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# Engage your audience – and make it special

*It's time to step away from the PowerPoint presentation and make business events a memorable experience to capture the attention – and imagination – of customers*

- ◆ OVERVIEW
- CLARE GASCOIGNE

When Jaguar Land Rover launched the Range Rover Sport, the company invited guests to watch a live film of the up-market vehicle being driven from New York docks to the venue. So far, so dull. But when it arrived, 007 actor Daniel Craig stepped out from the driver's seat.

The event not only engaged the 750 invited VIP guests, but also connected with 20,000 others who had registered to watch it at the same time. It was subsequently viewed by almost four million people online, while the hundreds of mobile phone pictures taken by guests at the event went on to have a life of their own.

"We had a stunt at the heart of the event, with a wow factor, but also with a customer response we could measure," says Patrick Reid, Europe, Middle East and Africa chief executive of Imagination, a creative agency that organised the event. "Social media has meant a much greater audience reach."

It demonstrates a fundamental change in the business event industry. No longer

is a business event a one-off; it is part of a whole corporate communications strategy. It's about how to make more of each moment of an event – how to package it up and make it portable.

"Business events often become a bad habit – something that appears in the annual corporate calendar, a fixture and an end in itself," says Tim Leighton, senior vice president and creative strategy director at agency Jack Morton Worldwide. "That's a big opportunity missed."

A well-managed event can raise your public profile, enthuse your sales team, build your turnover and improve your customer service, but only if you start off on the right foot.

"If you're thinking about it as something that's going to cost you money, you shouldn't be doing it," says Dale Parmenter, group chief executive at communications agency drp. "The key is what you are going to get back."

So, for example, how does a three-fold uplift on last year's sales sound? That's what JCB, the multinational whose yellow machinery is seen on construction sites around the world, achieved with a global dealer event: a three-day event that ran 13 times in four weeks, with more than

3,000 customers coming in from around the world.

"Yes, JCB invested heavily on the infrastructure – there were marquees and fire-

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A well-managed event can raise your public profile, enthuse your sales team, build your turnover and improve your customer service

works and dancing diggers – but from the moment delegates arrived, their feet didn't touch the ground. It was a fully immersive experience, and the orders were placed there and then," says Mr Parmenter.

And that kind of engagement is exactly what today's business event needs to achieve, according to Mr Leighton.

“Feeling a part of it is critical, especially for the millennial generation [those born

at the end of the 20th century]," he says. "These people want to be involved and have their voice heard; they want to contribute. There is a need for the business event to 'unconference' and be genuinely dialogue-based."

Technology has changed the face of the business event; if you want to hold a two-hour meeting with a global sales force on 60 different sites, then yes, we have the technology, but it still needs to be managed.

"In that instance, we started by getting every group to take a selfie," says Mr Parmenter. "It was the best of both worlds; hosted, face-to-face groups that were linked into a global meeting."

But technology is not the whole story. Mr Leighton points out that most people will turn up at an event with more technology in their pocket than many events will use. Mr Parmenter cites a conference where they ditched the whizzy apps in favour of tablecloths printed with comment and ideas boxes, on which the delegates wrote their thoughts and opinions. "It's about what will best achieve your aims," he says.

That might still mean a slide presentation in a conference hall, but those slides had better be working hard

and your presentation had better be good. Event management these days is as much a question of graphic design and coaching classes for the chief executive, as it is about hiring a hall and buying the sandwiches.

Critically, companies need to be applying business metrics to their business events. "Companies can spend lots of time measuring how happy people were at a conference, when they should be measuring the effect on the business," says Mr Leighton. "If you are spending the money, you have an obligation to get it right. Businesses should be thinking about what value an event adds."

If you're looking for tips on how to make your annual conference more interesting, then step away from the PowerPoint; you've got some much more constructive work to do first. What do you want to achieve with your event? What outcomes do you want? How do you want your audience to feel as they leave? What do you want them to be doing in a week's time?

The message is stop thinking about your next business event and start imagining your next business experience. Only then will you achieve those really surprising results.

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# Do your meetings and events really make good business sense?

*With the right strategy and technology in place, bringing customers and staff together can drive savings and efficiencies across a business*

## ◆ STRATEGIC MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

● IAN WHITELING

With increasing pressure on corporate spending, it has never been more important to exceed expectations when you hold a business event. And that's not just in terms of delivering a fantastic programme and great delegate experience, but also from a cost and business-results perspective.

Beyond wowing delegates, to justify its very existence, the annual Adobe Summit, where more than 5,000 marketing and technology leaders explore the latest tools and trends in digital marketing, also needs to prove its value to the business in driving a tangible return on investment. By introducing a technology-led strategic meetings management programme, Adobe has been able to customise content, break down logistical barriers, and use detailed reporting metrics to link back to revenue goals and sales opportunities.

"By tracking attendee participation, we can learn what products they're interested in and provide that information directly to the sales team," says Mike Stiles, Adobe's senior corporate events manager.

So it's no wonder that strategic meetings management has become an increasingly hot topic among corporate event organisers, and not just for external meetings and conferences, but for internal gatherings too.

"It's the consolidation and automation of the myriad of systems and processes that are required to execute corporate meetings and events, and the associated travel requirements successfully," says Anthony Miller, chief marketing officer at Lanyon, Adobe's strategic meetings management provider.

"The current approach tends to be manual, inefficient and extraordinarily expensive. The right strategy partnered with the latest technology can automate those processes, improve the value of in-person meetings and provide great outcomes. The companies we have worked with have saved up to 25 per cent on their meetings spend and cut time spent on manual tasks by up to 90 per cent."

Meanwhile, recent independent research into Lanyon's customers by Hobson & Company puts the average return on a three-year investment into a strategic meetings management programme to be 251 per cent. And that's got to be enough to get even the most sceptical businesses interested.



Adobe Summit 2015

From a cost-saving and efficiency perspective, strategic meetings management is very much about examining and analysing historical data, according to Des McLaughlin, divisional director at Grass Roots Meetings and Events.

"It's about examining how much you spend, where and why," he says. "Can you leverage some of those costs more effectively, such as by moving certain events? In fact, you might discover an event needs moving not because of cost, but due to delegate travel time and so on. Once the information starts to flow, the possibilities are endless, and the relationship between client and strategic meetings management partner can grow exponentially."

This process directly affects the delegate experience by streamlining event organisation. Meanwhile, introducing state-of-the-art software to improve the event itself, from registration solutions to attendee engagement software, such as interaction tools and mobile apps, adds further value beyond cost savings.

“Buy-in by senior management and stakeholders is the single most important factor for a strategic meetings management programme to succeed”

Although strategic meetings management can, in theory, be applied to any organisation and any size of conference programme, Mr McLaughlin says it's most effective with businesses spending on events in excess of £2 million a year. However, there are two major barriers to adoption – awareness of spending and corporate culture.

"Most companies do not fully realise the level of investment they are making in meetings, events and travel," says Lanyon's Mr Miller, while Mr McLaughlin insists: "Buy-in is the single most important

factor for a strategic meetings management programme to succeed. If you don't have the right level of buy-in from the top, coupled with the right stakeholder support, your programme will struggle to get off the ground."

Global organisations tend to have disparate teams organising various meetings. Strategic meetings management brings all this under one roof and people can find it hard to let go unless a mandate is issued demanding compliance. Consequently, when considering implementing a programme, Amanda Hanlin, director of global sales for HRG Meetings, Groups and Events, recommends spending a large percentage of time and thought on messaging regarding change – what is going to happen, how is it benefiting the organisation and what part employees need to play.

"Be mindful of culture and market sensitivities – some countries will need a slightly different approach," she says. "Appointing the right supplier, aligned with the right technology, will ensure the programme receives momentum and

development. Being clear on services, in and out of scope, is also important.

"Adding consistency across areas such as payment, process, service levels and risk management will make the programme and return on investment easier to measure. Keep it simple in order to encourage use and adoption."

Another fear factor is the level of investment required to launch a strategic meetings management programme. This can vary depending on number, size, location and complexity of events held, but as Lanyon's research shows, return on investment should more than compensate for ongoing cost.

"The level of investment can be marginal by starting off with a small meetings technology solution that can be scaled into a larger more comprehensive strategic meetings management programme," Mr Miller advises. "The key here is scalability. Your technology partner should be ready to scale up when you are, which includes the option and ability to globalise."

Of course, crucial to justifying investment is measuring its return, which historically has proved a challenge for event organisers. However, strategic meetings management technology is good at justifying its existence.

"It's all about setting clear objectives at the outset," says Mr Miller. "Return on investment can be measured by using key data elements extrapolated from the business intelligence gathered by the technologies used to operate the strategic meetings management programme. The key is to use the right data elements which map to the strategic milestones and key performance indicators that are identified in advance of the programme launch."

Better, more efficient meetings increase engagement with customers and employees, driving sales and boosting performance. Meanwhile, the cost savings through smarter event organisation and travel planning can grow revenues and profitability. What's more, increased efficiencies improve employee time management, driving up productivity. This means getting a firm, strategic grip on meetings and events management makes good business sense.

Or as Mr Miller puts it: "What was once a nice-to-have, has now become a must-have for every organisation."



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Reasons for implementing strategic meetings management



81.7%  
Cost-savings



59.8%  
Good communication of practices across the organisation



56.2%  
Visibility/transparency



55.6%  
Improved value of meetings management



54.9%  
Increased productivity

Source: MPI Meetings 2014

# Backing the UK's event organisers

*The UK's events industry is well placed to boost its contribution to the economy, but challenges remain*

OPINION



COLUMN

“The UK events industry currently delivers a healthy £42 billion to the British economy, but there is scope for further growth. According to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the UK Events Industry, the sector will be worth an estimated £48.4 billion by 2020, with almost 80 per cent coming from conferences, exhibitions and trade shows.

But perceived barriers to growth exist. Broadly speaking these include the ability to remain competitive on a global scale, thinking beyond London, and having the infrastructure and flexible, skilled workforce in place to support regional venues, innovation and creativity.

Alongside other trade bodies, the Association of Event Organisers (AEO) is working with the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and UK Trade and Investment on a business visits and events strategy.

The next important step is the formation of a DCMS events industry board to address how we can work together, supported by new Culture Secretary John Whittingdale, to overcome problems.

