



Corporate Event Trends in 2019: The Revolution has Begun

Introduction

The future of corporate events

It's started...traditional lines have blurred, and expectations have changed. The attention span of corporate meeting and event attendees has dropped and engagement leading to action is more critical than ever.

Think about it.

The concept of self-driving cars is not new to us anymore. It's terrifying, or amazing, depending on which side of the "street" you're on - but it's not new.

Here are 5 corporate event trends you must be aware of and embrace if you want to design relevant meetings and events in 2019.

1. **Creating Connections**
2. **Oh My Goodness**
3. **Game On**
4. **My Tech Matters**
5. **The Power of Positivity**

1. Creating Connections

Our first trend is about designing and maintaining ecosystems. It's the most overarching trend, because as you will see, so many other trends tie back to the importance of connection and community.

It seems like everyone's creating events these days. And for good reason. In a survey of over 700 corporate executives, Harvard Business Review Analytic Services found that 52% of respondents say event marketing drives more business value than other marketing channels. Some even spend more than half their marketing budget on hosting or sponsoring events.

Driven by the experience economy and a desire to connect, events provide the perfect opportunity to build "business ecosystems." In a LinkedIn post, Executive Advisor Amanda Setili, said that the most valuable companies in the world "created their success by deliberately and aggressively building powerful interconnected networks of customers, partners, suppliers, content providers, investors and others."ⁱ She was talking about brands like Google, Microsoft, and Apple.

Here's an example of an app that created an ecosystem:



WeChat is a Chinese lifestyle platform with 1 billion users that started as a messaging app. It's so widely used that it's poised to become China's ID system according to The Verge, which describes the app essentially as your phone.ⁱⁱ From games, to paying bills and booking doctor appointments - WeChat added 1 million "mini programs" in 18 months.ⁱⁱⁱ It even has a divorce button. The point here is that WeChat became the super-app it is today by providing relevance and connection for its users.



Here are two more relatable corporate event examples:

Salesforce believes in the power of communities so much that it has a Vice President of Community, Erica Kuhl. She has headed up the Trailblazer Community, as Salesforce calls it, for over a decade which has helped to expand the reach of large marketing events with local run events by community members. Beyond that, she says they've found active members close 2.5x more deals, deliver 2x as much pipeline, adopt products at a 35% higher rate than other customers and are 4x more likely to stay with Salesforce.^{iv}

Another way to build on your ecosystem is to host a sales meeting in conjunction with a tradeshow. It's a great way to connect sales executives, vendors, and customers. We helped one of our clients [increase attendance](#) to an event like this by over 1000% in just a few short years.^v

2. Oh My Goodness

Our next trend focuses on the wellbeing enlightenment. While eating healthy and staying active is an important focus for most, the latest numbers from the Global Wellness Institute are no joke. Coming in at \$4.2 Trillion, the global wellness economy proves that we are on a never-ending journey for self-improvement, health and overall wellness. And even though wellbeing is a personal trek, people like to join tribes that support their same goals. (See how ecosystems fit here, too?) Think about goat yoga, cannabis yoga, and beer yoga. No one wants to do those alone.

Here a few wellbeing concepts corporate event participants will find important.

Biohacking the Brain

- Getting proper sleep and honoring the circadian rhythm is especially important when travelling to meetings and events. If participants' schedules are thrown off, chances are they won't be able to fully invest in your program. Simply sending encouraging messages or providing tips and gadgets to help with this challenge will be appreciated.
- Incorporating nature into the meeting or event design will also help participants be more productive with the tasks you assign them. In fact, a study by the University of Exeter found that offices with plants "could increase productivity by 15%" as well as "lower physiological stress, increase attention span and improve wellbeing."

Nutrigenomics

- Uber-personalized food choices are grasping the attention of consumers. First it was ancestry based on DNA results and now we are looking to our genes to tell us what we should eat.
- According to J. Walter Thompson, "Food trends continue to move at lightning pace, driven by social media and ever more sophisticated and daring audiences. The wellbeing movement is also driving the continual quest for ingredients with added health benefits."

