10 event trends for 2020

for 2020

GAME ON!

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About the Author

Julius Solaris is the founder and editor in chief of EventMB (link: eventmanagerblog.com). Started in 2007, EventMB is the number one online platform for event professionals. EventMB was acquired in 2019 by Skift, the largest and most influential travel media company worldwide.

He has been named one of the most influential individuals in the meetings industry by many magazines and media for the past 10 years.

Julius has conducted some of the most groundbreaking research for the event industry. Over 3,000 events reviewed and 15,000 event professionals interviewed.

Julius' analysis and reports have been downloaded by over 300,000 event professionals. 300,000 more read EventMB every month.
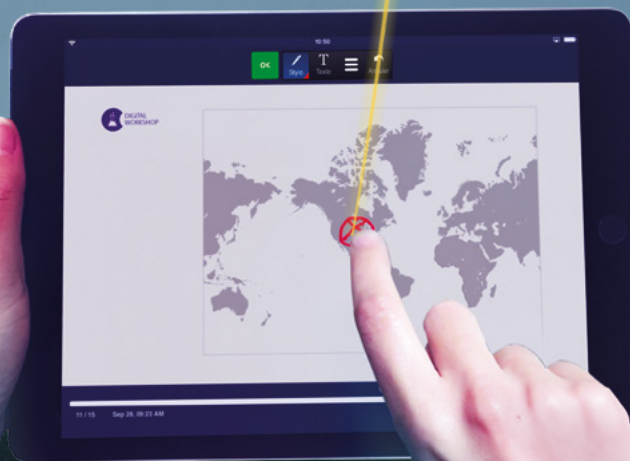
Julius has been keynote for events in 12 countries and for over 200,000 attendees.

A note from the editor

2020 will mark the beginning of a new event industry. An industry defined by identity, where event professionals realize the impact they have in changing peoples' lives. Where events are not seen as a waste of resources but as an integral part of preserving human interaction as we know it in an incredibly tech-dominated world.

Every decade signals a change in gears. In 2010, it was the massive explosion of technology and event apps – a trend still in full force but consolidating really fast. 2020 is the beginning of a new cycle for the event industry.

The stakes will be high. Only those fully committed to the meaning of being an event professional will survive. With increased competition, attendee expectations at an all-time high and budgets inevitably failing to keep up, planners face an unprecedented set of challenges.

Survival of the fittest? No, the survival of the fearless.

Only planners able to dive into change will flourish in 2020. Only those events fully committed to innovation will survive.

2020 is not about the half measure. It's not about trying stuff out. It's not about following fashion. We had the past decade to experiment.

Whether you're a planner, venue, destination, DMC, agency, or event technology provider, 2020 is going to require that you take massive action.

From this perspective, speculation may risk your career. This is where our report comes in. We based our trends on the following:

⚡ **We reviewed over 2,000 events in the space of two years.**
⚡ **We have reviewed north of 300 event technology solutions for our reports, case studies and reviews.**
⚡ **We stepped up research this year with surveys collected from over 3,000 event professionals.**

We've done all this to bring you the most research-intensive trends analysis to date.

It's Game On!

Julius Solaris
Editor, EventMB

Top 10 Event Trends for 2020

1.
FLIGHT SHAMING CALLS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

As the meetings industry embraces a stronger commitment to sustainability (trade shows are the **second-worst contributor** to waste after the construction industry), unnecessary flying will be a key target of green company policies in 2020. Unnecessary travel, especially for non-transactional event attendance (i.e. education, workshops, learning in general), will be cut in favor of online delivery methods.

As planners are more interested in creating experiences for attendees, the resulting increase in virtual attendance will pose a new set of challenges and opportunities.

A flat livestream isn't going to cut it anymore. 360-degree video, virtual networking rooms, and enhanced commenting and collaboration will be the tools required to offer more bang for the attendees' buck. In turn, planners will be able to capitalize on their online content by selling online access and subscriptions.

1. FLIGHT SHAMING CALLS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Explore what offering an online event stream would look like for your event.

⚡ Consider whether to sell tickets for online sessions or to offer them for free to increase reach.

⚡ Evaluate the use of hosts or moderators for the online audience. Having a point of contact and a digital master of ceremony is vital for those following online.

