



Global Trends Impacting Meetings & Events

In this white paper, we'll help you navigate six global trends and provide some key insights to make you and your company thrive in 2016 and beyond.

Trends

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Introduction

Global Trends Impacting Meetings & Events

The experience economy. The knowledge economy. The sharing economy. Rise of the millennials. However you want to summarize what's happening in the business world today, six global trends are making an impact on meetings and events. On the following pages, we've included information on these trends as well as some idea starters for you to deliver effective messaging and unforgettable experiences.

1. Acquiring Status
2. Creating Community
3. Localization
4. Personalization
5. Diversity of Thought
6. Be Better

1. Acquiring Status



Status seeking is ever-present in almost all behaviors whether conscious or not. An individual's status no longer stems from what they own, but from who they are as a person; what or whom they know; where they've been and what they've done. It's material possessions vs. experiences, and experiences are winning out. The most obvious reflection of this is on social media where the focus of photos is on fabulous vacations, cool concerts or celebrity run-ins. While these displays are mostly the workings of overt personalities and experience fanatics, what we will call "covert" personalities are looking to the values of a product or service, or the meaning behind a cause, to privately reach their desired status. Status can be extended through both recognition (especially social) and experiences.

Status Acquired though Recognition

As the TrendWatching 2016 Trends Report states, "the only true status that remains must be earned."ⁱ Status and recognition go hand-in-hand. We strive for recognition, which is the outward acknowledgement of reaching a certain prestige (be it winning an award or creating something new and innovative). And with recognition we feel appreciated. A CareerBuilder survey found that, of people contemplating leaving their jobs, 50% said an increase in employee recognition (awards, incentive trips, etc.) would encourage them to stay.ⁱⁱ Elevating that notion by one step is the power of social recognition. Whether internally, among peers, or outside of the company, recognition creates a snowball effect, increasing momentum and reinforcing positive behaviors throughout the company. As more people recognize positive behaviors, interconnectivity and the web of activity help reinforce desired behaviors. There are many ways to give recognition. According to the Generations in the Workforce & Marketplace: Preferences in Rewards, Recognition & Incentives White Paper by the Incentive Research Foundation,ⁱⁱⁱ slight nuances exist between generations when it comes to the acceptance of recognition, but every generation wants to be recognized.

"The only true status that remains must be earned."



Leverage Status Through Recognition at Your Next Meeting or Event:

Implement a social recognition platform to encourage building personal status through behaviors that align to company culture and values and make your employees feel appreciated. Seek to understand how your employees want to be recognized - will a formal award ceremony be most impactful? Or is fun, casual recognition in front of peers a more meaningful route?

Status Acquired through Experiences

These days, so much can be learned with a quick Google search. But that's impersonal. People want experiences to enhance the facts. Associate Editor at Wired UK, Rowland Manthorpe says "Google was once the miracle of the age: now people take it for granted. It's very linear; it can't tell you what you didn't know you wanted to ask. As people become more aware of this, a cultural movement is growing up in which people look to wander and discover rather than go directly to the thing they already knew about."^{iv}

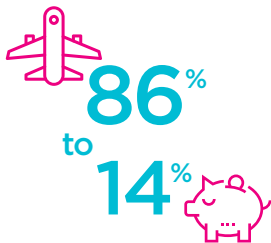
People want to partake in experiences because experiences make them feel empowered; they can share them with others, they are representative of them as a person and prove their status or worth through exclusivity.

Bud Light's "Whatever, USA" contest is an ideal example of exclusivity and status. Over 1.7 million contest applicants submitted a brief video of themselves, showing they were "Up For Whatever" and just 1,000 people were vetted and selected as the perfect partygoers.^v After participating in a weekend-long party and total town takeover, winners became quasi-celebrities by appearing in promotional footage taped during the festival. Ultimate Party Animal Status? Check.