The World Economic Forum's recently released *Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report* shows that, although the UK retains overall fifth position, we are placed second to last out of 141 countries when it comes to price competitiveness, largely due to aviation



CHRIS SKEITH  
Chief executive, Association of Event Organisers

and fuel taxation. Visa costs and process times also need addressing.

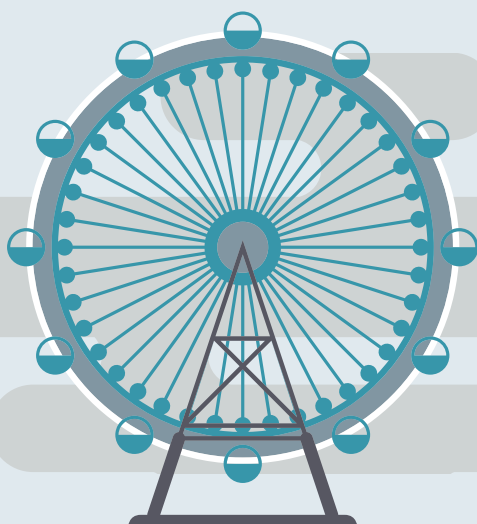
By hosting the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, the UK has proved it can put on large-scale events. But, if we are to remain competitive, a campus style venue, similar to an Olympic village, which can host world-class congresses with onsite accommodation, hospitality, exhibition space and conference suites, should be considered.

In representing the events industry in the UK, we are not solely concerned with London. With first-class transport networks, venue accessibility and availability, other major cities around could be in a position to take a larger slice of the pie.

Former European capitals of culture Glasgow and Liverpool are both good examples of where investment has helped regional cities attract global events. There are also business-sector clusters in cities such as Aberdeen, Cambridge and Reading which are well-known success stories for the oil, life sciences and technology industries.

It's clear the events industry has much to offer the UK, both in terms of inward investment and overseas expansion. In fact, business generated abroad from AEO member exhibition organisers already represents £1.91 billion. It is our job to make sure the future of the UK exhibitions and events industry remains buoyant.

“**The events industry has much to offer the UK, both in terms of inward investment and overseas expansion**”



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COMMERCIAL FEATURE

# DISRUPTION: THE THREAT TO EFFECTIVE MEETINGS...

Research specially commissioned for *Warwick Conferences* reveals that disruption during meetings isn't just annoying, it can greatly reduce their effectiveness, says *Rachael Bartlett*, author of *Warwick Conferences' Value of Satisfaction report*



We've all had the experience. You're in a meeting with colleagues, suppliers or customers. The mood is positive and focused, and you're making progress as you work through your agenda. Suddenly the atmosphere is shattered by the noise of building work or loud voices from a crowd out in the corridor. Or slow wi-fi brings the key presentation to a grinding halt, or a member of staff interrupts to say you need to take your coffee or lunch break now.

Perhaps a couple of colleagues arrive late because of travel problems, disturbing the meeting at a key moment. Or someone else explains that they've now got to leave early for similar reasons.

I'm lucky enough as part of my job to travel the world and visit venues as well as talking to the leaders of a wide variety of organisations about their needs when it comes to meetings. They've all told me that disruption in business meetings is a very common problem. As one of the country's leading meetings venues and

as a part of the University of Warwick, we decided to take an evidence-based approach to identifying what effects disruptions have on meetings and what can be done to minimise them. To do this we commissioned a major independent survey.

Nearly all (91 per cent) of the delegates, managers and event bookers we surveyed agree that finding a venue with minimal distractions is important, while 78 per cent of delegates who were chief executives, managing directors and business owners regard this as very important. Two thirds (63 per cent) of delegates and managers think that a good meeting venue can make all the difference to the success of a meeting.

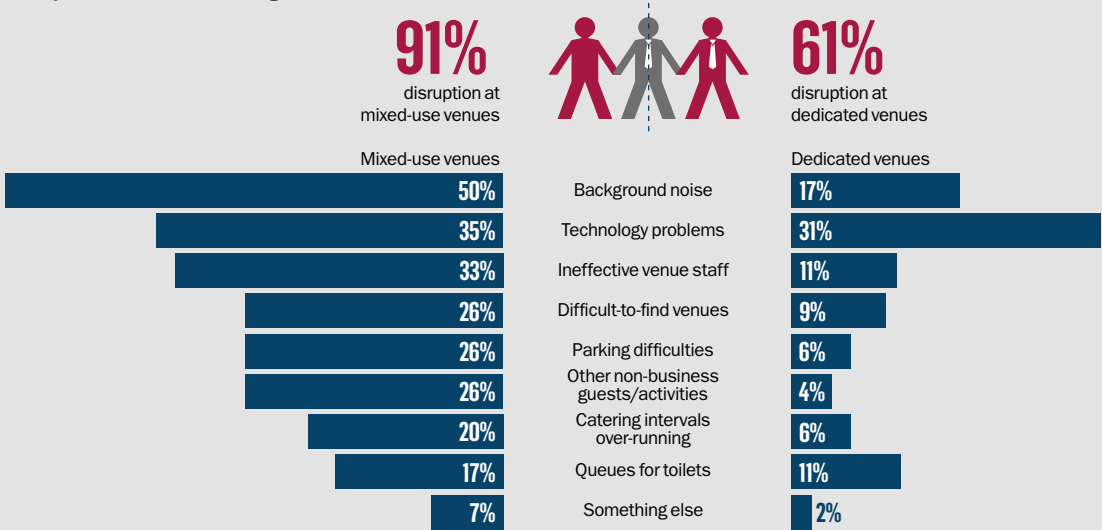
We also found that 90 per cent of respondents believe it's important that a business meeting venue lacks distractions from non-business guests or activities. Nearly half (46 per cent) of delegates have recently attended meetings at venues where they have encountered non-business guests. This figure

## Focused and effective: five ways to minimise disruption to your meeting

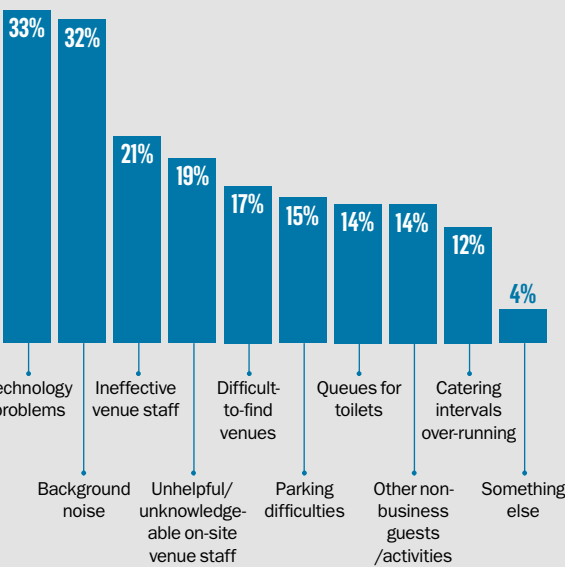
- 1. Choose the right venue**  
Ensure that your venue is dedicated to business meetings so that the staff and facilities are appropriate. You don't want to try to manage your meetings around wedding parties and stag dos.
- 2. Communicate with the venue**  
Ensure those at the venue know exactly what you need. This means communicating your requirements effectively with the staff who'll be supporting the event on the day as well as the salespeople you deal with beforehand. Those providing catering and other services should be aware this is a business meeting and not a social event. If problems do arise, raise them immediately and make sure you have easy access to someone who can take action.
- 3. Get the right working environment**  
The exterior and reception area of a venue might look impressive, but what about the meeting rooms themselves? You need to make sure the areas in which you'll be working are spacious,

- quiet and private, as well as having the right lighting and temperature.
- 4. Check the area around the meeting rooms**  
Your meeting room might be conducive to work, but what about its immediate vicinity? Background noise is one of the biggest bugbears for delegates and a major cause of disruption. Noise-related nuisances can include building work, cleaners, the public and traffic. Check how prevalent this is when you visit a venue.
- 5. Consider the catering**  
Good food not only shows delegates they are valued, but it also gives them energy and helps them to concentrate. Instead of the basic sandwiches and crisps, invest in good-quality protein, fresh vegetables and a wide choice of well-prepared food. Make sure water, tea and coffee, as well as snacks, are in constant supply so meetings are not disrupted as participants go in search of essential hydration or something to keep their blood sugar up.

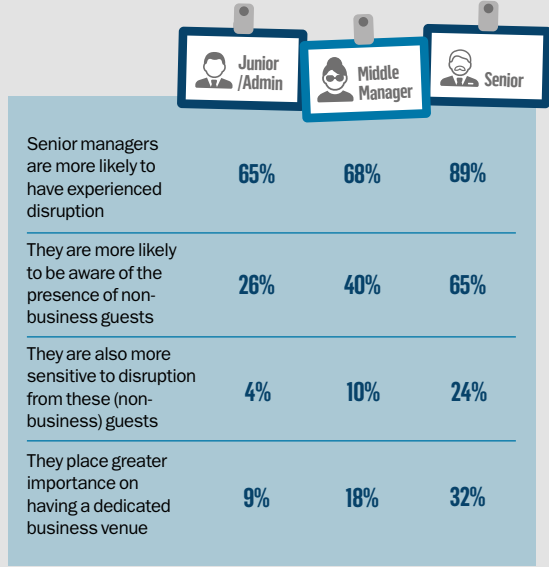
Those attending meetings at mixed-use venues and encountering non-business guests experience far more disruption than those using dedicated venues



What disrupted meetings?



Senior staff are far more sensitive to disruption than their junior colleagues



The more meetings and events a delegate attended, the greater their exposure to disruption

Number who experienced disruption in previous 12 months



rockets to 79 per cent for those who have been dissatisfied with customer service in the last 12 months.

As a dedicated business venue this was particularly interesting to us. A quarter (26 per cent) of those who have attended events at mixed-purpose venues say their meetings have been disrupted by non-business guests or activities. One client told us how a meeting they'd held mid-week in a multi-purpose venue had been interrupted by a raucous wedding party.

When it comes to keeping interruptions to a minimum and improving delegate concentration, staff play a key role. Two thirds (65 per cent) think venue staff going the extra mile makes a venue stand out. However, in the last 12 months, almost half (43 per cent) say that venues have been let down by poor customer service and staff. Staff in multi-purpose venues need to clearly understand the difference between a business meeting and

“  
As one of the country's leading meetings venues and as a part of the University of Warwick, we decided to take an evidence-based approach to identifying what effects disruptions have on meetings and what can be done to minimise them

a wedding reception or 21st birthday party.

