Frankfurt.

IMEX America 2019 takes place on September 10-12 at Sands Expo, Las Vegas.



Carina Bauer
Chief executive
IMEX Group

57m+

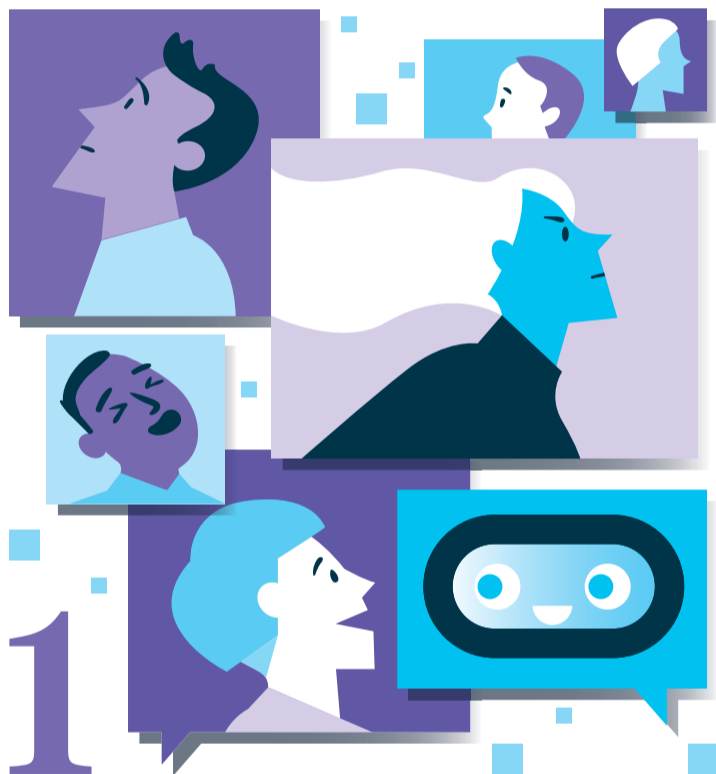
views for the most popular TED Talk in history, by Sir Ken Robinson

TECHNOLOGY

Four technologies to change events forever

The events industry keeps getting bigger, but is famously slow to evolve. However, forward-thinking planners are trying to shift the paradigm, with new technologies promising to disrupt the guest experience

Dan Thomas



AI

Julius Solaris, founder of event trends platform EventMB, says he could talk for hours about how artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms will change the event experience, although some innovations are likely to take hold sooner than others.

One will be chatbots: computer programs designed to answer frequently asked questions in a way that mimics human interaction with a conversational partner. They can be controlled through text commands or voice activated and are already being placed at strategic points throughout conferences or events.

"At a conference, if you want to know what session is next, you need to pull out your phone, open the event app, find the schedule and scroll through. That minute-and-a-half is an eternity in event time," says Mr Solaris.

"But if you could stop and ask a chatbot, you'd save that time. Organisers could also reduce the cost of hiring temporary staff."

AI-powered facial recognition technology may take longer to gain

traction, but could revolutionise events, he says, speeding up entry by a factor of five, much like epassport gates do at airports. It could also bolster security at high-profile events, which have become terrorist targets in recent years.

William Thomson, founder of event technology consultancy Gallus Events, thinks AI will really come into its own in telling organisers how attendees feel about an event, both during and after. "You will be able to work out who was engaging and at what point," he says.

Such tech is already used commercially, enabling retailers and marketers to detect hidden emotions by studying the micro-expressions on customers' faces in photographs and video. Take the startup Affectiva, whose platform records video of faces, then codes people's expressions frame by frame to assess their mood.

"At events, you would never have to ask for attendee feedback, which can be an arduous process. You would just have a system that would tell you 72 per cent of people felt this, for instance," says Mr Thomson.

Live streaming

Live streamed events are already taking off. Look at the way Twitter has broadcast NFL football games and Facebook has shown baseball to their millions of users, enabling sports broadcasters to reach vast new audiences.

However, many in the event industry are wary that it could end up cannibalising their ticket revenues, as people decide not to show up in person and simply tune in online. "There is a love-hate relationship between planners and live streaming," says Mr Solaris at EventMB.

But he notes that when social media emerged in the mid-noughties, many in the industry freaked out, viewing it as an existential threat, while the opposite turned out to be true. "Actually, fear of missing out on Instagram or Twitter makes people freak out and want to be there in person. It will be the same with live streaming," he says.

Gallus Events' Mr Thomson agrees, adding that emergence of tools, such as 360-degree cameras, is only going to enrich the experience of watching events from home. He says: "Organisers have to take advantage of this. Rather than just having 1,000 people come in person, you can have 100,000 online."



RFID

Radio-frequency identification, or RFID, technology enables digital data to be encoded in tags or badges and transmitted to physical readers using radio waves. Video game controllers, keyless car fobs and fitness wristbands are just some of the gadgets using it.

And while it is not widely used in the events industry because of its cost, this is almost certain to change, says EventMB's Mr Solaris.

He says we can get a pretty good idea about how it might be applied by looking at the Disney World theme park in Florida. Visitors are given RFID bands that allow them to touch to enter their resort hotel

rooms, make purchases and get preferential access to rides. "Your meals are even pre-loaded on it. It's a cashless paradise," says Mr Solaris.

Similar smart bracelets and badges could help events and conferences run more smoothly. They could also collect reams of useful data, from how many people attended, to where they went and what they liked.

"Imagine you had an event with 5,000 people, you might rely on event staff to tell you when were the busy times," says Gallus Events' Mr Thomson. "But RFID would help you identify hotspots. That helps planners know where to place stands; when you have a big event it is really hard to tell."



VR and AR

Virtual engagement at events is also being revolutionised by virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), – a trend likely to accelerate.

Mr Thomson at Gallus Events thinks AR, where objects viewed in the real world are augmented by computer-generated visuals, could make content much more dynamic. Using enabled smart glasses, phones or tablets, attendees are already able to view supplementary information about seminars, or experience breathtaking mixed reality at exhibition stands.

"You could be at a hospitality conference and stop at a stand promoting kitchen knives. You could pick up a knife and suddenly find you're stood next to Jamie Oliver cutting courgettes," he says.

VR, where you are transported to another world altogether through your VR-enabled headset, takes this idea even further. It could also be used both by attendees at an event or those tuning in virtually. "At the moment, VR works with pre-recorded video, but in the future it could work with live streaming. With a 360-degree camera, it would be transformational," says Mr Thomson.

Many events companies are sceptical about technology, but EventMB's Mr Solaris says they must accept the world is changing.

"With everybody doing events, there needs to be a differentiation point and it's coming from these technologies," he says. "The issue is creating value from it. Sometimes there will be a short-term gain, but in most cases it takes time." ●



New age of business events is here

Russ Lidstone, group chief executive of The Creative Engagement Group, parent group of events division WRG, explains how events have evolved to reflect a new culture of business

We've all been there. A conference where the speakers read their speeches in a monotone, one after another, part of a rigid agenda, in a faceless hotel, making delegates feel they've time-warped back to a Soviet party congress. In a rapidly evolving business culture of engagement, curiosity, inclusion and innovation, this is unforgivable. Events ought to be inspiring, immersive and provoking. When done well, they can utterly change the way an organisation is perceived and impact how engaged stakeholders behave.

WRG has more than 25 years' experience in creating stand-out business and consumer events, working with brands from HSBC and Nissan to Shell and large pharmaceutical businesses. We have built a reputation in Europe and the United States for delivering some of the most outstanding experiences in the corporate world.