Leverage Status Through Experiences at Your Next Meeting or Event:

The Incentive Research Foundation found that incentive travel and experiences are desired more so than cash awards - 86% to 14% respectively.^{vi} So, as part of your total compensation package, offer incentives to your employees (sales incentives, ideation awards, etc.), and reward achievers with incentive travel or other unique experiences. In an effort to emotionally tie employees to your company, meaningful and exclusive incentives are key.



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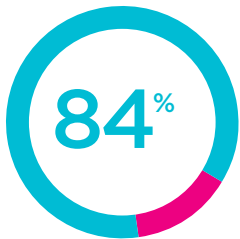
2. Creating Community



There are many ways to generate connections, and collaborative workspaces are a prime example of this. There is a push to develop and sustain work environments that ignite serendipitous meetings and aid in synergies among co-workers.

But those co-workers don't necessarily have to be working for the same company anymore. Co-working spaces is a rapidly growing market that grew from 1,000 to 6,000 co-working spaces in just three years, with forecasts suggesting a six-fold increase by 2018.^{viii} Having become the symbol of connectivity and efficiency, co-working spaces are a direct product of the social-media-way of thinking. Sharing opinions and networking together creates the ultimate community.

Millennials are now dominating the workforce, and of those polled in The Decision to Attend study, 84% state that networking and making connections at meetings is very important to them.^{viii} Simply putting people together in a ballroom and talking at them is not cutting it anymore. Planners need to be more strategic than ever. They will now become choice architects for the participants of the meeting or event. An effective meeting setup can nudge (or encourage) attendees to connect and collaborate with each other more easily. Because of this, more research and importance will be placed on behavioral design. Open learning formats at meetings, where attendees can choose their own track based on interests, and other types of inspirational meeting design will also help cultivate community, collaboration, relationship building and innovation. Meeting technology will become more important in starting conversations among attendees before the event, during and after the event ends. It plays an important role in keeping the conversation going, increasing collaboration and promoting social sharing through photos and posts.



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Leverage Creating Communities at Your Next Meeting or Event:

Create an unforgettable event that fosters collaboration, creates community and helps people learn with the right program design and conversation builders. Mobile event apps are a great way to carry the dialogue throughout the life of the event. Other meeting technologies that enable "happenstance" encounters will enhance the participant experience even more. Ligo by Limefy flashes when you are near someone that the app recommends for you. If you are a startup looking for investors or a designer looking for retailers, this technology can easily connect you to your target audience.

3. Localization



People are realizing the numerous benefits of supporting local businesses. Unique brand personalities provide an intrigue that big box chains can't usually fulfill. And the ability to easily create company websites has provided the opportunity for small businesses to compete with larger brands. Bigger names sometimes even promote local initiatives such as American Express and its Shop Small Business Saturday campaign, encouraging people to patronize and shop at small businesses in their community.

Airbnb prides itself on local hospitality. It offers 'hosted walks' on a mobile app that allows visitors to experience the nuances of a destination as a local would.

Other big brands are tapping into the local craze to boost sales. McDonald's locations in the Chicagoland area held a Burger Build-Off that enabled residents to submit recipe ideas for a locally themed burger and vote on their favorite simply by purchasing it.^{ix}

Starbucks also underwent a localization makeover. Instead of applying the same interior design in all stores globally, designers created new looks by mixing the brand with local culture. For instance, stores in Mexico foster group conversation, similar to a bar setting, while stores in China offer easily movable furniture as Chinese patrons often visit coffee shops in large groups.^x

“The most unique aspect of the trip was when we paired local couples and families to host the incentive attendees in their own homes. The groups became fast friends and even stayed in contact after the trip was over. You can't get much more local than a delicious meal in the home of an Irish family!”