Food and beverage, if it's not handled correctly, can disrupt a meeting too. According to our survey, 80 per cent of event bookers say appropriate catering is their number-one priority. Curly sandwiches or soggy croissants are not just unappealing, they have a detrimental

effect on delegates' energy levels and the effectiveness of a meeting.

Food should be nutritious and varied with protein and freshly cooked vegetables in order to minimise that post-lunch dip.

Mixing variable party sizes, and social and business guests can also be a considerable disruption. One in five say catering intervals have over-run at multi-purpose venues – over three times more than those saying they've experienced this at a dedicated venue.

These might sound like small things but, as our independent survey and my conversations with customers demonstrate, it's important not to shrug disruptions off as an acceptable part of business conferences. Insignificant and momentary blips soon multiply, leading to lower levels of delegate satisfaction, engagement, meeting effectiveness and, ultimately, disappointing return on investment.

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◆ ENGAGEMENT  
● MICHAEL TRUDEAU

You can put a baby in a high-chair, but you can't make them eat. And the same goes for delegates at events. Many will simply show up, sit through the speakers, while thinking about the party that evening, and then slink on home after catching up with their old contacts. Not to say you should treat attendees as babies, but as any new parent knows, sometimes you need to find creative ways of getting an infant to open its mouth – to engage.

Engagement is what you get when delegates enter an active dialogue with the event instead of passively letting it wash over them, transforming the event into an experience that starts in the run-up and continues after an event ends.

According to Alex Morrisroe, head of client services at Concerto Live, research suggests only 5 per cent of information people retain comes from what they hear in speeches, while 20 per cent comes from audio-visual presentations and even more so from group discussions. The amount of information retained jumps hugely if people are able to practise and explore information as soon as they get it.

"The focus should be on creating experiences, events that allow your delegates to discover information for themselves, become part of the day and shape their own agenda," says Mr Morrisroe.

How do you know if your audience is engaging? The answer can be as easy as seeing if people are asking questions. But what about those that are too shy to raise their hands? Are people thinking about the content outside the room? Is it relevant?

Fortunately we live in a society soaked with connectivity and there are many innovative digital solutions that can measure engagement.

"These days there isn't an event that doesn't have an app," says Kevin Jackson, vice president for Europe, Middle East and Africa at experience marketing agency George P. Johnson. "Asking questions and polling the audience through

the life of the event is a very good way [of measuring engagement]." This can include rating speakers, inputting questions, live polling of audiences, and even allowing an event to change course live as people feedback the topics that most interest them and the points which need more or less coverage.

Existing social media platforms can be a good way of increasing and measuring engagement, asking people to use specific Twitter hashtags or join dedicated Facebook groups, for example.

But the digital age moves quickly and events technology innovation is no exception. This is where professional event management companies come in. It's their job to stay on top of the options for increasing engagement and implementing them effectively.

"The specialist knowledge required, along with the ability for event management companies to work across industry sectors and benchmark solutions, often means this expertise is best outsourced," says Alan Newton, co-founder and chief operating officer of Eventopedia.

He gives three examples of tools that use cutting-edge technology to help increase and measure engagement:

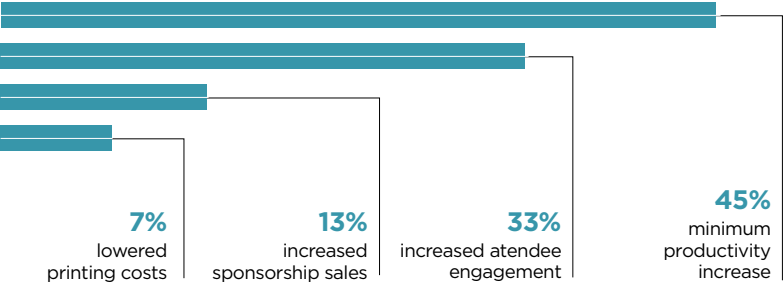
1. Crystal Interactive – provides engagement tools including icebreakers, team building, question and answer sessions, and delegate insights as the conference ends: "Very powerful and you can visually see the engagement," says Mr Newton.

150%

more likely to get clicks with a digital "thank you" sent within 24 hours of an event

Source: Crowd Compass 2014

ENGAGING EVENTS AND MOBILE APPS



Source: Crowd Compass 2014

2. DoubleDutch – an event app provider to help keep track of parallel sessions, breakouts and networking. Also uses "gamification" – making a game out of itself to encourage participation: "We have experienced how it actively encourages delegate participation and engagement, particularly among those who may otherwise be too shy to join the debate verbally."
3. TweetWall Pro – allows delegates to participate using their own devices, make comments, debate and pose questions which can be projected on to a conference screen live: "The additional advantage of this technology is that delegates unable to attend the event can also join the debate, which multiplies audience engagement."

Of course, people are savvy and won't necessarily leap to engage if they feel

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You don't want your CEO coming out in a baseball cap and then trying to rap in front of their employees

they are simply buying into a cynical corporate marketing scheme. Telling them to "like" a soulless brand name or use a corporate-sounding hashtag will turn them off quicker than a cold shower and this is where authenticity comes in.

Mr Jackson believes an event has to hit three targets in order for people to freely engage – it has to be relevant, right and real. Relevant might be self-explanatory, but right means the information has to be delivered in a way that is appropriate for your audience.

"You don't want your CEO coming out in a baseball cap and then trying to rap in front of their employees," he says, adding: "This has happened." You have to know your audience, what they want and how they want to engage.

Real means authentic, honest and not forced. "The modern world is very quick at spotting what isn't real and isn't authentic," he says. Red Bull does this well, he says, with their fun soap-box derbies and their sponsorship of extreme stunts such as the Felix Baumgartner freefall. The opposite of this might be a large insurance company sponsoring a music festival – what do they care? Clearly not every brand can easily attach to something as exciting as someone jumping off a platform in space, but authenticity is something to keep in mind.

Phil Boas, director of brand engagement at Paragon, says: "You need to make sure that the experience you create is going to be interesting and engaging for the consumer, and sometimes that means your product or brand taking a back seat, as not every brand has something as exciting as a new 'iWatch' to talk about."

Regardless of the event or the brand, using the proper technology, perhaps via an event management company, can start engagement weeks before an event and continue to engage the audience afterwards, making a fleeting event into a more lingering experience.



# WORLD-CLASS KEYNOTE SPEAKER AGENCY DELIVERS

*No matter the nature of your event, Champions has just the right speaker for the occasion*



**Jack Hayes**  
Sales manager



Champions Speakers, a division of Champions (UK) plc, is a leading international speaker agency, supplying motivational and business speakers, corporate entertainment and after dinner speakers to companies and institutes in over 25 different countries across the world.

The stable of A-list stars supplied by Champions spans all sectors. From politics there is Michael Portillo and Alastair Campbell, from business Michelle Mone, Baroness Karren Brady and Innocent Drinks founder Richard Reed. Or for some true inspiration, they'll serve up adventurers of the calibre of Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Pen Hadow to motivate audiences to the extreme.

In the last month alone, Champions has been busy supplying high-profile speakers all over the world, including delivering Anthony Thomson, co-founder of Metro Bank and Atombank, to speak at conferences in Singapore and Sweden, and Sir Steve Redgrave, who addressed delegates at multi-billion-pound pharmaceutical firm Sandoz in Barcelona.

Champions was extremely proud to work with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa when she performed at Saga Cruises' centennial Gallipoli commemorations and have booked *The Sunday Times* economics editor David Smith to speak at an event for the National Bank of Oman. They also supplied Silicon Valley star Jimmy O. Yang to host a San Francisco event

on behalf of Pageant Media, and IT expert Christer Holloman to address a tech conference in Spain.

As a family business run by John and Donna Hayes, with Matthew, Louisa, Sophia, Roxanna and Jack Hayes in key positions throughout the business's 60-strong workforce, family values and old-fashioned personal service are integral to the success of the company.

Gareth Davis, chairman of two FTSE 100 companies and former chief executive of Imperial Tobacco, says: "Champions is a unique and exciting business. With unparalleled access to the best business leaders and sports personalities, not only in the UK but internationally too, they're undoubtedly the best people to speak to if you're looking to create impact for your brand or event."

They have recently doubled their head office to almost 13,000 square feet to accommodate their continued growth, as well as establishing a Mayfair office in London's Hanover Square. This was acknowledged when, over the last two years, Champions has been placed in the *Sunday Times Fast Track 100*, and named as one of the London Stock Exchange Companies to Inspire Britain and a Santander Breakthrough 50 member.

According to a study conducted by ITV 20 years ago, fewer than 5 per cent of TV campaigns in the top 100 most successful featured a celebrity. Now almost a quarter of the



Top image: 2013 X Factor winner Sam Bailey  
Above, pictured left to right: Sir Steve Redgrave, Mike Tindall and Martin Corry at Champions (UK) plc's Tony Jacklin Wentworth charity invitational

top 100 are headed up by a celebrity. This just emphasises the power of celebrity in business today. Demand for pairing the correct personality with the right event or conference has grown dramatically in recent years, helping Champions grow exponentially.

Top names can deliver big results for almost any campaign, from black-tie balls and awards to product launches and business summits. As the number-one name in celebrity and with more than 2,000 stars on its books, Champions has a proven track record in matching the perfect celebrity to brands and events of all kinds.

When Mercedes launched its new Actros long-distance truck it needed real impact from day one. Their event team turned to Champions to bring in some genuine star quality. Their access led to comedian John Bishop adding the "wow factor" to its launch, which was a smash hit.

England Rugby World Cup winner Neil Back is represented exclusively by Champions. The agency recently paired him with Heineken for their cheeky #runwithit viral video which, recalling the infamous "hand of back" incident during the 2002 Heineken Cup Final against Munster, saw the brewery leak his mobile on Twitter and urge Irish fans to text him their thoughts. Hundreds did and the best, lured to a staged press conference, got a fake roasting from Back.

Combining the right talent with your event or brand promotion, you can be sure you'll be getting the highest possible return on your investment

Their sporting talent pool is too deep to summarise adequately. Managed clients include four-time Ryder Cup captain Tony Jacklin, England fast bowler Matthew Hoggard and England football international record cap holder Peter Shilton, to name but a few.