BIOHACKING / (verb, noun)

'bī-ō-,ha-kiŋ

(v) To use science, biology, and **self experimentation** to take control of and **upgrade your body**, your **mind**, and your **life**.

(n) The art and science of **becoming superhuman**.

Source: *Bulletproof*

NU·TRI·GE·NO·MICS (noun)

n(y)ootrijē'nōmiks,-'nām' /

(n) the scientific study of the **interaction of nutrition and genes**, especially with regard to the **prevention of treatment of disease**.

Source: *Oxford Dictionaries*

You know it's serious too when social media giants are taking a stance on an issue they are blamed to have created - stressed out, unhappy users. Google launched Digital Wellbeing, and Facebook and Instagram added wellbeing divisions to their platforms and team in an effort to regain trust and increase a healthy balance.^{vi}



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3. Game On

Let's take a look at another multi-million-dollar industry - Gaming - for our third trend.

Previously thought of as what teenage boys do in their basements, the online/virtual gaming industry has penetrated the real world and the implications can't be ignored. According to ESPN.com, there are 50 varsity e-sports programs in the US - and the industry is still growing at 13% per year.^{viii}

Still not convinced gaming is the real deal? Here are some facts about Fortnite: There are 80 million players per month who spend \$300 million on optional in-game purchases.^{ix} They made a Fortnite themepark which fans "mobbed" at Gamescon Germany,^x and they dropped an object from the game in a desert. Why? Well, because games.^{xi}



Remember how we said all the trends tie back nicely to ecosystems? Well what is gaming if not a community? Who would players play against and share cheat codes with?

Even if your corporate event audience isn't into Fortnite, the concept of the gaming world very much applies to meetings and events. You can incorporate it in many ways:

- **To destress**

Gaming lounges are a great place to escape. Simply for fun, they can be just the break from a busy day that meeting and event participants are looking for.

- **Networking/Icebreaker**

Great for driving tradeshow traffic, use an app to incent participants to attend sessions or scan codes at booths. The more points they earn, the more chances for prizes.

- **Learning**

Use games that people are familiar with. Keeping it simple will help maintain their focus instead of trying to grasp the rules. Try custom trivia games on kiosks or through an app to answer industry questions. A "Family Feud" style game will also test participants' knowledge and allow them to work together in teams.

Fortune 500 companies like Boeing, UPS, and Walmart are using VR as training tools for simulations, safety and hazard training, etc. Boeing reported using augmented reality to train employees to install electrical wiring, which resulted in a 40% improvement in productivity.^{xii}

Boeing reported AR helped them achieve a **40% IMPROVEMENT** in productivity.



4. My Tech Matters

Augmented and Virtual Reality brings us to our next trend - the integration of technology into everyday life. One of the reasons AR/VR are successful in increasing learning and productivity is because it puts the user in the center of the experience. It personalizes the experience.

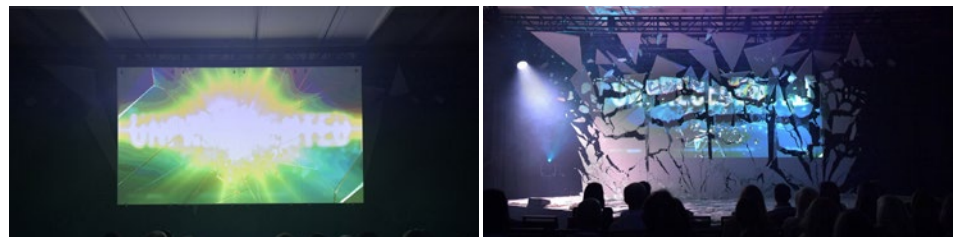
Technology has gone so much further than the handhelds and headsets we think of, though. It's being developed to adapt to users in real-time and integrate into their daily lives. Three examples of this include a Livio AI hearing aid that translates 27 languages instantly, a Reebok sports bra that adjusts support based on level of activity, and Puma athletic shoes that analyze sweat to prevent fatigue.^{xiii}