Leverage Localization at Your Next Meeting or Event:

Use the charm of your locale to tell a story with food, merchandise and activities. You can ask a local figure from your industry to craft a message to your group or develop a learning journey related to the history of the destination. Leverage your creative work to help people visualize themselves in the destination. As virtual reality becomes more mainstream, gadgets like the Oculus Rift and Samsung Gear VR will assist in visualization by giving users the immersive feeling of being in the destination and its surroundings with a 360-degree video. According to a 2015 Statista survey, users of Virtual Reality are forecasted to reach 171 million by 2018.^{xi}

Creative Group Account Executive, Brian Kelley, remembers a time when an incentive group travelled to Ireland. “The most unique aspect of the trip was when we paired local couples and families to host the incentive attendees in their own homes. The groups became fast friends and even stayed in contact after the trip was over. You can't get much more local than a delicious meal in the home of an Irish family!”

4. Personalization

Coined “Generation Me,” Millennials may have been the drivers of highly personalized experiences; after all, who doesn’t love being catered to and receiving tailored service? The challenge is that personalization is now expected. It’s no longer that impressive that you go to a hotel chain and they know you prefer a high floor, not near an elevator. It’s all about the big data and learning how to analyze it smartly. Only then will you be able to gather key insights that help you to get to know your clients or customers even better. You’ll understand the “whole” them; what makes them tick; what their story is and where you fit in. This will enable relationship building and empower you to provide the highest level of service: advice. Because each person is unique in their backgrounds and experiences, a great place to start is by grouping people with similar interests and facilitating discussion or tailoring types of activities. True and authentic personalization can be built once a solid relationship is established. A great example of personalization is in the Museum space. 3D replicas of famous paintings were created for visually impaired visitors at the Pardo Museum in Madrid;^{xii} EnChroma glasses were provided to colorblind visitors at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago;^{xiii} and the Muzeums app curates a museum journey for you based on your profile settings.^{xiv} That’s personal! Personalization is also the opportunity to embrace individualism. You’ll see this used more often as it relates to beauty, clothing and experiences. This is nothing new in the world of Build-a-Bear and American Girl Doll, but when an iconic brand such as Mattel’s Barbie undergoes a two-year revamp to start offering different hair types, skin colors and body shapes to make the dolls more relatable to their target audience, you know this trend is serious.



Leverage Personalization at Your Next Meeting or Event:

When planning meetings, events or incentive travel programs, a simple place to start is to dig deeper into audience insight. Take for example mobile apps for meetings and events. You can ask for preferences and interests to properly tailor and personalize the experience for your attendees. You can then group people by interest and provide sessions or activities you know they will enjoy. For a really exclusive event, we recently offered incentive travel winners a personal shopper experience. After a series of questions, the shopper developed a theme (or “story,” if you will) and took the winners on a personalized journey through stores featuring items tailored specifically to their tastes and interests. Another idea is to gather data by working through sponsorships or partnerships. For example a retailer could partner with a hotel and provide a Clothes Mini Bar in the guest rooms. The retailer would be gaining exposure for their brand and possibly new clients, and the hotel is offering a new, inventive service. Check out Fashion Mini Bar, popping up in hotels located in fashion cities around Europe.^{xv}

5. Diversity of Thought



Diversity is not taught with a dull, outdated video on day one of company orientation anymore. It is becoming part of the workplace culture. And we are not just talking about race and gender; we are talking about thoughts and ideas and a level playing field where all can express themselves. The smartest companies know that there's no stereotype for where the best ideas come from. And it won't exist in a vacuum. By cultivating cross-functional interaction and brainstorming – as well as removing stigmas and barriers associated with gender and age – amazing things can happen.