Champions understands the power of matching the right celebrities to the right brands and they know the challenges of entertainment inside out. This knowledge has seen them appointed as exclusive entertainment strategy partner by Grosvenor Casinos, supplying the entertainment at all 57 of their casinos for the next three years. This sees Champions deliver up to 1,500 acts a year, with national headline tours as the backbone of the entertainment strategy.

Following their acquisition of Warner Music in 2014, they've launched the Champions music & entertainment division, and are making big industry signings, such as 2013 X Factor winner Sam Bailey, in an

exclusive agreement to join their already impressive stable.

This autumn they're promoting and co-ordinating the inaugural Leicester Business Festival, starting an exciting fortnight between October 26 and November 6 with a high-grade business summit featuring a number of global business speakers.

Their list of clients is growing and includes British Airways, IKEA, Ford, Farmfoods and Mattioli Woods. IBM reports: "We were very pleased with Champions' portfolio of speakers and they exceeded all expectations with their response level."

Star speakers are proven to give any event a real boost. "We supply the best of the best. Combining the right talent with your event or brand promotion, you can be sure you'll be getting the highest possible return on your investment. I'd urge anyone hosting an event to give us a ring to see what we can do for you," says Matthew Hayes.

Champions (UK) plc is also an award-winning brand, public relations and marketing agency.

For full information on their vast range of after-dinner speakers, visit [champions-speakers.co.uk](http://champions-speakers.co.uk)  
For the complete picture on their full range of brand and public relations services, go to [championsukplc.com](http://championsukplc.com)

Hayes family, from left to right: Louisa, Jack, Matthew, Sophia, Roxanna and John Hayes





# People yearn for human interaction

*Despite cost-cutting and enabling technology, face-to-face events may still have the edge and deliver value for money*



◆ FACE-TO-FACE

● YASMIN ARRIGO

Video conferencing, webinars, virtual meetings: when the UK was in the grip of the double-dip recession, companies cut back on corporate travel and the global meetings industry faced a rising threat of virtual meetings. New technologies enabled better, swifter and more tangible video conferencing and meetings that had previously been deemed business-critical were scrapped by some companies in favour of virtual solutions.

Yet in spite of the rise in event tech, the meetings market has remained resilient. Experience agency TRO's client services director Sian Bates explains: "The virtual approach can work for some meetings, but it really does depend on what the objectives are for that event. If you have a network of offices around the world and you need to catch up regularly with staff to share information and ideas quickly, then this can be effective through Skype or video conferencing.

"But if you are trying to make an impact – to change perceptions and behaviour or to inspire and motivate – our belief is

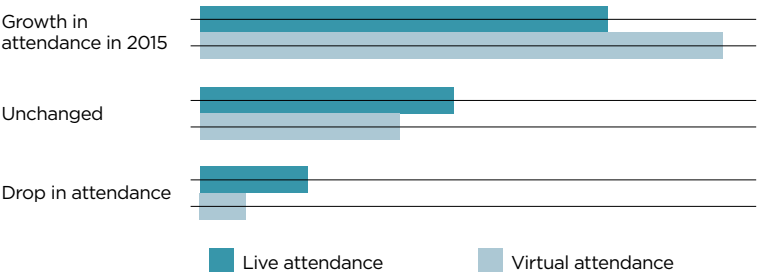
that nothing can replace the face-to-face medium."

Indeed, the drive towards virtual meetings was overwhelmingly driven by a desire to cut costs, without measuring the impact on the overall outcome of the event. Ms Bates concedes: "Of course, there is the cost element which needs to be taken into consideration as the perception is that face-to-face meetings can be more costly when you factor in expense, but that's where the objectives and measuring success against objectives come in.

"If it's a hugely important product launch that requires internal and external stakeholders to be fully educated and empowered, then our opinion and that of our clients is that face-to-face is the best way to do this."

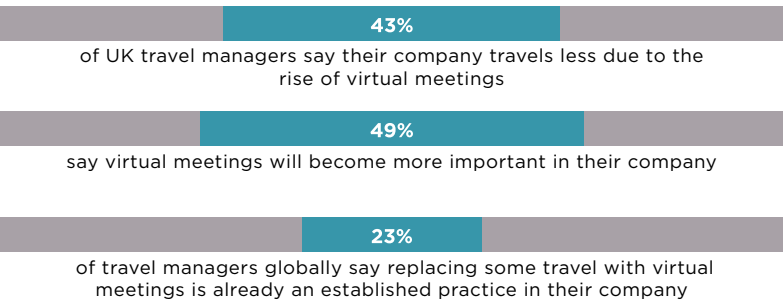
The reality is that while meetings and annual conferences were cancelled due to costs, this was a short-term measure and supplemented by fewer, regional events, which then utilised the latest technology to connect to a wider audience. The "hybrid" event has flourished and enabled internal teams to still come together and share learnings with their peers across the globe.

PERCENTAGE WHO WILL ATTEND LIVE OR VIRTUAL EVENTS



Source: MPI Meetings Outlook 2014

MOVING TO ONLINE



Source: Airplus 2014

Kevin Jackson, vice president sales and marketing, Europe, Middle East and Africa, for global brand experience agency George P. Johnson, adds: "The half-way point is the hybrid

event where people gather locally and regionally, and content is then supplemented centrally, but at the heart is the face-to-face – we are social beings and we crave human interaction."

And while social sharing and carefully crafted digital campaigns abound, the engagement recorded from real face-time still trumps a virtual meeting. Referencing data relating to the recent general election, Mr Jackson explains: "Despite everyone's belief in the power of social media, the biggest spike in voter engagement was when they met a candidate or went to a meeting. We don't work for a company, we work for a person – that person needs to be front and centre, and in the flesh – we need to see and be seen."

And rather than digital solutions hindering the meetings market and replacing events, experts in the field believe this will enhance the live environment and offer a richer delegate experience.

Nic Cooper, chief executive at Sledge, the agency behind Telefonica's Campus Party tech festival, believes pushing meetings into the digital space is less about replacing face-to-face events and more to do with extending the audience reach.

"The digital platform is a great space to use when you need to get a message out to your audience quickly and also where there is a need to overcome geographic boundaries. It is also useful for amplifying a live event and extending the experience into the virtual space for a broader audience. So if the digital space is used in a targeted way, it can be highly effective, both from an experience perspective and a cost point of view," he says.

Digital and social in particular are now used regularly to increase engagement pre, during and post event with organisers engaging with delegates to help shape content, stream out to a wider audience and enhance the lifeline of an event. Rather than competing outright, the boom in technology in this space has enabled companies to use both digital and live in a combined approach to strengthen

their communications strategy and have a richer dialogue with their audience.

George P. Johnson's managing director Jason Megson believes brands will continue to invest in face-to-face in the future and puts the business case forward. "Businesses are built on relationships and their ability to leverage both internal and external connections in order to exchange ideas," he says. "Without these communications channels, the chances of any business flourishing are significantly reduced – sales pipelines dry-up, product development stagnates and work-flow processes grind to a halt."

There is nothing more powerful than using the collective moment of theatre to make your message resonate in a way that is not possible in the digital space

And despite the next generation growing up with tech at their fingertips and embedded in the social network, which some would argue is slowly replacing real human contact, companies are continuing to invest heavily in face-to-face.

Sledge's Mr Cooper explains: "More than ever, people yearn for human interaction and live experiences. We now have a society almost permanently glued to their tablets and smart devices, so the live experience is the only way to disrupt and grab an audience's attention effectively. There is nothing more powerful than using the collective moment of theatre to make your message resonate in a way that is not possible in the digital space. Once you have the audience in the presentation environment, free from their devices and other distractions, your message can be so much more effectively delivered."

So while technology companies may be targeting the burgeoning meeting market with new conference kit and virtual solutions, the industry is showing no signs of slowing and many agencies specialising in conferences are experiencing growth across 2015.

TRO, which has delivered meetings for brands including Tata Consultancy Services, BMW and Shell, has enjoyed an upturn and, according to Ms Bates, "the objectives are often very similar – to enable brands to connect with their audience via a distinctively positive moment that inspires and educates groups of people, driving change, and strengthening relationships within organisations and between people and brands".

She concludes: "The importance of creating a brand experience, whether at an annual conference, product launch or an employee training event, is ever-growing, and with it the appetite for greater entertainment, personalisation and immersive engagement."

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# Events industry helping to power UK economy

*In terms of generating employment, government tax revenue and spending by delegates, the business events sector is a UK economic powerhouse*

## ◆ ECONOMIC IMPACT

● MIKE FLETCHER

People who attend events, along with the organisers of UK meetings, conferences, festivals, concerts, exhibitions, sporting spectacles, plus incentive travel and reward programmes, now spend £39.1 billion annually, according to the Business Visits & Events Partnership (BVEP).

This direct expenditure has increased by just over £3 billion compared with 2011 and gets pumped back into some 25,000 British-based businesses who provide venue hire, event production, exhibition stand design, technology solutions, food and drink, transport, and a raft of other goods and services, all related to the staging of live events.

In fact, the events industry is now the UK's 16th largest employer with more than 530,000 people directly employed, which is more than double that of the UK telecoms industry.

Jackie Boughton, head of sales for Barbican Business Events in London, says: "It's all too easy to see the economic impact of events just in terms of direct expenditure with perhaps a bit of travel thrown in. However, the events industry also delivers taxes, employs a significant workforce and has a massive influence on indirect attendee spend, such as eating out in restaurants, taking taxis and public transport, leisure time and overnight stays."

According to a 2013 *UK Economic Impact Study*, carried out by Meeting Professionals International, conferences, meetings, incentives and exhibitions contribute a total of £21.1 billion to government tax revenues, accounting for 3.6 per cent of overall UK tax.

It's little wonder, therefore, that in the final six months of the Coalition, the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) took steps to work more closely with this industry and to identify a diverse range of global and domestic events, which could then be bid for and staged in the UK with government support.

Anita Lowe, who owns Swindon-based agency Venues and Events, says: "Following informal industry consultation with government last year, the DCMS recently proposed forming a joint board with the events industry to support three tiers of event targeting – global, domestic and business visits. It's vital for the country's continued economic growth that under this new government, and with John Whittingdale as the newly appointed Culture, Media & Sport Secretary, the DCMS proposal is realised."

The events industry's future growth doesn't appear wholly dependent on increased ministerial support, however. Since 2011, the sector has gained much wider parliamentary respect and has been far better represented in the corridors of power, largely due to the work of former Conservative MP Nick de Bois, who chaired an All-Party Parliamentary Group to increase awareness among MPs of the importance of a robust events industry to UK plc.