However, in recent years we have partnered with clients to lead the way in helping them transform how they run their business events, to reflect their changing cultures and capitalise on new technologies available to our interactive and immersive team.

Like all companies, the blue-chip organisations we work with are seeing a radical evolution in their workforce. Mobile and remote working, multi-generational teams, and the transparency required

“
The changing nature of business and a new direction from innovative leaders needs to be reflected in events

in the glare of social media mean businesses have had to evolve, and move from command-and-control to connect-and-collaborate philosophies.

Look at chief executives like Vas Narasimhan at Novartis. They are in the middle of transformation programmes to create more open, responsive cultures. Employees are engaged, constantly feed back and management respond to their ideas. It's brought companies and employees together, which is critical for any organisation in today's fast-moving landscape.

The changing nature of business and a new direction from innovative leaders needs to be reflected in events and here are a few things we've learnt to create more participation, increase engagement and deliver greater commercial effectiveness.

MOVE FROM “INFORM” TO “INVOLVE”

Companies have to think much more about what an audience wants to get out of the event. Delegates don't want to be lectured, they want to be involved. I often say employees now want to work with their companies, not for them, so transparency and two-way communication are at the heart of the way we plan meetings. Therefore, businesses and event agencies need to be braver in providing the space and tools for that engagement.

We recently designed and delivered a conference for a large pharmaceutical organisation with an ambition to foster an environment of “safety to fail”, and asked delegates to vote for the best successes and failures of the business. The content then morphed to fit the results. We boldly left a blank agenda on the final day for delegates to present their own stories and work with a speaker coach to help deliver their content. This transparency allowed the delegates to deliver their content in a psychologically safe environment. As a result, 90 per cent of delegates were inspired to do things differently, and 100 per cent of delegates felt energised to build partnerships and collaborate more.

EXTEND BEYOND THE EVENT

All engagement activity needs to reflect the multi-faceted, multi-screen, always-on communications landscape. Engagement starts before the event and continues afterwards,

so we always aim to be creative with formats to recognise events as a part of an ongoing engagement programme. We help many clients to create eclectic formats to suit the audience environment. For example, we often encourage the capture and broadcast of film content from meetings, so our in-house hybrid broadcast team can engage those unable to attend, plus create thought-leadership content to support local and global post-event online media campaigns.

Businesses can see the impact of the content well after the event has finished and engage with a larger audience, regardless of whether or not they attended. This drives participation and extends reach, ultimately delivering greater return on investment.

USE PHYSICAL SPACE TO STRENGTHEN EXPERIENCE

The physical environment for events increasingly needs to put people into the right mindset to receive content and experience messaging, rather than just hearing it. After all, they can listen to it online. Thinking about the physical flow of your event and how delegates are going to navigate the

agenda or floorspace, as well as the use of touch, taste and smell, can have a huge impact on their experience. This is why our environments team work to bring the brand values into a physical and tactile environment for clients such as Google to land messaging with more potency.

LET TECHNOLOGY FACILITATE REAL-TIME AGILITY

An integrated solution for clients incorporating responsive technology enables us to adjust live experiences in real time. While event apps have become standard, increasingly we are supporting clients to use RFID (radio-frequency identification) and anonymised facial recognition camera tracking technology to track delegate movement. This enables us to analyse data and adjust environmental flow or layouts in real time.

TALK TO “THE REAL SELF”

Alongside the business-orientated agenda, delegates are increasingly keen to learn and experience new ways of thinking about themselves and bringing their real selves into the corporate environment. This means providing breakouts or content that also recognises their life beyond the organisation. For example, for a healthcare client, we delivered workshops on sleep management which demonstrated the importance of wellbeing in the workplace. They were highly informative and totally oversubscribed, demonstrating how engaging and effective they were.

BIGGER SPEAKERS, SMALLER STAGES

Clients value meaningful content over potentially vacuous, shiny production with bells and whistles. This means having compelling speakers matters more than ever, but you also need to make the most of them. Rather than simple podium-based broadcasts, we encourage a compelling mix of keynotes, fireside chats, panel discussions and huddles, alongside off-site business visits. This requires a more agile approach, combined with exemplary production discipline.

Events provide some of the best opportunities for companies to engage and embrace key stakeholders. Getting maximum impact means reinventing the experience in line with how our work and life experience is changing. This requires an innovative mindset and clients to cede some control.

Delegates will thank you for it and engagement with your organisation will benefit as a result. Importantly, we will all be thankful never to experience that Soviet party congress time warp, ever again.

To find out more please visit wrglive.com



The six lessons

1

Move from “inform” to “involve”

2

Extend beyond the event

3

Use physical space to strengthen experience

4

Let technology facilitate real-time agility

5

Talk to “the real self”

6

Bigger speakers, smaller stages

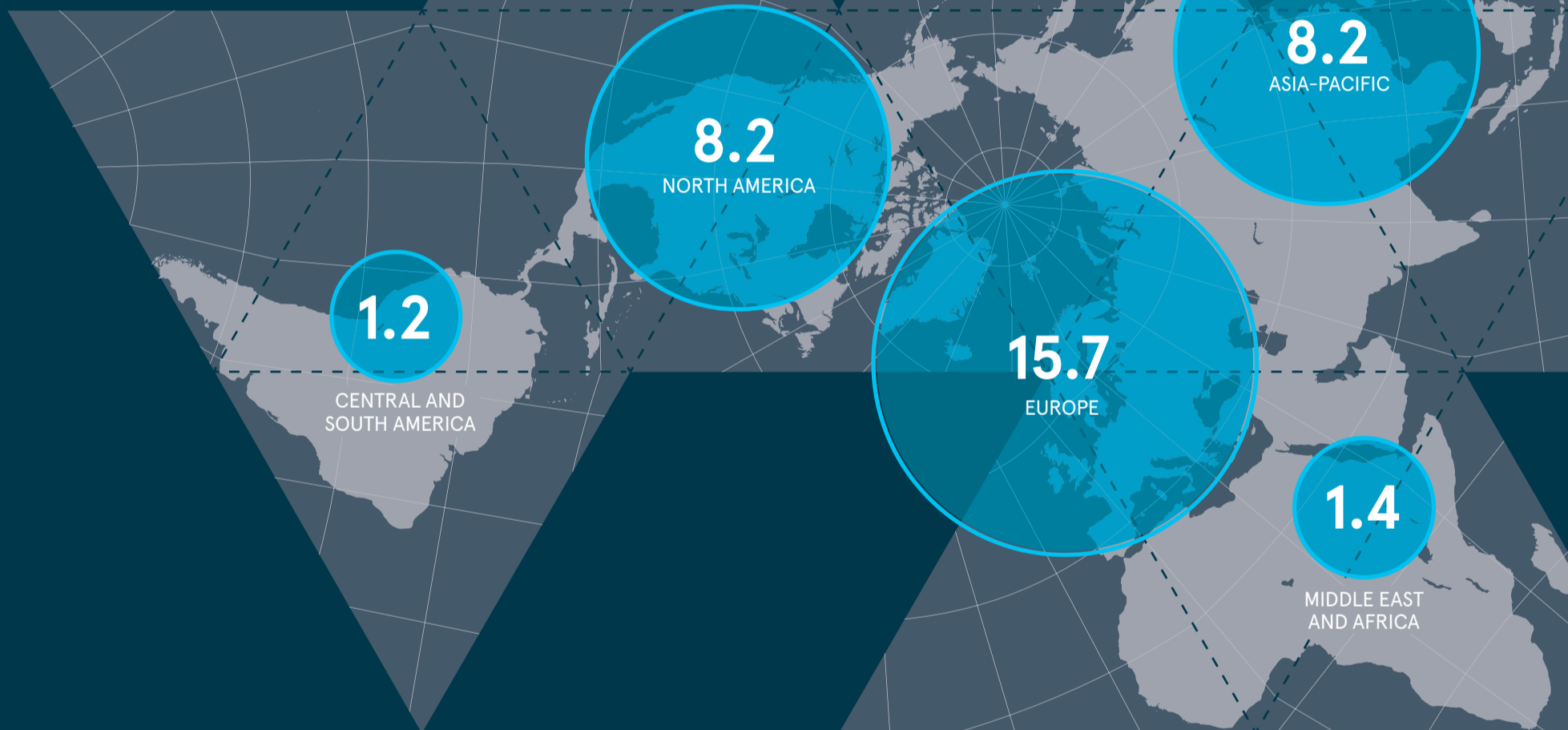
LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION

Competing in an increasingly busy events space, order to provide a unique experience. What are t when deciding on the next destination for their b

GLOBAL EVENT SPACE CAPACITY

Million square metres

GBTA 2018



LARGEST EXHIBITION HALLS IN THE WORLD

Hall capacity in thousand square metres

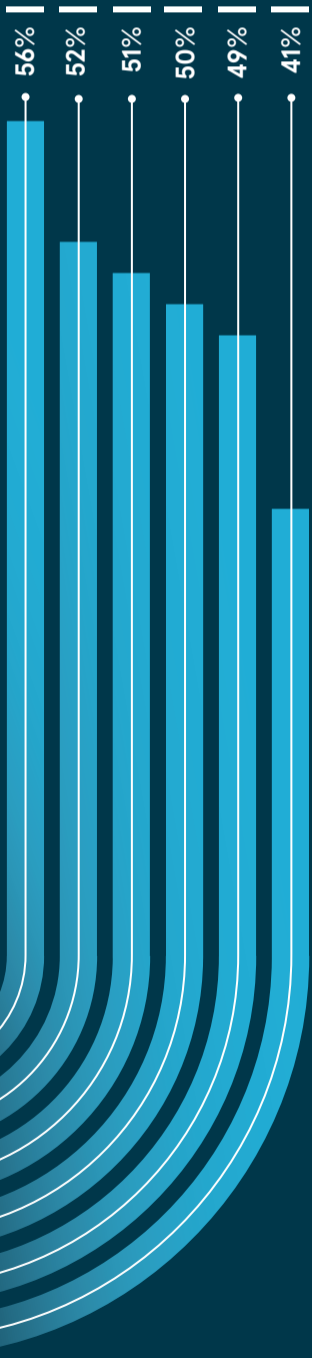


organisations are looking further afield in
the main considerations for companies
business event?

60%

of business trips turned
into "bleisure" (business
leisure) in 2017

Expedia Group 2017



TOP PERKS FOR ATTENDEES

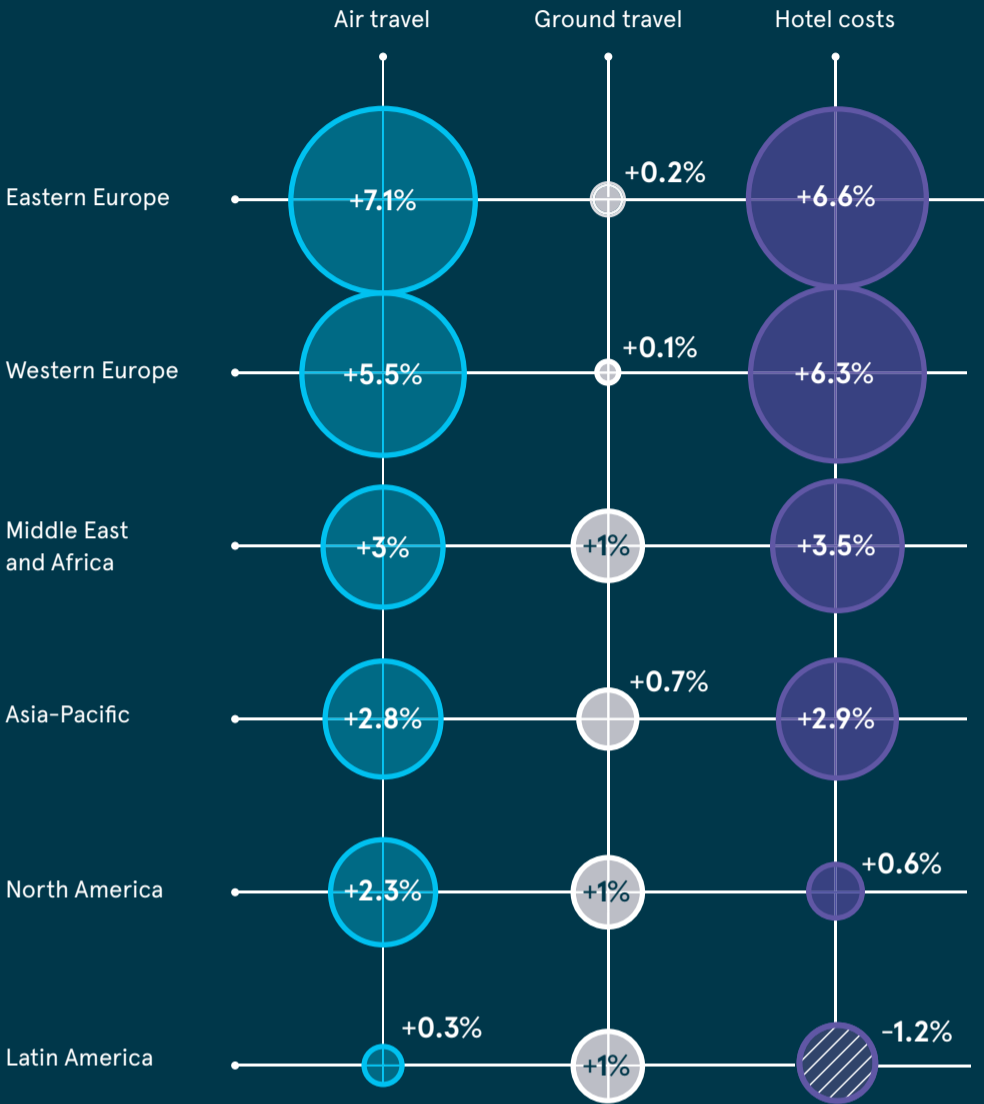
What makes a great
"leisure" destination?