One challenge of personalizing experiences for people is how to do so at scale. Adidas figured out how to create 30,000 unique videos for runners of the Boston Marathon. Using RFID chips in running bibs, street mats with sensors, and a camera crew - they put together personal highlights for each runner.^{xiv}

And if there aren't enough athletic brand examples already, here's just one more. Nike by Melrose is a data-driven store working to make a seamless customer experience between physical and digital worlds.^{xv} It's the brand's first "live concept" store where merchandise is informed by online purchases in the local community. There's curbside pickup via text service available and sneakers on reserve to try on. According to Business Insider, "The store also offers complimentary tailoring services and a vending machine that spits out free gifts for Nike Plus members."



Integrating technology into experiences is an effective way to surprise and impress meeting and event participants. For example, we created a “glass break wall” for one of our clients. This proved to be very impactful for an audience viewing a compelling video sequence during an opening session. At the conclusion of the video, overlaid words appeared to break through the screen and the projection wall actually shattered at the same time. The video itself was inspirational, but the surprising ending made it unforgettable.



Projection mapping is another tool that can be used at scale (for large groups) or more intimately as showcased by Skullmapping’s *Le Petit Chef*.^{xvi} It’s a visual mapping on your dinner plate. The animation shows a story and the making of your meal – and voila! The magic dish appears with the help of waitstaff.



5. The Power of Positivity

Our fifth and final trend brings us full circle as we tie back to communities. In 2019, brands will continue taking a stand on issues and furthermore, provide solutions that solve problems for everyone.

One brand that's doing this is Allbirds. They re-engineered the rubbery substance found in most shoe soles to use sugar plants instead. Called "SweetFoam" – it's not made using fossil fuel – so it has the ability to make the shoe industry more sustainable. Instead of patenting this innovation to keep to themselves, Allbirds is giving the earth-friendly information away for all to benefit.^{xvii} Another sustainable shoe product came to life as a collaboration by three organizations to reuse chewed gum scraped off the streets of Amsterdam to make sneakers.^{xviii}

Competitors are even teaming up. According to FastCompany, "McDonald's and Starbucks plan to leverage their combined scale to change the way all single-use cups are made and disposed of. It's a plan of unprecedented scale in the fast-food industry to improve its ecological footprint."^{xix}



86% of consumers believe companies should take a stand on social issues.

We see positive impacts showcased at meetings and events all the time – but it can always be better. We can always be better, and we expect brands to help us get there. In fact, 86% of consumers believe companies should take a stand on social issues.^{xx}

And Brands are responding.

Patagonia officially endorsed two U.S. candidates in Nevada and Montana that promised to protect water and land.^{xxi} WeWork banned serving meat at company events to reduce its carbon footprint,^{xxii} and Microsoft now requires its suppliers to provide employees with paid parental leave.^{xxiii}

Companies have a big voice which makes a big impact with their choices. When they commit themselves to important issues, carrying the message through in everything they do – including meetings and events will only make the message louder and that much more clear. People will be inspired to reach the collective goal, especially if they feel they are part of something bigger and are provided with easy ways to get involved.

Supporting meaningful causes can come in the form of meaningful gifting experiences like the buy-one-give-one models such as Bombas socks or hosting actual events like a biotech company does with its Breast Cancer walk.^{xxiv} Beyond that, great ideas to solve health or social issues can come from anywhere. Business events are beginning to embrace concepts like pitch competitions and hackathons to tap into the collective power of event participants.

Summary

Vegetables are being displayed like fine works of art.^{xxv}

Museums that strictly prohibited photography now encourage it.^{xxvi}

Doctors are writing scripts to attend museums.^{xxvii}

Traditional lines have blurred, and expectations have changed. The attention span of corporate meeting and event attendees has dropped and engagement leading to action is more critical than ever.

The revolution has begun.

Creative Group can help you make the most of it.

Let's Talk

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