According to BVEP, even if the industry fails to find someone who can replace Mr de Bois in spearheading the industry in Parliament or should the formation of a joint board with the DCMS take longer than anticipated, direct event spending would still grow to around £48 billion over the next five years.

Simon Hughes, BVEP vice chairman, says: "We welcome the DCMS's interest in winning future events for Britain and attracting more business visits."

**The events industry is now the UK's 16th largest employer with more than 530,000 people directly employed**

But at the same time, the existing need for events in business shows no sign of slowing down.

"Within companies, business strategies have become more impersonal, focused largely around digital solutions so the requirement for face-to-face engagement between stakeholders, shareholders and customers has never been more relevant. It is reflected in our industry's growth since 2010 and it's why spend is expected to increase by a further nine billion pounds by 2020."

Meanwhile, the UK and London in particular is continuing to bathe in the last remaining Olympic after-glow of staging the 2012 Games. British events companies, which supplied London 2012, have reported securing business worth more than £130 million, through contracts won for the Brazil 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games on the back of their Olympic experience.

Figures also suggest that London can continue to expect an additional 20 per cent of expenditure for a further two years, generated by businesses and incentive groups specifically deciding to come to the UK capital in order to visit

the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and to hold meetings and events in the 2012 Olympic host city.

Venues and Events' Ms Lowe says: "Scotland will no doubt experience a similar economic-legacy impact in the five-year period following Glasgow's staging of the Commonwealth Games last year. Over £1 billion of new events infrastructure investment has already been stimulated by the UK's two recent major sporting spectacles in 2012 and 2014, while our ability as a country to attract large-scale concerts, conferences and events has benefitted as a direct result."

Edinburgh cites 2014 as a huge success for convention business with a record total of 208 new events won, including the European Society for Clinical Cell Analysis and the International Conference on Ocean Energy, both set to take place in 2016. These two major conferences will attract more than 65,000 delegates to the Scottish capital and generate an estimated £91.5 million for the local economy.

Examples of recent infrastructure investment in Scotland include a £17-million refurbishment of Glasgow's International Airport, the SSE Hydro entertainment venue, designed by world-renowned architects Foster + Partners, and the £113-million Emirates Arena, which incorporates Scotland's first indoor velodrome, named after Britain's most successful Olympian Sir Chris Hoy.

"Associations remain one of the most important elements of the economic impact of conferences, meetings and events held here in the UK. The sheer size and regularity of association events means they can be relied upon continually to deliver spend not just in terms of direct venue, food and beverage expenditure, but also in a wider context that benefits the host destination significantly," says Caroline Windsor of the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers.

"The BVEP's recent spend figures show the impact of business events is growing faster than national tourism. Clearly, business events, particularly associations and their impact on the market, are on the rise. It is up to us as an industry not just to continue to organise great events, but also to ensure those in power, and our counterparts in other sectors, understand just how important we are, and why the meetings and events industry must have a seat and a voice at the policy making table."

## THE VALUE OF BRITAIN'S EVENTS SECTOR: DIRECT SPENDING

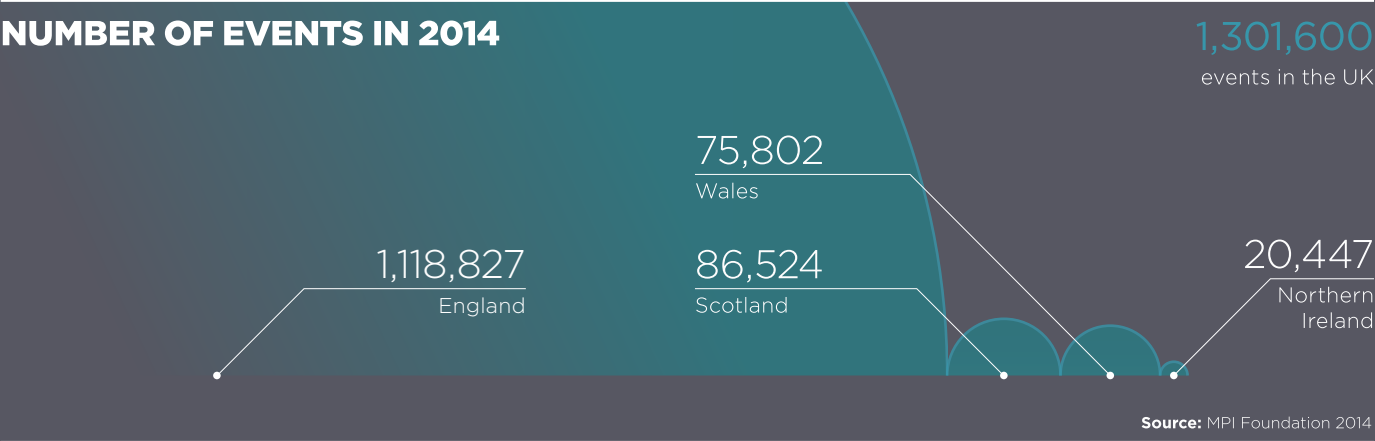
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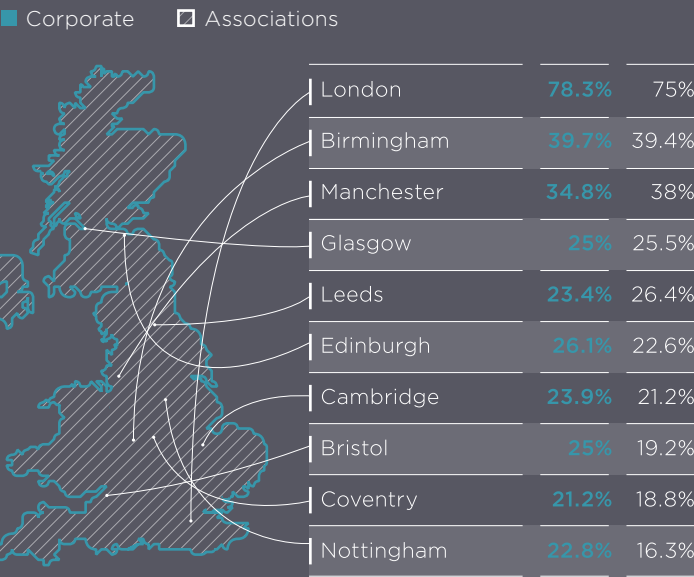
NUMBER OF EVENTS IN 2014



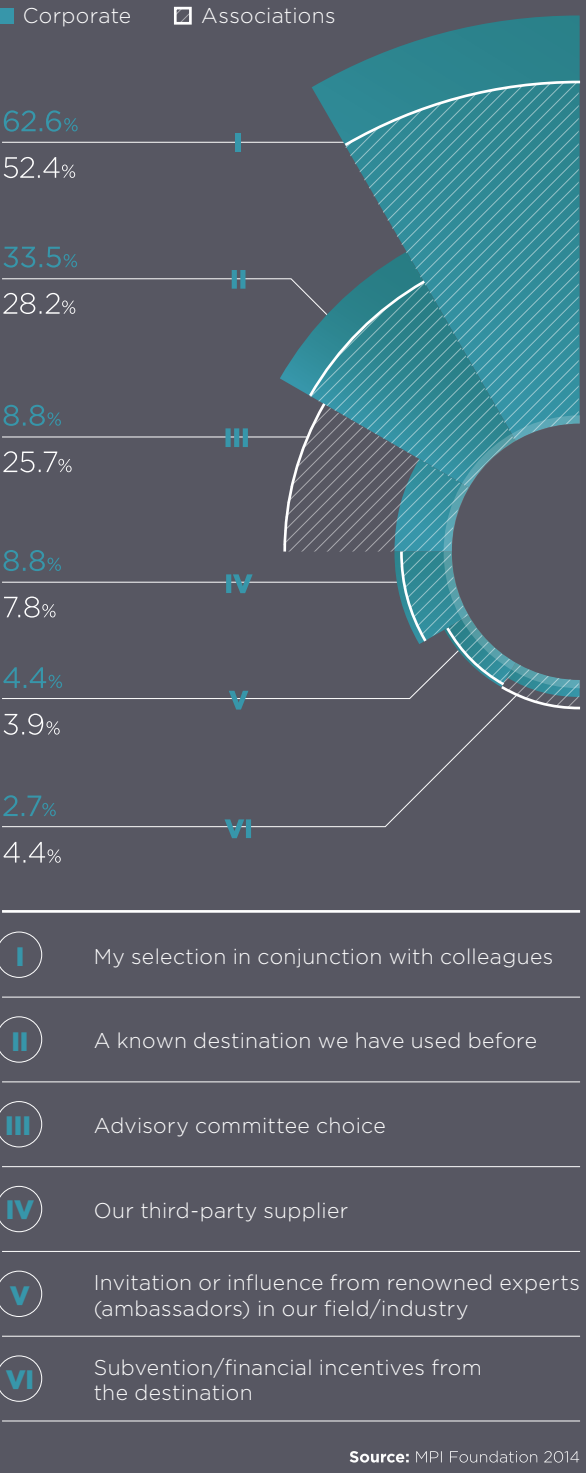
NUMBER OF CITY EVENTS



TOP 10 UK LOCATIONS MOST USED BY EVENT ORGANISERS



INFLUENCES ON CHOICE OF VENUE FOR BUSINESS EVENTS





# It's mobile, not holograms

*Cutting-edge technology such as holograms and augmented reality are on the fringe of mainstream events, but have yet to make a major breakthrough as organisers prefer to go mobile*

◆ TECHNOLOGY  
● BRID-AINE PARNELL

Just as it has with every industry, technology has invaded the events sector, churning out buzzwords such as holograms, augmented reality, closed social networks and hybrid events. But, just like in other industries, the truth on the ground is often quite different from the high-tech future the technology firms are touting. For most, mobile is still at the cutting edge of the technology that's actually being deployed at events, conferences,

“  
The area we're most excited about, especially with the introduction of the iPhone 6, is near-field communication

exhibitions and meetings, and it's the technology that organisers will be focused on in the immediate future too. Ticketing event firm Eventbrite already embraces the mobile experience, giving organisers a mobile app that turns their smartphones into QR (quick response) or barcode scanners to check attendees into events and giving delegates a mobile app that stores tickets for any event run by the firm. “One of the worst experiences to have as a delegate is to arrive at an event and there's a big queue, and you have to wait for ages to check in. The fact that any event organiser can do this high-speed scanning means it's a much more seamless check-in process,” says Marino Fresch, Eventbrite's senior group mar-

## CASE STUDY



The ability to market events digitally, through e-mail and social media, has been a massive boon to the events industry. The costs and labour intensity of direct marketing, such as “snail” mail and telephone calls, have been hugely reduced and an organiser's reach has been greatly extended. But as much as organisers would like to focus solely on digital marketing, those old ways haven't disappeared everywhere just yet. Big firms such as CVENT are marketing mainly online, says marketing director for Europe David Chalmers. “We don't normally do any kind of physical marketing such as direct mail these days. E-mail is very much the priority and promoting your event through social channels is obviously a big priority,” he says. But smaller firms such as Solar Media continue to hit the phones and send out letters, according to head of marketing James Wight.