- Food/restaurants
- Beaches
- Natural sightseeing locations
- Weather
- Historical monuments/sightseeing
- Museum/arts/culture

Expedia Group 2017

CHANGE IN BUSINESS TRAVEL COSTS WORLDWIDE

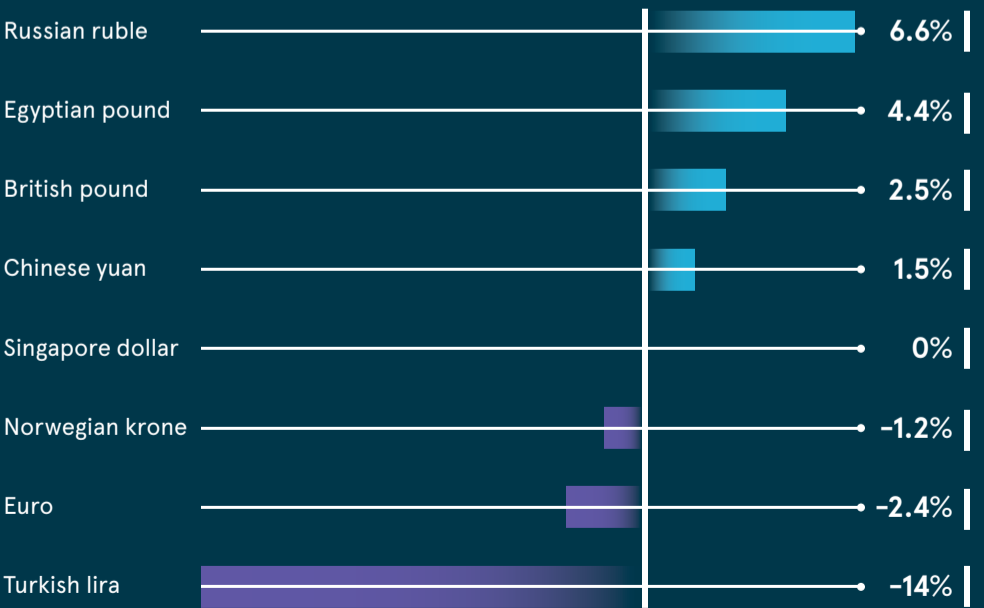
Annual change in costs between 2017 and 2018



GBTA 2017

SWINGS IN CURRENCIES COULD IMPACT THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SOME MARKETS

Currencies against the US dollar, year-to-date change as of 8 May 2019



Thomson Reuters Datastream 2019



Calimage/Sam Edwards/Getty Images

SEXISM

Events industry must put a stop to sexism

From so-called booth babes to sexual harassment of women, sexism remains rife in areas of the events industry, and some organisers must try harder to set a more inclusive tone

Emma Woollacott

The #MeToo movement has received a big boost in recent years, not least in the events industry. Notably, there was widespread outrage when it was revealed that hostesses had been groped and abused at the annual Presidents Club Charity Dinner in London, attended by hundreds of businessmen and financiers.

An investigation by the *Financial Times* uncovered evidence that organisers of the men-only event ordered hostesses to wear skimpy outfits and many of the women said they were harassed or assaulted. In the hubbub that followed, organiser David Meller quit his job with the Department for Education's board

of directors and earlier this year the club was disbanded altogether.

The recent rise in prominence of the #MeToo movement has made such behaviour all the more likely to be called out and in most professional situations there's now a strong focus on treating everybody, male or female, in a respectful manner.

However, the events industry seems to have a particular problem. Soon after the Presidents Club scandal, and despite a warning by the chief executive of the UK Gambling Commission Sarah Harrison, the three-day International Casino Exhibition Totally Gaming 2018 took place, complete with a *Playboy*-themed strip show, pole dancing and scantily clad women galore.

"Really, the prevalence of employing so-called booth babes, and colloquially referring to them as such at events, sets the tone and atmosphere," says Lin Classon, head of public cloud product services at cloud management firm Ensono, which recently surveyed women about their experience of technology conferences.

"To me, the most revealing incident occurred last year during CES, the largest consumer electronics show in the world, with a stage hosting 'stripper robots'."

There are, though, moves to clean the industry up. Last year, for example, Sarah Soliman of Soliman Productions and Courtney Stanley of CS Consulting launched #MeetingsToo, an initiative based on the #MeToo movement aimed at stamping out sexual harassment at meetings and events.

"It is a big problem within the live events space and a lot of it boils

down to the type of environment that's expected and created at live events," says Ms Stanley.

"At a live event, you typically see a lot of alcohol that is not only complimentary, but also typically endless, so you've got a four-to-six-hour event taking place in the evening where there is also somewhat of a vacation mindset."

Ms Stanley and Ms Soliman recommend creating a code of conduct for every event, and making sure that every attendee is given a copy. Event organisers should also hire security staff or volunteers along with a designated point person, they say. Finally, organisers should poll attendees after the event to discover whether they have been happy with the way things have been handled.

"I really don't feel like that has to impact any kind of fun that is to be had at the event. I think there can be absolutely a fantastic event where every attendee has an exceptional experience and part of that is that they feel safe," says Ms Stanley.

"I personally don't recommend that we completely change to a situation where there's no alcohol and no fun to be had."

Importantly, there should be sanctions for harassment or misconduct. "I think what's necessary is first being preventative and second taking action. There's no point being preventative unless you're prepared to actually do something, like asking somebody to leave a conference," says Ms Stanley.

"If you don't do that and take on the challenge of holding people responsible for their actions, you'll never reach the goal of actually providing a safe environment."

However, says Ms Soliman, there's only so much that events organisers can do. "If I'm a business owner, and I'm going to exhibit at a trade show and have booth babes, I think that's down to the company and not the events industry," she says. "Once we are in the venue, though, it really is the organisation and the venue's responsibility to ensure safety and security."

Shockingly, according to the Ensono research, one in four women has experienced sexual harassment at a tech conference. One respondent, a speaker at an international technology conference, says she was assaulted during the early-morning welcome mingle.

She says: "I introduced myself by extending my hand to the nearest

“
There's no point being preventative unless you're prepared to actually do something

person, who proceeded to grab my hand tight and pull me close, way too close and so hard I lost balance and had to step towards him, while he said something like 'tell me what you're working on sweetie'.

"I was perplexed and took a step back. The T-shirt I was wearing had a decorative zipper in front, right under my breasts, which he proceeded to grab and pull on, essentially 'bouncing' my breasts. 'I bet people do that all the time,' he said."

Ms Classon believes that one reason sexual harassment is so rife at events is because too few women are involved at a senior level. Only 25 per cent of tech conference keynotes in the last three years have been made by women and 70 per cent of the women surveyed who have sat on a panel at a tech conference reported being the only woman there.

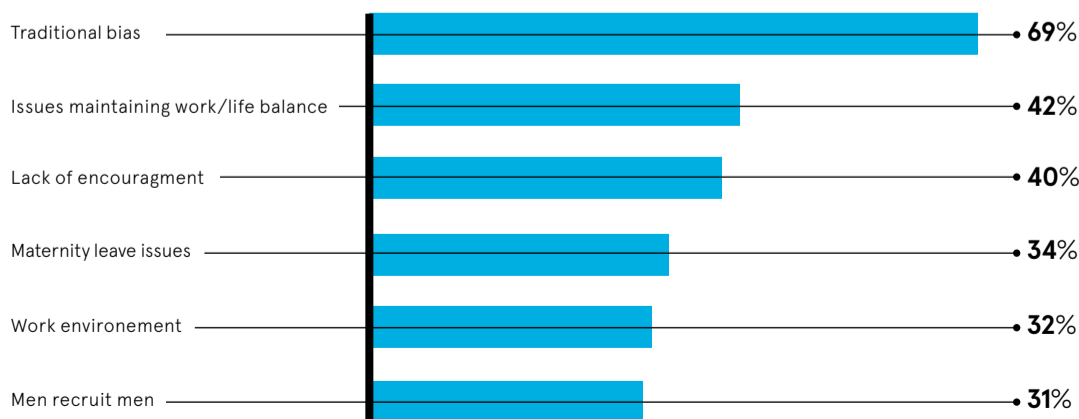
"What does that say to women who are just as dedicated and committed as their male counterpart? That we don't belong," she says. "In addition to instituting and reinforcing a code of conduct, we'd like to encourage the industry to make an effort to include more diverse speakers in the line-up."