People will look to thought leaders and innovators in hopes of sparking their own creative thoughts. Think South by Southwest Interactive, an annual group of film, interactive media, and music festivals and conferences that highlight compelling panel discussions and enable endless networking opportunities with the brightest minds. Companies are recognizing the opportunity to look outside the box for innovative thinking. In 2015, the luxury brand Louis Vuitton brought together 58 developers from a pool of applicants for the opportunity to analyze company data to solve organizational problems.^{xvi} The winners of various exercises were awarded a trip to San Francisco for their work, and Louis Vuitton gained a fresh perspective on its challenges. Frito-Lay tapped into the diversity its consumers provide with the “Crash the Super Bowl!” ad contest. Super-fans directed submissions for a Dorito’s Super Bowl ad and competed for votes, with the winner receiving \$1 million and the chance to work on a Warner Bros. film.^{xvii} Thinking outside the company brought a slew of ideas from creative fans and Frito-Lay and Doritos brand “created a whole industry around user-generated content,” said Jeff Klein, vp of marketing for Frito-Lay, in a statement.



“Diversity: The art of thinking independently together.”

– Malcom Forbes



Leverage Diversity of Thought at Your Next Meeting or Event:

Look for ways to incorporate innovation and diversity of thought into your next meeting. If you are not already tapping into your employees as a valuable resource and fostering an open environment to brainstorm and ideate, then you are profoundly missing out on ways to improve your company. You can even apply this idea externally by hosting a conference or forum to tap into thought leaders in your industry. With enough valuable content, charging a registration fee can even turn this into a revenue source for your company.

6. Be Better

Better business practices, better personal well-being and better care for our world and its inhabitants will continue to be a strong focus in 2016 and beyond.

Better Business Practices

With the popularity and emphasis on “Best Places to Work” and the GameChangers 500, which highlights companies working for “social good,” it’s no surprise that purpose-driven organizations and human-centric thinking are taking center stage in businesses today. In fact, Deloitte’s Global Human Capital Trends 2015 survey reports that 87% of HR and business leaders consider lack of employee engagement as their #1 challenge.^{xviii} With such a close tie between employee engagement, customer experience and revenue and growth rates, those not focusing on this will be remiss. People are not commodities, and with the ability for many jobs to be carried out with flexible schedules, companies that are open to this will likely lead a more satisfied workforce. Another study by Deloitte, the 2016 Millennial Survey, found that 43% of Millennials are given the opportunity to work remotely and 75% would like to start or do it more often.^{xix} Your internal culture will become your greatest external asset or biggest detriment. The demand for better business practices will cultivate an open, innovative and positive company culture.

Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives are an effective way to gain external notice and internal loyalty, as well as to be a better business partner. Because these initiatives are so important to people, companies need to make them part of their culture, too. Tying CSR initiatives to your company purpose or local community will increase the appeal of your organization’s story. In fact, the 2015 Global Corporate Social Responsibility Study reports that 84% of global consumers seek out responsible products every time they shop, and 91% expect companies to do more than make a profit.^{xx} Co-founder of Twitter, Biz Stone says that the future of marketing is philanthropy, and Todd Kaiser, Marketing Insights Strategist says “brand differentiation is driven by emotional forces as well as the social life of brands [and] will drive marketers to examine how their organizational culture affects how consumers relate to their brands.”^{xxi}



87% of HR and business leaders consider lack of employee engagement as their #1 challenge.



84% of global consumers seek out responsible products every time they shop.



Leverage Better Business Practices at Your Next Meeting or Event:

In addition to monetary donations, there are many ways of inviting your employees to join in on your CSR efforts. Creative Group Account Executive, Tom Hillmer, recalls an incentive trip to Costa Rica. “Our client sponsored an elementary school and asked attendees to bring a backpack full of school supplies. Everyone did – some even more than one. The donations didn’t cost the company a single cent, nor did the activity take any time out of the program, but the attendees were happy to be contributing and the school received much-needed resources.”