“We do still have an events sales team, which is handy for our international events, because you still need to get on the phone to get these conference delegates on board. And we also do a small amount of direct mail, which is integrated into the online strategy, where they get something dropping on the mat a short while after the e-mail,” he explains. Combining different forms of marketing, physical and digital, is the key to successful promotion. Mr Wight's direct mail marketing is always personalised and only goes out to the hottest prospects, who've usually been contacted digitally or on the phone. CVENT, meanwhile, are getting more and more engagement and registration from social media channels, alongside its e-mail marketing campaigns. And there are attendees who shy away from the digital world. Mr Wight points out that certain industries, such as medical devices in the United States, still like to have a shiny brochure they can lay their hands on. However, he hopes that having a web app that is applicable to multiple Solar Media events will help engagement to continue digitally between events, supporting the firm's e-mail and direct marketing campaigns. “The app keeps conversations going and adds more engagement between events,” he says.



keting manager for the UK and Ireland. “The attendee app is essentially a little bit like a passbook for tickets, it remains on the delegate's phone. For any event they attend, the ticket will be in that app so they can access it wherever they are.” Events tech startup Noodle, which was founded by managing director Clemie Hardie in January 2013, is betting its business on the use of mobile apps at events, supported by RFID (radio-frequency identification) smart badges. Noodle is one of a number of creative agencies that are now specialising in events technology. “What I've seen is a lot of the new technologies being showcased at events specifically aimed at events professionals. But I think we're kind of doing the most cutting edge that you'll see at a non-industry event,” she says. “As a new startup, we don't feel overly competitive. We've got more work than we can deliver on, and that's consistent across the industry at the moment because organisers are just coming to grips with how they can make their events more efficient and engaging through the use of technology.” Noodle use smart badges to augment

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their mobile app so that delegates aren't constantly glued to their phones at events. The badges are touched in at interactive swipe or touch points to give delegates updated information or content and help organisers keep track of popular sessions and other helpful data. But with the advent of NFC (near-field communication) on mobile phones, Ms Hardie hopes eventually to be able to get rid of the smart badges altogether.

"The area we're most excited about, especially with the introduction of the iPhone 6, is the NFC functionality," she says. "That's really exciting for us because it makes the placement of these interactive touch-points really scalable and applicable to many more different event environments. So it's conceivable that you could go to Glastonbury, walk out of seeing a band and tap your phone at a poster and collect 'likes' on Facebook or get a bonus CD stored away on the app.

"Instead of having a smart badge that you tap on a reader, you have your smartphone that you tap on a poster – for us that's the most exciting because it blurs that line between physical and digital even further."

Eventbrite's Mr Fresch also sees mobile as the future for event organisers. "We're at what's being referred to as peak desktop – we've reached the point where desktop sales are declining, and mobile and tablet sales are increasing. Increasingly, organisers will be ensuring that every part of the event experience is optimised for mobile," he says.

Mobile apps are not just tools for content. Using iBeacon technology, they can be interactive maps for delegates to find their way around an exhibition, they can include polling and Q&A functionality, connect delegates to each other, to speakers and exhibitors, and function as a closed social network for event networking.

But event technologies can present their own difficulties for smaller organisers such as Solar Media, which does a round of small annual events of a few hundred attendees and one large event of several thousand each year.

"I've seen a lot on augmented reality and a lot about iBeacon," says head of marketing James Wight. "It's all good and well, but it depends on what soft-

ware you have on your phone. Especially now, it's more fragmented than three or four years ago when you could depend on most people being on iOS.

"That's the problem, you get the sales pitch in an area that's exciting and then you drill deeper into the devices, the bandwidth and other technological challenges, and realise it's actually a lot of work."

Solar Media has just launched two new technologies for its events, a web app that's mobile responsive, to cut out interoperability issues, and live streams for some of its events to go out to delegates who can't make it onsite, turning them into hybrid events.

"Traditionally, setting up meetings and networking are key at these events, and it was a manual telephone process to set up these things before, which is just not efficient. With the app, you can smooth things and give people nudges rather than be the organiser of something that should be user-generated," says Mr Wight.

"This moves towards a community model around the event and not doing that these days is probably fatal to be blunt."

The app is also functional across multiple Solar Media events, allowing delegates who attend more than one to keep in touch with each other and with the company in between conferences.

The far-off future might include broad use of technology such as holograms and augmented reality, but in the immediate future what event organisers and delegates are looking for are ways to integrate the technology they're already carrying around with them.

Hybrid events that feature delegates or speakers attending virtually through holograms are something that big events like to showcase, but it's not something that the events sector at large is buying into yet. Also Mr Wight points out there's a fine line between offering live streams and webinars to those who can't attend, and tempting potential delegates, even speakers, not to bother attending when you have these kinds of alternative offerings.

Buzzwords of the future might be holograms and augmented reality, but the greater capability of smartphones is the technology changing the delegate experience right now.

## COMMERCIAL FEATURE



# LEADING EVENT APP PROVIDER NOW IN UK

*DoubleDutch, a US-based event app provider, recently opened up shop in London. Luke Glen, who runs DoubleDutch UK, explains why event apps matter and how to get the most out of your app*

doubledutch

### How can an app improve my event?

Beyond simply replacing the paper guide, an app is a one-stop-shop for all your event-critical information. An app allows you to modify information on the fly, so if speakers change or sessions move, you can update the schedule instantly. An app provides new ways to engage your audience, with a built-in Activity Feed where delegates can share comments and photos. The app also collects valuable data on your event's performance, helping you make important improvements in real time and for future events.

### What features should I look for in an app?

First and foremost ease of use for both you and your delegates. Also, all the basics should be in there, such as maps, speaker biographies and venue information. There ought to be a social component, so delegates can ask questions, comment and connect with other attendees. This should create a closed, private stream where they are free to share information and network with one another. We are also seeing really exciting new breakthroughs with new technologies such as beacons, for example, that can send delegates location-based messages to personalise their experience.

### What sort of data can I expect to get from my app and, more importantly, how can I use that data to impact business?

An app is a brilliant way to collect data on things such as engagement, trending

topics and overall sentiment in real time. For example, at a DoubleDutch customer's event, the registration queue outside was long and delegates were getting cold.

“Our app enhances the experience for every event stakeholder – the organiser, delegate, speaker, sponsor and exhibitor”

The organisers noticed sentiment falling via the app, and stepped in to speed up the queue and give coffees to grumbling delegates. We are also able to determine the most popular speakers and the most influential delegates – the people who are gaining the most traction in the app. In fact, we've seen a delegate get invited back as a speaker because of the buzz they created in the app. Our robust analytics platform, Event Performance, provides a wealth of useful data, helping organisers make the most of their events.

### How can an app be used to benefit sponsors and exhibitors?

Sponsors can use the Activity Feed to connect with prospects using "promot-

ed" posts in the same way you might use a pinned tweet. When users tap on the post this creates a lead generating measurable return on investment. Exhibitors can scan delegates' badges, allowing them to upload their information to their database seamlessly so they can reach out to them post event.

### Tell me about DoubleDutch.

DoubleDutch is an award-winning app provider for events, conferences and trade shows. Based in San Francisco, with offices in London, Amsterdam and Hong Kong, we work with leading brands such as SAP, Forbes, LinkedIn and UBM.

### What sets DoubleDutch apart from other mobile event app providers?

We provide one of the most engaging, social event apps out there and this engagement is what is helping event organisers unlock valuable data about their events' performance. They can then benchmark that data against other events, helping them better understand successes and failures over time. Our app enhances the experience for every event stakeholder – the organiser, delegate, speaker, sponsor and exhibitor. Mobile apps are truly taking the event experience to a whole new level and we've made it our mission to lead this charge.

For more information visit [www.doubledutch.me](http://www.doubledutch.me)





# Aiming to stay in vogue with carefully targeted events

*Vogue's editor-in-chief Alexandra Shulman tells how launching an annual festival has helped spread the printed word and broadened the magazine's appeal*

◆ INTERVIEW  
● RAYMOND SNOODY

Alexandra Shulman (pictured) is an editor at the top of her game after 23 years in editorial charge of *Vogue* magazine in the UK.

The magazine is synonymous with the world of high fashion and crammed with glossy advertisements for Dior and Chanel, Prada and Louis Vuitton.

In difficult digital times for publishing, *Vogue's* print circulation is faring better than most.

"The profitability of the magazine has more than held up. We are very lucky there, but everybody knows that print sales generally are not going to increase at the very least, so we were looking at what we could do," she explains.

What the *Vogue* editor-in-chief could do was dream up the idea, and then launch, the *Vogue Festival*, which this year – it's fourth – featured top names from the fashion and design industry, such as John Galliano, Christian Louboutin and Jean Paul Gaultier.

The need to move into large-scale events for the first time did not strike like a eureka moment for Ms Shulman, rather it oozed out of the atmosphere around her six years ago.

She was aware of pop stars making much of their money out of touring rather than CDs, and the explosion in numbers of everything from literary and poetry festivals to immersive theatre troupes.

"I realised that where people were prepared to spend their money was on live events," says Ms Shulman, whose magazine had already launched gala *Vogue* shopping nights in Oxford Street in 2008.

"The festival we came up with was less of a great money-spinning device because events are incredibly expensive to produce, more a way of taking the idea of *Vogue* out to more people," she explains.



The *Vogue* cover wall at the opening of *Vogue Festival* last year

It was driven by the realisation that *Vogue* magazine had never been more famous around the fashion world, yet there were still people who might not consider buying it.