Things aren't exactly improving quickly, with the Ensono research revealing there was only a 4 per cent increase in the number of female speakers between 2016 and 2018, and delegates saying harassment is still rife. The #MeToo trend is slow to catch on in the events world, it seems.

"The rampant sexism in the events industry has persisted for so long because it was not seen as an issue that affects the bottom line of either the event organisers or the organisations who send their employees to these events. 'Boys will always be boys,' we're told," says Ms Classon.

"As long as this mentality continues to be allowed to flourish in corporations around the world, we will be continuing to fight an uphill battle." ●

WHY THE UK EVENTS, TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY BELIEVES WOMEN ARE UNDER REPRESENTED AT SENIOR LEVEL



BCD Meetings and Events 2018

Creating live experiences

In almost all areas of life, human connections and interactions enable better understanding, not just of one another, but also the world around us

Experiences and memories are made through physical connections with one another, and for brands it's increasingly becoming a necessary element of the marketing mix and strategy.

The presence of consumers in live event settings often enables emotional responses and more lasting bonds with brands. Few brands understand this better than Red Bull, which has spent decades building a reputation for creating highly emotive and engaging events across sports, music and culture.

A common challenge facing brands and marketers in the events and hospitality sector is the need to create lasting relationships with consumers. "For all the growth of the online world, physical experiences are what stimulate and allow people to feel fulfilled," says Chris Preston, managing director of Freeman in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

With brand interactions being much more fleeting, due to the myriad of choices consumers now possess, marketers need to ensure that messaging, as well as their brand experience as a whole, is engaging, timely and, above all, relevant and meaningful. This is where live brand experience excels.

Mr Preston delves into the challenges facing brands and marketers reaching audiences in an event setting.

He says: "In a world with increasing competition and varieties of choice for people's attention, it's about creating live experiences, using data-driven insight, that genuinely connect brands with their audiences and ultimately create a truly positive and highly emotive response. This is key to crystallising these meaningful connections."

With 90 per cent of companies using event data to inform wider marketing strategies and one third of consumers having paid to attend a live brand experience, it's clear brands are taking steps in the right

direction to ensure connections exist after the initial interaction.

"If you can create an event which is meaningful, on-brand and meets the needs of the community that you're trying to connect with, the potential levels for attendance and participation are immense. It's about relevance and connection," says Mr Preston.

"We partnered with Vodafone to help create a message that captured the imagination and made the launch of 5G real for attendees. Using live-streaming and holograms to demonstrate the benefit and use of the technology, it allowed people to connect with and understand why 5G is useful, which is how the story comes alive."

As brands continue to shift their focus and attention to Generation Z, how can marketers embrace a demographic much more socially and ethically conscious than previous generations, while also much more likely to research a brand online before purchasing from them?

"The only way to connect with an audience like Gen Z is to create something real for them, but you have to go a step further to try and understand the aspirations of consumers; it becomes much easier to communicate with them," says Mr Preston, who adds that it's not product-led, but experience-led marketing.

In a digital media-led world, reaching your audience is one thing, but to get them to not only attend, but be fully engaged at a conference, exhibition or branded event is a task in itself.

"Vodafone's drone racing installation at Goodwood Festival of Speed brought the brand's augmented and virtual reality technology to life by allowing people to master a new skill. This is great technology that people have heard about; and if you can make it real and enjoyable then they can participate in that journey, as opposed to just spectating," says Mr Preston.

According to research by Mintel, mobile applications play a key role



Live experiences that create lasting memories through shared experiences can create a ripple effect and are remembered

DEPENDENCE ON DATA



98%

of marketers use data to secure budget



89%

of marketers use data to make strategic decisions



66%

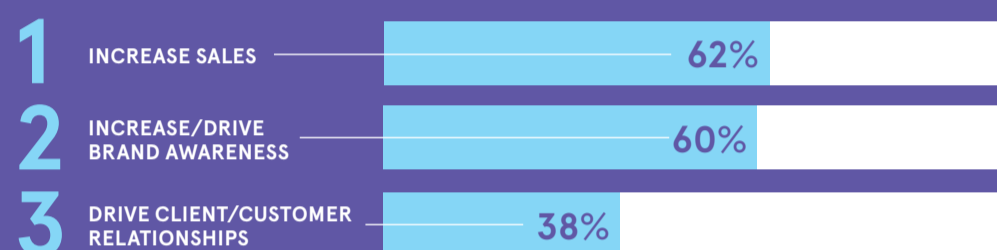
of top corporations are increasing investment in marketing data and analytics for 2019



67%

of top companies that have previously invested in data and measurement, maintain a separate budget for this

TOP 3 PRIMARY CORPORATE MARKETING OBJECTIVES



Generate new leads came in fourth (not first!)

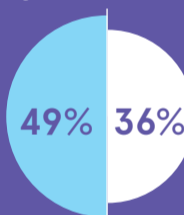
CORPORATE MARKETER'S TOP DATA TRENDS

Biggest challenges and pain points related to marketing data capture and management: analysing the data effectively

46%

Event marketers in B2B sectors are much more focused on generating new leads compared to consumer-facing event marketers

B2B event marketers



Consumer-facing event marketers

88%

of companies use event data to inform other marketing strategies

in enhancing customer experience, driving networking, interaction, exposure and virtual reality technology functionality. This has enabled event organisers to capture and collect data from these apps to improve future operations.

It's also one of the key reasons why 89 per cent of marketers use data in making strategic decisions, and two thirds of top corporations are increasing investment in marketing data and analytics for 2019.

The role of technology has been increasingly significant in the live event space. While technology that enables unique consumer

interactions can often be attractive, Mr Preston believes the intent is just as important as the use of technology.

"It's not just about getting people into the environment so they can see the brand, but getting them to be a part of the journey that makes it understandable, pleasurable and memorable," he says. "Technology such as augmented and virtual reality is used to enhance the experience, but the environment should allow for it to be purposeful because technology for technology's sake isn't always an effective way to ensure the brand's message is clear."

That said, Mr Preston reiterates that leading with the strategy and creative work before envisioning how an event comes to life enables brands to better understand not only where their audiences are, but how to communicate with them.

"Today it's about understanding where communities gather, how memories can be enriched and enhanced by centring events around key interests of audiences," he says.

Live experiences that create lasting memories through shared experiences can create a ripple effect

and are remembered, even felt, long after a consumer's interaction at an event. Not only does it enable brands to think more broadly about how to engage with consumers post-event, but it also indicates that personal bonds, which extend beyond live environments, are what strengthen the wider brand experience.

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F R E E M A N

DESTINATIONS

Looking further afield may hold the answer

The events industry is becoming more adventurous, with companies exploring destinations and experiences previously overlooked. But what are the business advantages of finding new destinations for corporate events?



Charles Orton-Jones

Marketing agency Cohesive wanted somewhere a bit different for its company get-together. It searched the map and discovered the West Usk Lighthouse on the South Wales coast.

“It was superb,” says Andy Crisp of Cohesive. “Gazing out from the lighthouse across the estuary at low tide seemed to conjure up countless possibilities. There just seemed to be visual stimuli wherever you looked. We had the run of the place, so were also able to hold sessions in different parts of the lighthouse. It was a glorious winter’s day too, so that added to the effect, especially when it came to the 15-minute walk along the seafront to a pub lunch in a remote spot.”

