

Creating an Experiential Event

In a study by the Event Marketing institute, **74%** of respondents had a *more positive* impression of the brand after attending a live-branded event, and **94%** of customers reported they were *more likely to buy the product*.

Surprise and delight attendees with multi-sensory experiences. Music, art, and a comfortable environment create immersive conference experiences that grab attention and enhance retention. Hands-on workshops have also been proven to have higher engagement for attendees.

Hone in on the human aspect. Include more networking sessions and longer breaks. Mix-and-match icebreakers, and use "spot-me-badges" that identify attendees with similar needs or interests. Mix vendors, existing clients and new prospects with conversation areas in exhibits. Capture memories with conference photos.

Incorporate and encourage social media. Consider using social media and online resources to not only lock in the learning, and publicize your event, but also to increase engagement and solicit feedback from attendees. Encourage live Tweets with event specific hashtags, and ask attendees to "check-in" or Like the event on Facebook.

High Demand Topics for 2017

BigSpeak has done the research and compiled a list of the most requested topics in the business event industry for 2016-2017. Matching these topics with your audience for a unique and relevant experience is a great way to engage with attendees.

Leadership

Executive Development, Leading Change, Leading Winning Teams

Human Resources

Attracting and Retaining Talent, Corporate Culture, The Alliance, Customer Service

Innovation

Inspiring Workplace Creativity, Disruptive Innovation, Innovating Change

Emotional Intelligence

Performing Under Pressure, Stress Reduction, Effective Communication, Work-life Balance

Sales & Service

Predictable Revenue, Negotiation and Persuasion, Customer Experience

Future Trends

Geopolitics, Future of Healthcare, Millennials as Consumers and in the Workplace, Future of Work

Technology

Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), The Future of Technology, Cyber Security

Motivational

Overcoming Adversity, Celebrity Success, Power of Optimism, Corporate Social Responsibility

Maximizing ROI for Your Attendees

91% of event professionals stated that increasing engagement at their events was an important priority for their organization.

Create a mobile app for your event. Apps allow attendees easy access the event schedule, session information, and link to social media. 60% of event planners say that event apps increase attendee engagement, plus the app is a valuable tool to collect attendee engagement and attendance.

Provide workshops and follow-up opportunities to "lock in the learning." Keep attendees engaged and maximize learning retention by providing expert-led hands-on workshops during the event. To ensure that attendees retain and utilize important knowledge after leaving the event, offer a follow-up webinar, online training sessions, or in-person coaching/consulting.

Hire a subject matter expert, headliner, or emcee. Whether the goal is to increase registration, attendance or audience engagement, hiring experts who will engage with attendees is very important. Often times, industry experts aren't always the best keynote speakers, be sure to view footage first.

Maximize networking opportunities. In an age where just about anything can be found online, it's increasingly valuable to be able to meet face-to-face with the right partners, prospects, and experts. Optimize your venue space and scheduled activities to maximize networking opportunities, and allow attendees to interact with one another through your event app and social media campaigns.

Hold a Raffle on the last day of the conference: Allocate at least \$2,500 for prizes that will be raffled off on the last day of the conference. Relevant and fun prizes with substantial value will encourage attendees to stay for the last day and attend final sessions.

Choosing the Best Keynote Speaker

Establish the date, location and budget of your event.

Your date, for example, will affect which keynote speakers are available, whereas your budget will establish parameters for the speaker search.

Consider the demographics of your audience. Do you need a keynote speaker who will appeal to a general audience or one who will interest a specific demographic group (e.g., an all-women's group)?

Determine the type of presentation you want and the time of day when it will take place. Some speakers are skilled at delivering workshops, while others excel at providing keynotes. After-dinner speakers should incorporate humor into their talks, where morning speakers should be energizing.

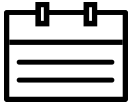
Examine speakers from prior events and attendee feedback. Think about which speakers have been successful for your audience, or if it is your first event, perhaps consider which speakers have been successful at similar events, or contact a speakers bureau for specific industry insights.

Reminder: Be sure the speaker's message is aligned with your company vision and have a clear objective for your headliner such as to entertain, educate, motivate, raise funds, or to endorse or promote a product or cause.

Tip: If budget or availability are a concern, consider looking at speakers that live close to the event area. A speakers bureau can help with this.



Promoting Your Event



Start early. Be sure to lock in your event date, venue, and headliners far in advance so you can begin marketing to your attendees, or prospective attendees. It is advisable to book your venue at least 6 months in advance (or more for a busy season or large event), and your keynote speakers 3-6 months (or more for celebrities or international destinations).



Take advantage of digital media. While nothing is technically "free" in this day and age, simple ways to use digital media include: creating a Facebook event or ads, identifying an event hashtag on twitter, and creating email blasts, blogs, and an online press release. Public event organizers can easily reach thousands of prospective attendees, while internal event organizers can start to drill in event objectives, and create excitement for confirmed attendees.



Event evangelism through word of mouth. Digital and print marketing are effective ways of sharing information about your event, but word of mouth marketing (WOMM) to and from trusted colleagues and friends is one of the most effective ways to build a community around your event and brand. Networking and referral programs are a great way to get the word out.