What else could you do with *Vogue* was the question?

"It was that marvellous thing when you have never done something before, you don't realise how difficult it is to do. I'm not sure if I'd known how difficult it was I'd ever have come up with the idea," the editor-in-chief admits.

She wanted a series of talks by leading industry players, but not only talks. It also had to include experience of fashion and beauty, as a way of trying to bring the magazine to life.

A lot of production agencies were interviewed, but the contract went to,

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and continues to be held by, Timebased Events who have been “absolutely brilliant”, she says.

Ms Shulman does not outsource the entire event. Timebased handles the nuts and bolts of building the site, while the *Vogue* editorial team keeps control of brand values and concentrates on central issues, such as signing up the best speakers, many of whom come from Ms Shulman’s contacts book.

The *Vogue* editor confesses, however, that even now she hasn’t got it exactly how she wants it.

“I wanted to reflect the status of the magazine and would like it to have more of an element of debate about the issues confronting people in fashion,” says Ms Shulman, who has journalism in her DNA. Her father Milton Shulman was theatre critic of the *London Evening Standard* for 40 years, and her mother is the feature writer and author Drusilla Beyfus.

“I’d like to do more about fashion and art, fashion and film, and it would be good to do fashion and politics, all of those kind of bigger issues,” says Ms Shulman, who concedes she also has to be realistic.

People, she acknowledges, turn up to hear the big speakers and it’s the big names, such as designer and film director Tom Ford, who will fill a 900-seat venue to overflowing, rather than serious debate.

“I would like to have a bit more of an edge and be a little bit less about the personalities, and more about the issues. It’s a fine calibration, but it can probably be



The point is to engage people who are interested in the idea of *Vogue* – it’s another way of consuming *Vogue*, another way of taking part in the world we create

done,” says Ms Shulman, who has made her position clear on some of the more contentious issues facing the magazine and the industry.

She won’t use models under the age of 16 and, although she wants larger models, she doesn’t mean normal-sized women, just “larger thin women”.

People buy *Vogue* and attend the *Vogue Festival* to see “a kind of version of fashion and style” – an element of fantasy – rather than a portrait of their own lives. There’s *Good Housekeeping* for that sort of thing, she says.

At this year’s *Vogue Festival*, Ms Shulman interviewed designer Galliano on stage for one of his few appearances following his acrimonious departure from Dior after he made anti-Semitic remarks.

But for her, the highlight was less dramatic. “We took over the Royal College of Art for the first time as a venue and turned it into the world of *Vogue*, and Alexa Chung did a very good interview with designer Olivier Rousteing which was hugely successful,” says Ms Shulman.

The festival, which attracted more than 7,000 people this year, made a profit although the *Vogue* editor says it would have been a lot easier to make the same amount of money by selling a few more pages of advertising.

“The point is, yes, for it not to lose money, but to engage people who are interested in the idea of *Vogue* – it’s another way of consuming *Vogue*, another way of taking part

A CAREER IN FASHION JOURNALISM

Educated at Sussex University, where she read social anthropology in the mid-seventies, Alexandra Shulman wrote a freelance article for *Vogue* on “Sussex style”. It was her introduction to a career in journalism and to the magazine she would one day head. But first she worked in the music industry with Hannibal Records and Arista. She started out in publishing as secretary to the editor of *Over 21* magazine and continued to write as a freelance, eventually landing a job with *Tatler* in 1982 and subsequently becoming features editor. In

1987 she was headhunted and joined *The Sunday Telegraph* as woman’s page editor, later becoming deputy editor of the paper’s *7 Days* magazine. Then came an offer from *Vogue* to become features editor. Two years later, in 1990, she was promoted to editor of *GQ* magazine. In 1992, when Liz Tilberis left the post, Alexandra was offered the editorship of *Vogue*. In addition she has written columns for *The Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*, as well as publishing a novel, with a second due out in July. She is the longest serving editor in British *Vogue* history.



in the world we create,” she says.

The hope is that the festival is likely to make people more loyal to the magazine and attract younger potential readers.

“It [the festival] is seen as a good and successful event. You have to keep bringing in new things, not just events. You just have to keep on reinventing the wheel, don’t you?” says Ms Shulman.

She is speaking just after having the first meeting for the 2016 *Vogue Festival* with partners Harrods.

“We are planning to make it larger than it was this year and very special because it is our centenary year,” says Ms Shulman, who believes that events are going to become more important for publications, for marketing and public relations reasons, as well as creating a new stream of revenue.

*Vogue India*, for instance, has an enormous and very lucrative bridal event in a country where fortunes are spent on weddings.

The *Vogue Festival* is completely separate from London Fashion Week and Ms Shulman would be very wary about diluting the branding by trying to merge with any other event.

The annual fashion night, which is an international *Vogue* event, is being rebranded this year to *Vogue Love*, followed by the destination.

On September 12, it will be *Vogue Love Regent Street Fashion Night Out*, a celebration of fashion in a clearly demarcated space.

“It’s terribly exciting because thousands of people flood in and the shops that put a bit of effort into doing something special say they have made the money back in sales and are really pleased by the new customers it drives in,” the *Vogue* chief says.

More events are planned, but they are likely to involve education following the success of Condé Nast master classes at the festival where places at roundtable one-to-eight tuition sessions by experts were instantly snapped up.

Education like the festival, she believes, would be another form of reaching out to new potential readers.

However, the magazine is not about to try to create formal communities of *Vogue* readers, or members as *The Guardian* has done, although it first launched a website 15 years ago.

The publication has 2.5 million Twitter followers, 2.3 million Facebook friends and *Vogue.co.uk* has 2.3 million unique users a month.

Paper circulation in the second half of last year was 191,163 – a 0.6 per cent year-on-year decline, but apps subscriptions take the total number of paid-for sales above 200,000.

“We have got a lot of people engaged with *Vogue* and they could be thought of as a *Vogue* community that is growing, but we are a business and we have to make money, and those things don’t really make money,” insists Ms Shulman, who believes the trick is to provide services that people are prepared to pay for.

Before *Vogue Love Regent Street* and *Vogue Festival 2016*, she has an event of her own to look forward to on July 2, the publication of her second novel, *The Parrots*.

It is, she explains, about London and the effect of foreign money coming into the city.

“It’s also about desire and deception. It’s a *Vogue* world, but not about the fashion industry,” says Ms Shulman with a laugh.

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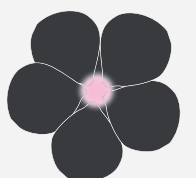
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Build/ing Community



# Engagement up, sales up, pop-up

*Pop-up shops and restaurants have proved a great way to improve brand engagement – now pop-ups are expanding into corporate events*

◆ POP-UP EVENTS  
● SIMON BROOKE

Just over two years ago, Phyllissa Shelton, then a transformation consultant working within the NHS, heard about a franchise concept that was taking the United States by storm. As the name suggests, at a “paint-and-sip” event people gather together to enjoy a glass of wine or beer and to put brush to canvass under the tutelage of an artist.

Shortly after launching PopUp Painting & Events in the UK, Ms Shelton experienced a strong demand among businesses, as well as consumers, and now her corporate clients include Visa, RBS and law firm Linklaters.

“We’ll come to a client’s offices or take them to a venue, and set up our canvasses, brushes and paints,” she explains. “Then we’ll give people about two-and-a-half hours to enjoy a drink and unleash their creativity. One of our artists guides people through the basics and we usually follow the style of a certain painter. Banksy and Van Gogh are the current favourites.”

As well as team-building, the events allow participants to explore challenges and issues. “We’ll get them to draw or paint what the current situation looks like with all its difficulties, and then to paint the future and how they’d like it to look,” says Ms Shelton.

In addition to being a medium to communicate with employees, corporate pop-up events are increasingly being used to engage with external audiences such as clients and suppliers. In September, the Can Makers trade body held a pop-up beer festival, aimed at independent brewers, to promote the benefits of the can over other drink packages.

“The independent canned beer market in the UK was very small when this pop-up was envisioned,” says Martin Constable, chairman of the Can Makers. “We needed an event that would create an occasion, a talk-



ing point and a ‘call to action’ for craft brewers, industry suppliers, influencers and media to attend.

“A corporate event wouldn’t have produced the excitement we needed to reverberate throughout the whole market. When you think of a corporate event you think of auditoriums and suits, but the business customers in this case were the independent brewers. The industry they belong to is incredibly cool.”

Mr Constable believes the growth of business-to-business pop-ups has been influenced by the consumer pop-up sector. “In the end, buyers, whether they’re buying for a business or themselves, are still consumers and they still exhibit the same range of consum-

er emotions and reactions. The business-to-business sector is swiftly catching up with the consumer in terms of creativity and realising that a consumer marketing campaign can be adapted to suit their business needs,” he says.

Richard Dodgson, creative director at Timebased Events, whose clients include shopping centre group Westfield and Calvin Klein, says: “The pop-ups that have been successful have been original, enjoyable and well-conceived experiences. To emulate this success, the corporate market needs to consider the messages and purpose of their activity carefully, and ensure the experience they create captivates this in a fresh, sincere, but also fun and entertaining, manner.

“To get this right they really need to understand their audience. The best pop-ups also tend to be bold and brave. This is certainly something the corporate market can learn from – do things differently and break new ground.”

When Twinings tea were looking to create an impact among supermarket buyers, they approached 4D, a consultancy that creates “immersive experiences” through creativity, technology and design. For Twinings it was essential that the experience was very portable, quick to set up and provided maximum impact in a wide range of different venues.

The solution was a giant inflatable pod where the audience could be transported through their senses to different tea-growing countries.

“For me it’s not just making a cup of tea with the right cups and saucers, it’s about being in the moment with the tea,” says Lucy Chappell, Twinings’ senior tea ambassador. “So what I wanted to create was a special experience for the customer I’m serving to be immersed in the world of the blend.”

According to Neil Crespin, creative director at mcm creative group, whose clients include Unilever, a well-executed pop-up experience can produce a far better “atmosphere for exchange” than a video or e-mail shot. “Some of the best pop-up activities have created a far less formal theatre for discussion, feedback and recommendation. Also by their very nature, a live event is a far more of a 360 experience than a video or e-mail communication,” he says.

“While there is a place to use both film and e-mail to communicate key messages to an internal audience, the power of a pop-up event allows a company to get closer. It offers the opportunity to spark important discussions and

inspire a work force by creating memorable experiences.”