Inspired? Yes. But unusual? Not entirely. The events sector is more adventurous than ever, with companies exploring venues previously overlooked. Some are zones previously known only for tourism. Others are in locations in economically less renowned area. Venue owners are playing a part as they’ve woken up to the financial potential of attracting corporate customers to provide round-the-year income.

For example, Costa Coffee recently chose eco-lodge wood cabins by the scenic Scottish town of Moffat, near Dumfries. The rural venue, run by Wigwam Holidays, offers a total break from urban life. Delegates can go fell walking and orienteering in the day, and sit by firepits under one of Europe’s first certified dark skies at night. And down in Somerset, the famous caves of Wookey Hole have played host to delegates from Waitrose, Tesco and Clarks shoes.

Overseas destinations are benefiting too from this new trend for adventurousness. Turkey, for example, is currently attractive due to the struggling economy. The country is mired in deep recession and the currency has plummeted against the pound.

Brand engagement agency FMI chose Turkey for a conference for Targus, a computer peripherals company. Dave Ball, events director at FMI, says the fundamentals of Turkey are fantastic. “The country has invested heavily in its infrastructure, with a new \$12-billion international airport, the second-largest in the world after Dubai. Due to its prime

geographical location and the excellent flight access, Istanbul certainly ticks the box for accessibility,” says Mr Ball.

Do a bit of haggling and you’ll get something seriously upmarket. “Istanbul’s four and five-star hotels are offering amazing rates and added extras,” he says. “The city is doing so much to gain the trust of the corporate buyer with added security measures, excellent value, great hotels with modern conference facilities and a cosmopolitan experience.”

2.2m+

bleisure trips were taken by business travellers around the world in 2017

SAP Concur 2018

Mentimeter, an interactive presentation platform, chose Palermo for a one-month company relocation project. Staff worked and slept in the extraordinary 14th-century palazzo La Bella Palermo. The cost of a get-away in Palermo is a fraction of more traditional destinations. This is a city where an espresso costs €1 and a terrific meal can be had for a third of London prices. The allure of Sicily’s architecture, history, energy and, of course, sunshine, tell their own story.

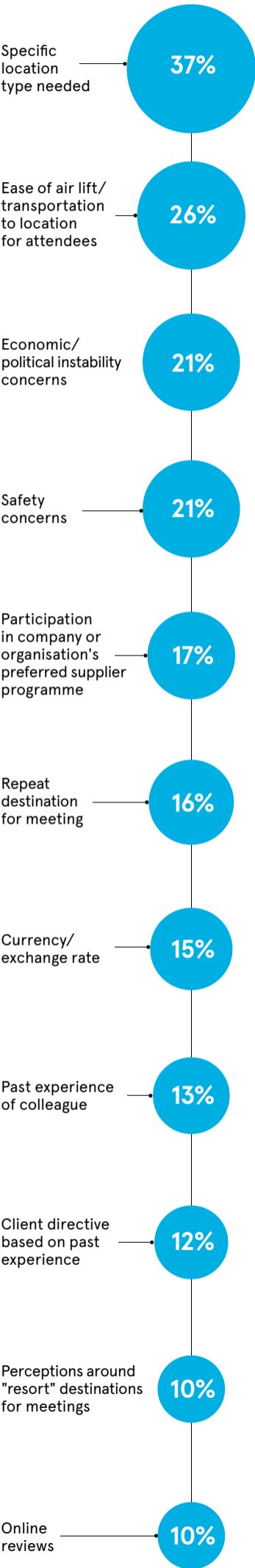
Mastercard, the payments company, is particularly bold in it’s choices. For its Global Risk Leadership conference, Mastercard has in recent years been to Dubrovnik, Cannes and New Delhi.

These days pretty much anywhere can be rented for a corporate event. The Birmingham Museums Trust is actively marketing the city’s superlative venues to corporate clients. The Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, home to an important collection of pre-Raphaelite paintings, such as William Holman Hunt’s mesmerising portrait of a young Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is available for evening receptions. The Birmingham Science Museum lets delegates walk under the wings of a Spitfire and has a planetarium.

These new destinations will remind attendees that the host company is able to look beyond the obvious. There’s additional motivation, knowing that the arrival of business travellers will boost the local economy. And there’s good reason to think originality of the venue can influence the quality of the event.

As Mr Crisp of Cohesive recalls of his trip to the lighthouse of West Usk: “We’d held our previous company meetings in soulless hotels and conference rooms, and wanted the choice of venue to say as much as possible about the fresh new direction for the business.” It’s hard to do that in a concrete bunker off the M25. ●

LEADING FACTORS INFLUENCING LOCATION DECISIONS IN THE EUROPEAN MEETINGS INDUSTRY



“[We] wanted the choice of venue to say as much as possible about the fresh new direction for the business

‘With established, profitable annual events, it’s a very brave organiser that decides to change everything’

Since the Great Exhibition of 1851, the UK events industry has always led and others have followed. Today, in the UK, exhibitions alone contribute £12 billion to the economy, but with venue space at a premium it’s now become a matter of safeguarding what we have, while other countries develop flexible campuses to suit any event.

Despite this challenge, the industry is still growing; so should we be keeping calm and carrying on? At the end of 2018, IBC365 asked broadcast and production companies such as Endemol Shine UK, MTGx and Netflix what their trends and issues were for 2019. The response? The same concerns affecting other UK industries like ours: infrastructure, Generation Z and talent.

B2B event launches in the UK are now tending to be smaller scale exhibitions or conferences. The big question regarding infrastructure is whether there is enough venue capacity, at a time to suit the organisers’ business or audience, to allow further growth of larger-scale events. In the meantime, UK organisers are looking elsewhere and investing in new markets by creating and geo-cloning existing events. In fact, they are now generating a turnover of £2.1 billion from outside the UK, which, according to the latest stats from the Office for National Statistics, is equivalent to the eighth largest service exporter.

Generation Z are certainly keeping us on our toes and making us question if our events are fit for purpose. Growing up in a world of social networks has influenced their behaviour and preferences so they challenge everything. They want to connect wherever they are, have flexibility to pick and choose content, share personal, fun and unique experiences and commit their time to socially responsible projects. In turn, they expect events to satisfy each of these as well as deliver on creativity and convenience.

This is creating major challenges for the industry. On the surface, it’s quite refreshing to have an entire generation questioning why. However, when the speed of change doesn’t keep up with the need to change, frustrations start to set in on both sides. We effectively need to rip up the rulebook for this audience, but with established, profitable annual

events, it’s a very brave organiser that decides to change everything.

Which brings me on to talent. Is there really a lack of talent or is it that what UK business is offering at the moment isn’t appealing enough? Some millennials, and now Gen-Zs, don’t want a job for life; they want three jobs at the same time. If they do decide to train for a long-term career, they want a clear indication of how they can progress, when they’ll be able to pay their student loan off, how they can impress their friends and family and have fun while working for an organisation with a social conscience.

The truth is, a lot still needs to change and the events industry has already identified what to prioritise. We’re taking big steps forward in attracting, developing and retaining talent, including targeting school leavers with the right mindset, personality, work ethic and, hopefully, staying power to help us develop next generation events.

Organisers are using data and technology to make the customer journey as simple as possible. By developing audience personas, they are delivering personalised content and interactive experiences that make their customers feel valued. Consumer festival formats are starting to be adopted by many B2B events, but there’s still more to be done to appeal to younger audiences.