Promote your next event. If you have planned an annual event or series of events, be sure to promote your event at the prior one, to get your attendees to register while they are still energized from the event environment. Also, be sure to send out post-event surveys to learn what worked, what didn't and to get suggestions on sessions and speakers for next time.

Getting the Best ROI from Keynote Speakers

Book Local. Contact a speakers bureau to find out if there is a notable speaker near the event - who may be willing to keynote at a lower rate or reduced travel costs.

Leverage Sponsors. If your headliner speaker increases event publicity and engagement, sponsors will benefit as well. Use this as a selling point.

Promote. Having a celebrity or industry expert can have a huge impact on registration, event popularity, and attendee engagement. Take advantage by promoting the speaker(s) in digital and print marketing.

Network. Find out if your speaker is willing to meet with your executive team, or notable event attendees over lunch or dinner. Face-to-face networking with a prominent expert or celebrity can be well worth the investment alone.

Follow Up. To lock in the learnings from the event, consider bringing in the speaker for additional workshops or consultations to truly move the needle. Speakers often offer a follow-up webinar Q&A session, or online learning software for free or at a lower cost.

Ask: The speaker to sign autographs, meet with the executive team, take photos with attendees, and/or to provide a hands-on breakout session.



What To Do In Case of Emergency



Be Prepared. Look into event insurance and the venue's emergency protocols. Create a backup plan for everything, and always run a thorough AV/technology check. Work with a speakers bureau as a backup plan in the event that there is an emergency with your keynote speaker and ask your keynote speaker to arrive the evening before their presentation. Make sure you have all vendor contact information on hand, plus a rapid way to communicate with event attendees in the event of emergency or schedule change.



Stay Calm - Anticipate Bumps. When something goes wrong, event planners are usually the first to know. Stay calm, work through the most urgent items first, and be sure to delegate tasks. If there is an issue with your speaker, call your speakers bureau promptly and allow their experienced team to address it immediately.



Communicate. "Acts of God" are out of our control, how they are handled reflect on you and your company. Communicate clearly and in writing with vendors, speakers, and colleagues to ensure everyone is aware of where and when they need to be in certain places. If something goes awry, immediately inform attendees on updated scheduling, room changes, or evacuation plans, in the event of an emergency. Having clear and accurate information helps eliminate confusion, is safer and also protects your reputation.

"If Plan A doesn't work, the alphabet has 25 more letters."

Day of Event Hacks

Carry snacks. We need optimal performance and energy on event day, which is difficult when blood sugar is plummeting and we're deprived of water. Counting on the buffet probably won't work since you'll be mingling or putting out fires.

Arrive early. Set your alarm twice and plan to arrive an hour earlier than you need to be there to account for the numerous unexpected inconveniences that always seem to occur on the big day.

Mingle. With all the coordinating and firefighting, it might be tempting to hide away during any down time. Don't. Take advantage of this valuable opportunity to network with partners, vendors, and attendees, plus, solicit valuable and candid feedback.

"Reserve" the back rows. To ensure attendees fill in the front rows, which increases engagement and discourages attendees from sneaking out early.

Charge. Your brain, your phone, your laptop. Get a good night's rest, ensure all of your electronics are fully charged, then start with a solid breakfast and ample liquids.



Breathe. Event day is a busy day, but it doesn't have to be stressful. Be prepared, stay calm, and enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Photo Lineup Hacks

For attendees, a photo opportunity with the speaker can be a special way to end the event. For event coordinators, however, a photo lineup can be a logistical nightmare—a veritable traffic jam of people in a line that never seems to move or get shorter. Fortunately, there are a few simple shortcuts to move the line along quickly and smoothly.

Hire a professional digital photographer.

A professional photographer will set up the proper lighting, backdrop, and camera angle. With a professional photographer there will be fewer (if any) photo retakes. The photos will be better quality and the line will move more quickly.

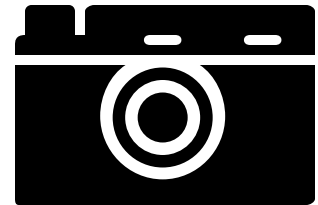
Set up the “photoshoot” location

accordingly. Make sure the photoshoot is set up in a location that will not block people trying to exit the event and will allow ample space for attendees to form a line. **Bonus:** Have a photo backdrop with the event and sponsor logos printed on it. This will look more professional, and is a good way to promote the event.

Assign two team members to manage the line. Simply having someone to usher attendees to and from the speaker, and regulate time spent taking photos, as well as one more person to explain photo etiquette and hold bags or pamphlets for attendees while they greet the speaker can be vital in keeping the line moving along quickly and smoothly.

Leverage for VIPs.

Send them a framed copy of their photo in the mail. Engraving the frame with the event name and date is an extra special touch.



Some speakers only allow 15-30 minutes for photos, so effectively managing expectations and the efficiency of the process is vital to attendee satisfaction.

“Good fortune is what happens when
opportunity meets with planning”

 -Thomas Edison



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