YOUR UNFAIR ADVANTAGE IN EVENT MANAGEMENT

White Paper
Technologies and trends shaping the Future of Events

NEW GEN LEADERS
Create the environment for self-directed business growth

VIRTUAL-PRESENCE WITH RESPECTED AMBASSADORS
Giving live streaming traction

CO-CREATIVE EVENTS
From preaching to listening and learning

ONLINE COMMUNITY INTEGRATION
Disruptive technologies and collaboration
B2B EVENTS

The pulpit is giving way to the sandpit, where teams come together to discuss, flesh-out and pressure test ideas.

Digital is, paradoxically, both the driver and panacea for an unprecedented cultural shake-up of business relationships that will continue to reshape the live event’s landscape.
NEW GEN EVENTS

In the 20th Century the big corporates looked to grand, annual events to cascade strategic plans, and promote innovation and change. Platforms created to inspire, engage and motivate. Shock and awe? We argue, it works no more. The pulpit is giving way to the sandpit where teams come together to discuss and incubate ideas.

Think about the billion dollar corporations popping up today. Companies doing in a few years what took others centuries. These aren’t so much led from the front as they are catalysed by inspiring experiences in unique, often temporal (pop-up) spaces – where staff, vendors and even customers come together to generate ideas and quickly move them from aspiration to a scalable reality. In this new paradigm events are about intense listening, collaboration and near real time, experimentation. Fail. But fail fast. Learn and move on. That’s the new mantra. That’s the modus operandi the live event’s world needs to embrace.

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Disruptive thinking. Strategic focus.
Audiences no longer consume events through a single medium or channel. An event no longer exists in a single place or time. A single experience no longer fits all. As audiences demand to create the interaction they want, events are moving from mass consumption to mass customisation.

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Over the last couple of years, even months, a deluge of technologies has swamped the world of live events. Indeed, wait 12 months and you’ll be hearing how AI and chat bots will be transforming the delegate experience. Before you know it, someone will tell you those same chatty-bots will be doing your job in a few years. Well, strap in.

There’s a fundamental cultural shift disrupting business and, by implication, the events world – the evolution of eco-systems geared around self-directed communities. The concept of leadership is being re-invented, as an unimposing catalyst.

Ponder how we rarely hear about Google’s founders, Larry and Sergey. What we witness is experts and imagineers coming together in seemingly egalitarian communities that embrace diversity and bold ideas. These communities incubate ideas. Then scale them or bin them, before moving onto the next thing. Hence why a Google campus is more like an event space than an office.

Of course, we could argue the toss about what is leadership today. Google’s founders do lead after a fashion. They nurture values more than they direct. They create the environments to enable a high level of self-direction. Companies, old and new, need to embrace this event-based, community mind-set, if they’re to grow.
VIRTUAL-PRESENCE WITH RESPECTED AMBASSADORS

Live streaming covers a multitude of techniques these days from sessions broadcast over Webex and YouTube to Periscope and now Facebook Live. As tools, most have been relegated to a world approaching voyeurism and topics with only narrow appeal, talking to a niche community of super-fans. In the hubbub of a live B2B event these channels tend to work best when someone famous or popular with a particular community or stakeholder cohort, is delivering the broadcast.

With a respected ambassador facilitating the broadcast and nurturing interaction, we believe it’s a great way to engage a remote audience. For people who can’t attend an event for whatever reason, be they too busy or not given permission to travel or couldn’t afford to attend, virtual presence through live apps on social channels can deliver.

Take Periscope for example. This micro-broadcast app and channel is very easy to use and watch live. Using it successfully, with maximum uptake by an audience, requires a decent mobile broadband connection and someone well known or respected providing the intro and outro to the talk or even conducting the interview or running commentary.

GIVING LIVE STREAMING TRACTION
CO-CREATIVE EVENTS
FROM PREACHING TO LISTENING AND LEARNING

We’ve talked about moving live events from a broadcast posture to listening. With the onslaught of digital technologies enabling the delegates invited to live events to shape the programme - and interact during and after - the tide is shifting to towards more co-creative activities and online interactions.

This is also largely because very few companies these days provide products and services via their own vertically integrated operations and distribution channels. Today companies focus on their core strengths, forcing them to consider how they collaborate, evolve and innovate within business eco-systems or consumer communities. And those eco-systems have taken on a new twist of late. Digitisation of business processes and services has created even more mission critical eco-systems that draws together both business partners in the supply chain and, ultimately, the consumer.

The Internet of Things era puts even greater emphasis on building out complex, inter-connected eco-systems. Success requires harnessing the ideas of multiple stakeholders. In this new world events turn from being a one way, broadcast and cascade process, to listening, co-creating and pressure testing ideas through inspiring and fun interactive experiences.

Hail the community

Events are increasingly about building communities through a combination of live event physicality blended with online interactions moderated by a community manager.
When companies host events, whether for their staff, business customers or partners, or even consumers, there’s an underlying desire to form lasting relationships. Indeed, as industries and business are turned on their head by disruptive technologies, often the goal is intense collaboration.

The live event is becoming the beachhead or catalyst to integrating the host company into the innovation process of their customer’s or the consumer’s life. To do this, it’s critical to have inspiring live events that create a sense of belonging, combined with engaging online interactions actively moderated by a community manager. The physical and virtual worlds allow delegates to keep in touch, share and pressure test ideas.
Shelton Fleming is a collaborative creative agency that blends audience insight with the latest experiential technology and techniques. Our ideas deliver unique, personalised experiences that enable our clients to transform their business and future.

This paper – a thought-piece – can be read along with our other discussion paper on ‘Cool tech disrupting the future of events’; published January 2017.

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Disclaimer: In this paper we reference companies, products and brands delivering cool innovations across the live events sector. They are not the only players on the block. Typically, we would encourage combing the market to find the solution that’s best for your event.

There is no commercial relationship between Shelton Fleming and any of the solutions referenced. Our position is strictly impartial. Our views aim to stimulate discussion rather than provide specific recommendations. Every live event has unique requirements and, as such, the technologies, methods and concepts deployed should be evaluated against your brief.

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