The good news is ‘face to face’ is still appealing to Gen Z who may well bring a friend along for the ride. For organisers that are able to take a leap of faith, formats can be adapted to suit their needs and, when used intelligently, technology and data will help the industry meet its ever-changing priorities. ●



Chris Skeith
Chief executive
Association of Event Organisers



New perspectives

There are a few key elements when it comes to a great event space: good accessibility, proximity to suppliers and hotels, and state-of-the-art facilities. Put all that in one of Europe’s biggest metropolitan areas, and at favourable terms, and you have the makings of a great event

Messe Essen is situated in the heart of Essen, an unsung hero when it comes to cities. With a population of around 600,000, Essen is Germany’s ninth-biggest city; it was European Capital of Culture in 2010 and European Green Capital in 2017.

Just 20 minutes from Dusseldorf International Airport, Messe Essen has excellent connections to more than 200 destinations worldwide. At the same time, being in the heart of the city means event attendees don’t have to travel miles in a taxi to get to the venue. And outside the conference or exhibition, there are hotels, restaurants and bars within walking distance, enabling groups to stick together, and making the site unique when it comes to location.

On top of this, because Essen is an insider tip, pricing is competitive, not just at the venue itself, but for ancillary costs such as accommodation.

Service is top of the list at Messe Essen, which provides a dedicated project team for all guest events. This means customers have one consistent port of call when it comes to technical, service-related questions or conference facilities queries. The team can also support organisation of an accompanying event programme.

The Grugahall, a multifunctional event location for up to 7,500 people, or the unique atmosphere of the new entrance Foyer, a special hall that can be used for exhibitions and evening events, offer a number of onsite options to cater for a range of events and requirements.

In addition to the services and opportunities Messe Essen offers onsite, customers benefit from the team’s experience in organising cultural, leisure or entertainment programmes that complete the working day and make the stay in Essen even more unforgettable.

Messe Essen is already rated one of the top-ten exhibition venues and exhibitions organisers in Germany, but the company is constantly seeking to improve its offering. In May 2016, it started a comprehensive modernisation project to improve its 110,000sqm of exhibition space, involving tearing down some facilities, building new halls and modernising others. That project is set to be completed in August 2019 and will make Messe Essen one of the most technically advanced, state-of-the-art venues in Germany, housing eight ground-level exhibition halls and three conference centres directly connected to different halls.

The company’s modernisation project marks the start of a new chapter for Messe Essen, but a lot of success stories have already been written here. Many started as a mid-sized show and are now using the whole venue, with the modernisation offering even more opportunities for growth.

Messe Essen is home to exhibitions across a diverse range of topics and target groups, with the company placing itself in the co-pilot position, looking for bespoke client solutions. From the 55 shows in the company’s portfolio, ten are the leading shows for their

industry, including industrial trade fairs such as METPACK (metal packaging) and SCHWEISSEN & SCHNEIDEN (welding and cutting), the E-world energy and water exhibition, which focuses on the energy sector, Security Essen, the leading international fair for security and fire prevention, and IPM, the world’s foremost trade fair for horticulture.

Messe Essen’s experience means it is a specialist in growing mid-sized guest shows. An exhibition with 10,000 or 20,000sqm gross can get lost in a venue with 200,000sqm or dwarfed by a huge show sharing the venue at the same time. In Essen having a mid-sized show doesn’t make you any less important; to Messe Essen you will always be number one.

Further information please visit www.messe-essen.de





MONTREAL: home to...

91,000

AI experts and some of Canada's best startups and research divisions of Microsoft, Facebook, Samsung and Google

TORONTO: home to...

\$1bn

of investment each year in medical research; where stem cells were discovered

Why Canada is the perfect place for your event

Behind the picturesque image of mountains and prairies lies a nation of innovators and entrepreneurs, eager to host your conference

Promoting Canada as a tourist destination is absurdly easy. When you have gems like the Rocky Mountains, Whistler ski resort and Lake Louise, which glows turquoise due to rock powder in the glacial water, word of mouth does most of the job.

Marketing Canada for business events, by contrast, takes a little more effort. The reputation of the country as a land for nature lovers has historically overshadowed the commercial message.

"We want to change the perception of Canada," says Virginie De Visscher of Destination Canada's Business Events, the state body tasked with boosting numbers for the visitor economy. "Yes, we are known for our incredible landscape, but we want people to know this is also the best place in the world for business events. That's our focus."

Fortunately, Canada offers a powerful proposition for events. Canada is a G7 economy and a leader in at least seven major sectors. It boasts world-class education, lavish facilities and Canadian hospitality is the stuff of legend.

However, the appeal of Canada runs a lot deeper. "Our cities each have their own unique specialism," explains Ms De Visscher. "Take artificial intelligence. Canada is known as a hub for AI and each city focuses on a different area. You can go to Toronto or Montreal for deep-learning and machine-learning, Edmonton for reinforcement-learning, and Québec City specialises in applied AI. This is where practical applications, such as how traffic lights that are co-ordinated to help traffic flow and the police, are researched."

A British company called Inspired Minds benefited from this when

searching for a place to host a global summit on AI in North America. The brief was tough. It needed a location famous for AI to attract delegates. The venue needed to be large enough to host 6,000 visitors from across the planet. And it needed an X factor, somewhere with a cultural buzz.

Business Events Canada recommended a few destinations across Canada including Montreal. The city is home to 91,000 AI experts and some of Canada's best startups, such as Element AI and Stradigi AI, as well as research divisions of Microsoft, Facebook, Samsung and Google. When DeepMind, the London company behind the self-learning AlphaZero chess engine, wanted an overseas research lab, it chose Montreal, partly to collaborate with McGill University.

Inspired Minds chose Montreal as the host and the inaugural event in April was a smash hit. "Inspired Minds signed a multi-year deal," says Ms De Visscher. "Their goal is to triple in size to hold the largest AI summit in the world, in Montreal in 2020. They believe hosting their

summit in a city like Montreal, which is bursting with AI expertise, is a prime destination where delegates can meet local experts, and is so much better than hosting it in an anonymous ballroom somewhere."

Likewise, event planners will find a suitable home in a Canadian city.

Life sciences companies should look to the Québec and Ontario Life Sciences Corridor, the largest life sciences cluster in North America. Toronto, at the south end of the corridor, is where stem cells were discovered and now sees \$1 billion invested each year in medical research. Ottawa is home to phenomenal regenerative medicine research and double-virus therapy for cancer, a major factor behind the International Mesothelioma Interest Group hosting their global conference there. The International Society of Paediatric Oncology is planning their 2020 conference in Ottawa.

On the west coast, Vancouver is an all-rounder, rated the best convention destination in North America, according to *The Watkins Report* survey of event planners. It ranked top for "most likely to recommend", "secure destination", "most helpful" and "great all-round convention city". Beyond its natural attributes of mountains, ocean and abundant outdoor recreation for delegates to enjoy, the city is a leading centre in regenerative medicine, digital gaming and clean technology.

"The tier-two cities are also worth a look," says Ms De Visscher. "The Winnipeg Convention Centre has had a \$181-million renovation and can host up to 9,000 guests. Saskatoon is known for agriculture and biotech research along with infectious diseases vaccine research. Calgary is affectionately called the cowboy capital of Canada, but is a world-class centre in geomatics, kinesiology, clean

tech and the industrial internet of things."

The choice is so wide businesses may feel they will struggle to navigate the options. "We can help you," says Ms De Visscher. "We will work with you to find the right city. Together with our partners on the ground, team Canada will help you find keynote speakers, sponsors, and put you in touch with local businesses, incubators and associations. We have one of the most robust support programmes anywhere in the world."