Better Well-being



People are focused on total well-being more than ever before. We are also buying from companies that care about our well-being. With books like THRIVE by Ariana Huffington and the Work Human conference – it's not just about eating healthy, but rather taking care of your whole self. Mind, Body, Spirit. While the Kardashians are still posting ab selfies on social media, there is a columnist in the Chicago Tribune hoping her children will just enjoy their “miraculous joining of muscles and tendons and a beating heart that allows [them] to leap and run and stretch.”^{xxiii}

Wearable technology and the Internet of Things has enabled us to track that miraculous movement of our bodies and monitor if we are getting the right exercise and enough sleep. People are also becoming more conscious of the foods they are putting into their bodies. This well-being demand has even influenced fitness club Equinox (whose tagline states “IT'S NOT FITNESS. IT'S LIFE.”) to launch a hospitality brand for health-conscious travelers.



Leverage Better Well-being at Your Next Meeting or Event:

Provide well-being opportunities to your employees and meeting attendees through wellness sessions. This could include a meditation room, yoga, running clubs and even stress relieving exercises such as improv classes. Consider reviewing your meeting agenda to ensure the right balance between meetings and free time or activities.

Apps to Be Better:



Glia

Examines social, political, and economic values of businesses to see if they align with your values.

Greenease

Finds local restaurants that follow sustainable and other important food sourcing practices.

Careerlabs

Gives job-seekers the opportunity to filter by company culture.

Calm.com

Watch waves crashing and the sun setting. Short, timed meditation to increase mindfulness and reduce stress.

Pulse Point

CPR-trained bystanders receive an alert where a cardiac emergency is happening and also where they can find the nearest AED to help save a life until the EMS team arrives.

Better World



With a better understanding of well-being (how diet, exercise and stress management affect the whole self) comes a better understanding of the interconnectivity of the world around us. Companies are becoming more socially and environmentally aware, because people are becoming more socially and environmentally aware. The UN introduced a 17-point plan, backed by 193 governments, to end poverty, halt climate change and fight injustice and inequality. According to its website, The Global Goals for Sustainable Development lead “the biggest attempt in the history of the human race to make the world a better place.”^{xxiv} With numerous celebrity backers such as Daniel Craig, John Legend and the cast of Sesame Street, to name a few, the global campaign is all over social media and sponsors online content and in-person curriculum training for local events.

Just like diversity of thought needs an open and collaborative community, so does social impact. “Impact cannot happen in isolation. It requires collective action.”^{xxv} The concept of global impact is rapidly growing and is evidenced by the 40% yearly growth of Impact Hub – which is a global network that consists of equal parts innovation lab, business incubator and community center that inspires collaboration to maximize financial, social and environmental impact. Cruise lines are even getting in on the idea with Impact Travel. Carnival Cruises teamed up with Fathom Travel to provide social impact in locations such as the Dominican Republic and even Cuba. An itinerary in Cuba might include visiting a UNESCO World Heritage site, an English workshop with students at a local primary school and other cultural immersion activities.



Leverage a Better World at Your Next Meeting or Event:

Offer opportunities either through events or incentive rewards that play into the “better world” category. Follow sustainable green meeting practices that will ultimately save you money in the long run. Oracle saved \$2 million integrating sustainable practices within its organization, including its meetings and conferences. Oracle officials also plan to have the first Zero Waste, Carbon Neutral Conference by 2019.^{xxvii}



become an innovation powerhouse.

Summary

To help people thrive, remember to keep these global trends in mind when planning meetings and events. Keep your participants engaged and connected and become an innovation powerhouse.

How we can help

We create lasting experiences that help you connect with your audience to effectively deliver your message and build your brand.

Our approach is focused on creating the most engaging and personalized participant experience. With end-to-end meeting support, we provide all the elements necessary to create a world-class meeting or event that will drive behavior to meet your goals. Our global programs and experiences reward excellence and inspire people to reach their full potential - we call it Thrivability™ - the art and science of reaching for the stars and nurturing individual greatness. For more information, contact Creative Group, Inc.

Let's Talk

sales@creativegroupinc.com



200 N Martingale Road
Schaumburg, IL 60173

T 800 236 2800
T 847 520 4350

619 N Lynndale Drive
Appleton, WI 54914

T 800 236 2800
T 920 739 8850

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