Measuring feedback is also important and so mcm runs bespoke measurement models for each event. “It could be a simple iPad survey with pre-loaded multiple choice questions and areas of free text to gain the audiences’ thoughts and reactions immediately after their experience,” says Mr Crespin. “If we are cascading a tool kit or key strategic messages that can be tracked, we can measure the effectiveness of the road shows or pop-up events over a longer period of time and look at how many people participated in delivering against the key objectives outlined at the start.”

First launched in Australia, a2 Milk is a variety of pure cows’ milk that has been shown to be easier to digest. The brand has the endorsement of international rugby star Danny Cipriani. “We were confident that an opportunity to ‘pour a pint with

“  
In addition to being a medium to communicate with employees, corporate pop-up events are increasingly being used to engage with external audiences such as clients and suppliers


Danny’ would be an appealing proposition for our key influencers,” says Scott Wotherspoon, chief executive of the a2 Milk Company. “We found a great little artisan café to take over and reskin into an a2 Milk ‘milk café’, open for one morning only.”

Mr Wotherspoon believes traditional corporate events don’t have the same sense of urgency. “Businesses should remember that stakeholders are also consumers,” he says. “A business message needn’t be delivered dry. Inviting guests to a pop-up, which is open for a limited time only, creates a sense of ‘miss it and miss out’, and is ideal for the brand and its guests to connect in a more enchanting way.”

1. Paint Banksy Fred Perry Group,  
2. Cobham Curve pop-up painting event  
3. Brewers and guests mingle at the Indie Beer Can Festival,  
4. Richard Dodgson, Timebased creative director







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# Running the race for events after the London Olympics

*London and other major UK cities face a tough challenge from events destinations worldwide where investment in infrastructure and venues has pushed ahead*

◆ GLOBAL DESTINATIONS  
● PAUL COLSTON

Since the 2012 London Olympics, the UK has moved up the global conference ladder and has now broken into the top six city destinations in the world for major association congresses, according to the latest annual statistics released by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

In the ICCA country rankings, the UK is up to fourth, pushing past France to approach leaders the United States, Germany and Spain.

Infrastructure is the key to running a successful event, and the Gulf States and China have hit the headlines for investment in tourism infrastructure as new global meetings destinations sprang up in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and on the Chinese mainland.

Now the UK has the Crossrail, HS2 and HS3 rail links all set to offer an improved transport experience for delegates.

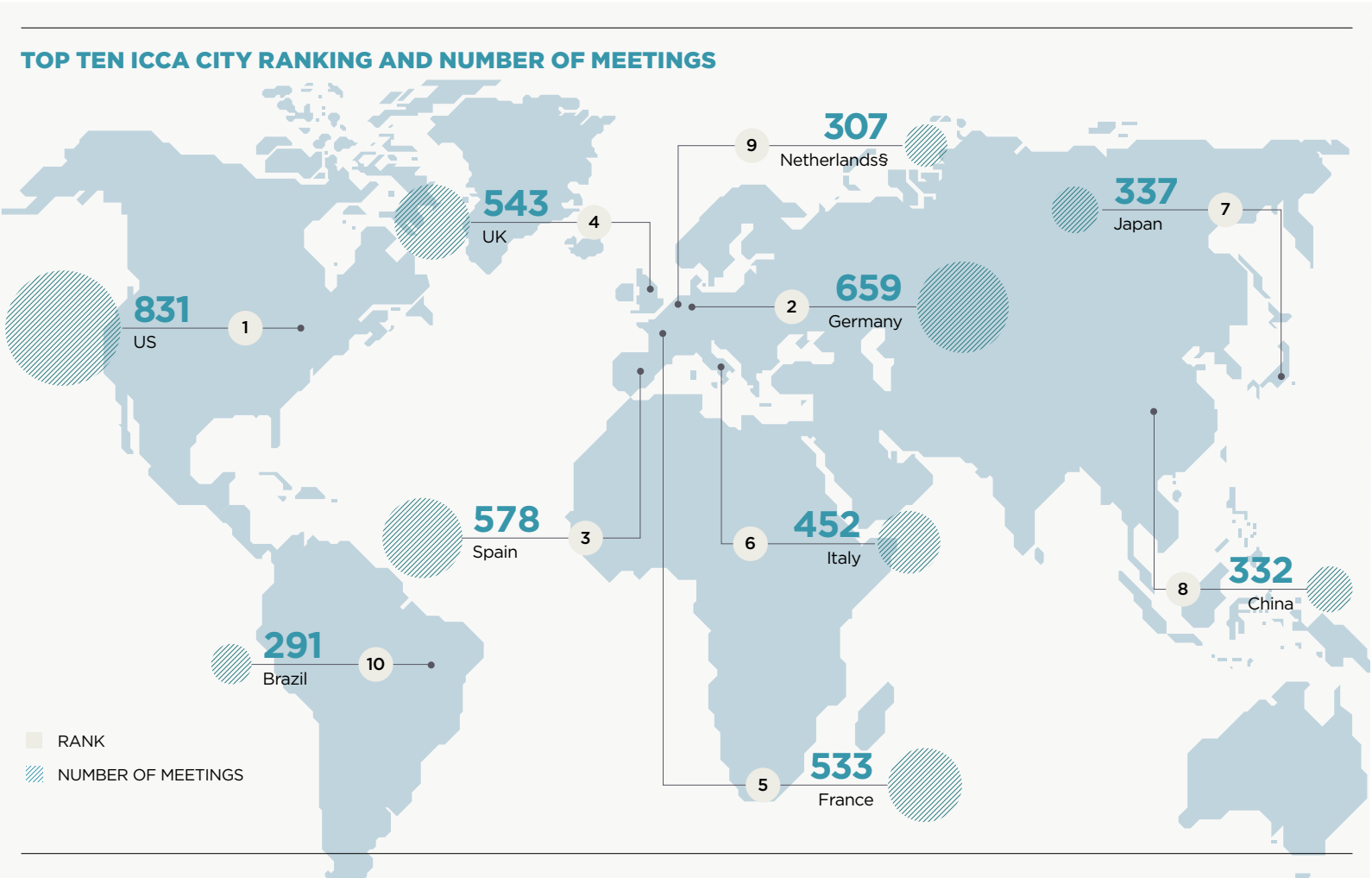
Des McLaughlin, divisional director at Grass Roots Meetings and Events, says: "Infrastructure programmes must dovetail with event planning and logistics. For the UK to remain a leader in hosting events, investment needs to

“  
For the UK to remain a leader in hosting events, investment needs to continue, something that can only be achieved if those in power truly understand our economic impact

continue, something that can only be achieved if those in power truly understand our economic impact. As an industry we have the data and figures, we just need to be better at presenting it to policymakers.”

It is an industry that is estimated to be worth some £40 billion to the UK economy, according the Business Visits & Events Partnership, and even the most conservative estimates put a conference delegate's spend at three times that of a leisure tourist.

It is an uneven pattern in the UK, where those dowdy destination dowerers – conference towns that had their heyday in the 1970s when unions, professional associations and political parties swarmed to the seafront to meet, not bothering much about return on their investment – are now scrambling to find the funds to freshen up their venues.



ICCA CITY RANKING AND NUMBER OF MEETINGS

1	Paris	214	11	Brussels	112
2	Vienna	202	12	Lisbon	109
3	Madrid	200	13	Copenhagen	105
4	Berlin	193	14	Beijing	104
5	Barcelona	182	15	Seoul	99
6	London	166	16	Hong Kong	98
7	Singapore	142	17	Budapest	97
8	Amsterdam	133	17	Rome	97
9	Istanbul	130	19	Stockholm	95
10	Prague	188	20	Taipei	92

Cambridge has worked smartly to align its scientific and pharmaceuticals research and development cluster with a campaign to win international conferences. It is an effort that has seen it rise to fifth in the UK city rankings, according to ICCA, and in Europe from 95th to 58th.

It clearly pays to put the accent on what you do best rather than go into battle on price. Hong Kong and Singapore have held their ground as specialist technological hubs in Asia, and continue to innovate in conferencing rather than attempt to compete on price with neighbours Thai-

land where there is a good events business in the incentives travel niche.

UK destinations seem reticent to harness the power of so-called subvention funding to attract the big convention fish. The very word "subvention" may sail too close to the reach of the Bribery Act for some and even those who use it – or "bid funding" as conference bureaus prefer it to be called – do not shout about it. Small investments in putting on a welcome party from the mayor or offering a travelcard for delegates on a city's transport system can make a big difference to event organisers.

Such packages are not commonplace in the UK, yet they form the core of marketing strategy for many international business tourism boards, including the Thai Convention and Exhibition Bureau, which offers hard cash – up to one million baht (£19,000) – if conference organisers meet certain conditions, including delegate numbers.

If you can't splash the cash, reduce the risk. Glasgow has developed a trail-blazing policy of risk-sharing with the city bureau and the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre offering to take a hit on venue rental fees if delegate numbers go down. This policy gives more incentive for increased joint efforts in boosting delegate numbers and, no doubt, boosts organisers' confidence in the process.

Other variables that can be controlled include taxes and visa restrictions. Mr McLaughlin comments: "True, our VAT is fairly high, but many international businesses can reclaim this. But I do think the government needs urgently to review visa agreements with China – as the world's most populous country and an economic powerhouse, everything we do to make their travel harder to the UK reduces business opportunities."

There is always another convention city waiting to offer a smoother welcome. Higher Chinese and Russian visitor numbers to France and other Schengen na-

tions, compared to the UK, bear out the fact that applying for a UK visa can be a laborious and often expensive experience.

The UK still falls some way off the pace set by the United States and Australia where buy-in by academia is second nature.

The prizes are big for destinations getting their infrastructure investment, subvention funding, technology and ambassador programmes in line.

The International Liver Congress saw more than 10,000 delegates come to London in 2014 – the congress's highest ever attendance – while the European Society of Pathology Congress in London last year enjoyed a 23 per cent increase in attendance compared with 2013 in Lisbon.

Such meetings only began to come to the UK following the construction of an International Convention Centre at Excel London in 2010. Tellingly, the investment came from Abu Dhabi.

The self-proclaimed events capital of the UK, Birmingham, has lacked investment at its flagship venue, the National Exhibition Centre or NEC. A new era is opening following confirmation last month of the council's sale of the venue complex to an investment arm of Lloyds Bank for £307 million.



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