"Consider tier-two cities, or time your event in late autumn or spring, and costs can come way down," she says. "For events in winter time, you can experience ice hotels and skate on rivers or canals in Winnipeg or Ottawa. It's just magical."

Canada ought to be seen as the obvious choice for business events, large and small. The fundamentals are terrific. An impact study by Oxford Economics ranks Canada as sixth most prosperous of world's top fifty countries for business events.

"People have their perceptions and when they arrive, it completely changes," says Ms De Visscher. "When you hold an event here, you'll get to meet thought leaders, entrepreneurs, researchers and global businesses. We'll help you meet the right people to match your growth agenda."

She concedes that the lure of Canada's tourism can only help: "You can come to Québec City for its strength in regenerative medicine and enjoy the charm of walking the cobbled streets of the Old Quarter. Or host a research event in Vancouver and enjoy Stanley Park."

The message for planners considering Canada? Just come and explore.

To find out more please visit businesseventscanada.ca

CANADA 
BUSINESS EVENTS

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Canada ought to be seen as the obvious choice for business events, large and small



10'000 Hours / Getty Images

ENGAGEMENT

Why internal events should not be overlooked

From teambuilding to training, internal events have considerable business benefits to both the bottom line and culture. Events that fit with a company’s culture and values can deliver tenfold. But it’s a fine balance between getting it right and forced fun

Peter Crush

Accountants have feelings too, part of an old joke goes. In fact, over a third of qualified auditors feel stressed on a weekly basis, according to research from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

So at Redbull, the company didn’t need to be told that giving its book-keepers some fun time would be money well spent on its balance sheet. Cue it recently uprooting 40 of its best and taking them glamping for a weekend in the countryside, complete with games, including an inflatable *Crystal Maze* dome, barbecue, music and campfires.

The experience, created by events organiser Shout About London, is just one example of what managing director Ben Gamble is seeing more demand for, a return to corporations seeing the benefits of corporate events, specifically those aimed at staff rather than prospects or clients.

“After some challenging years for businesses, where budgets for staff events were often the first things to be cut, more now understand the importance of team building in the workplace,” he says.

As customer experience champion Martin Newman, who has produced events for the likes of Ted Baker, Harrods and Burberry, says: “Firms wanting to be customer centric are increasingly realising they need to be employee centric first. It’s when employees don’t feel their interests are put first that they don’t buy into, or feel emotionally connected to, what the business is about.”

Some events reward star performers, but more often than not internal event organisers report companies wanting to embed cultures, bolster engagement and create an all-in-it-together feel. “We’ve created our Isobelly Laughs nights, four-times-a-year stand-up comedy nights held at our own office, with

room for 150 people,” says Jamie Williams, managing partner of creative agency Isobel.

“We book the best established and emerging comedy acts going, and for a cost of just hundreds of pounds, the vibe and goodwill we experience in the run-up to, and after, the events is fantastic.”

“New joiners often bring their friends, almost to showcase ‘this is where I work’. In our industry, the events have become so well known they are a differentiator at a time when recruiting and retaining scarce talent is getting harder.”

But while Mr Williams and bosses at Redbull are clearly confident the business benefits are there to be seen, the consistent problem with staff events is they are hard to link back to important business metrics, notably productivity or reduced staff attrition, in the same way external events clearly create new business.

“This can be problematic,” argues Lisa Hatswell, managing director at Unique Venues of London. “But the benefits of corporate events are there. What firms must remember though is that a meaningful event does require proper investment.

“To really work, events do need to be somewhere away from people’s day-to-day existence

“To really work, events do need to be somewhere away from people’s day-to-day existence, a place that promotes different thinking, which is especially important for the away-day type of events, or just to generate some all-important wow factor.”

John Fisher, managing director of engagement and events agency FMI, says: “If you’re going to run an event, it needs doing professionally. Leave it to people who aren’t used to organising them and that’s when employees suffer inappropriate venues, where they can’t hear or see what they’re there for. That creates entirely the wrong impact.”

Events need to fit who you are as a business and not seem like awkward bolt-ons, trying to artificially inject fun

According to Mr Fisher, running an amateurish event is worse than not doing one at all and some companies do claim the events they run are possible to measure. At Oxford Summer Courses, officially the fourth fastest growing education company in Europe and 35th fastest growing firm in the FT 1000 index, chief executive Harry Hortyn argues its policy of taking the whole team for a team-building event in Tuscany

35%

of employees globally are not engaged

AON 2018

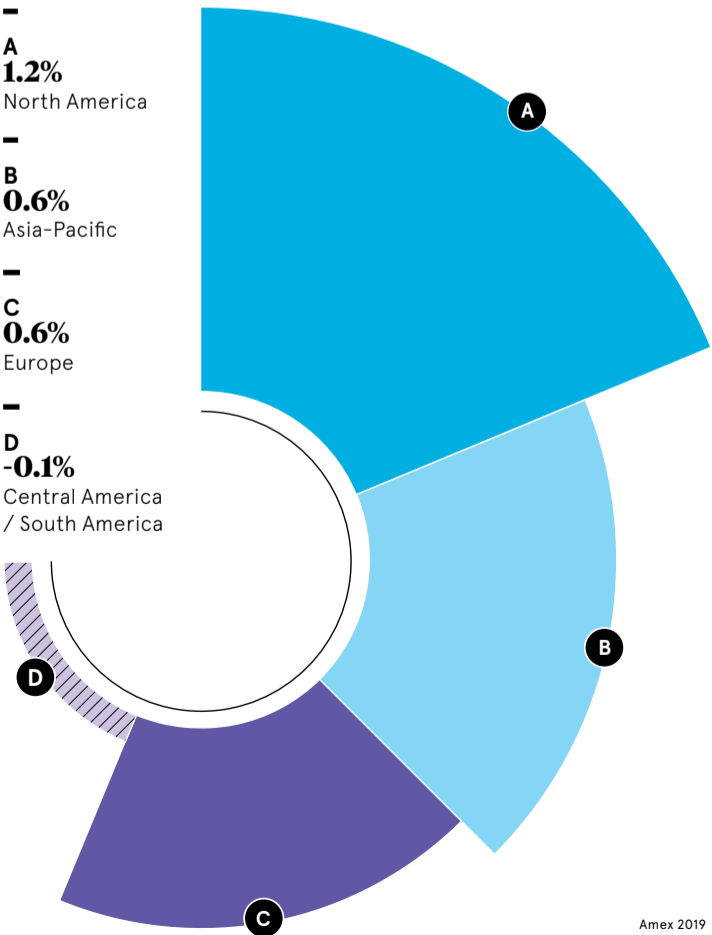
each year has seen it grow revenue from £900,000 in 2014 to £8 million in 2018.

Jason Manning, chief executive of Midlands-based full service agency Superdream, which holds regular office parties, Friday Fizz drinks and a staff summer festival, return on investment needs to be looked at in the round.

“Events need to fit who you are as a business and not seem like awkward bolt-ons, trying to artificially inject fun,” he says. “When they fit an ethos, which ours do around creating a sharing culture and clarity of vision, the benefits of corporate events is clear: they become part of who we are. ‘Any excuse to celebrate’ is one of our business values and we even have a staff forum where employees come up with new ideas for other events to hold.

“The only danger is that the more you give, the more people expect, but I’d almost say that’s a positive. It should be every boss’s role to ensure their staff feel valued. You simply cannot underestimate how important this emotion is to staff nowadays.”

ANNUAL CHANGE IN NUMBERS OF INTERNAL TEAM MEETINGS/TRAINING BY REGION, 2018 TO 2019



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