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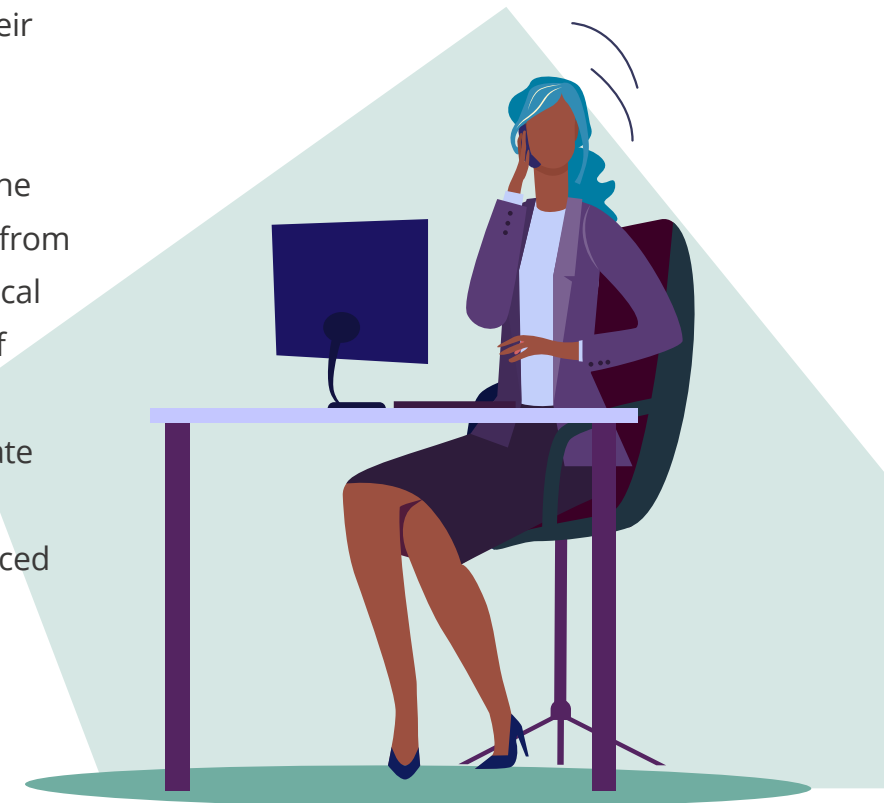**cvent**

Transforming Meetings & Events

2. ONE SOFTWARE FOR ALL MEETINGS

Eventprofs love all-in-one software. Usage has grown 27% year-over-year. While meeting planners traditionally selected from a range of functionally differentiated tools, the strong wave of eventtech acquisitions is making all-in-one tools better – and planners are taking notice. Planners love simplicity, and all-in-one software is solving the problem of juggling multiple tech tools from different suppliers.

Meeting planners traditionally have an aversion to data collection (52% of planners think of it as a 'nice to have' – *__The State of Event Technology__ Report*). All-in-one software offers enough data points to give the kind of event vitals that planners need to make educated decisions about their event ROI.

A big part of the advantage of all-in-one solutions is the readily available data from a multitude of different sources. Vertical tools may, in fact, just give one side of the story. This is not to say that all-in-one means better data. Some disparate tools and systems have really strong integrations that do guarantee advanced levels of data.

2. ONE SOFTWARE FOR ALL MEETINGS

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Was your event technology provider recently acquired? Look at ways to use more services under one umbrella.

⚡ Talk to your event tech provider now to seek further guidance on data. How can they support you to make better decisions?

⚡ Tools with strong integration to large customer relationship management (CRM) platforms like Salesforce and Hubspot may still be a better option to all-in-one solutions. Talk to your team members and ask what they need in their technology stack.

Eric Amram
*Founder and CEO, **Evenium***

Eric Amram is a strong advocate of interactive in-person meetings and is passionate about technology that pushes the frontier of live, interactive collaboration and learning with the intent of fundamentally transforming the event participant experience.

An Ecole Polytechnique and M.I.T. graduate, he co-founded Evenium with business partner Avner Cohen Solal in 2000.

After establishing Evenium as the reference technology platform for professional meetings in Europe, Eric moved to Silicon Valley in 2013 to expand Evenium Inc. in the North American and LATAM markets.

Technology Enables the Evolution of Event Planners to Event Strategists

In 2020, event planners will keep embracing their evolving role as event strategists, shifting their focus from logistics to designing impactful event experiences. Event tech will be their best ally to succeed in this new role, as it allows planners to save time by automating their tedious tasks and to focus on creating engaging and interactive event experiences.

As part of this shift, event stakeholders will expect event planners to use event data and attendee feedback to improve their return on investment and reach event objectives. Once again, event tech will be a helpful tool to gather meaningful data and measure attendee satisfaction.

Event tech will also gain a stronger foothold in education/training events because of its interactive features and how it helps facilitate group work.

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3.

EVENT EXPERIENCE DESIGN TRUMPS TRADITIONAL PLANNING

In 2019, the meeting industry was allocated between 40% and 70% more budget from marketing departments. Live events work, but expectations are also rising.

We define 2019 as the year of transformation. The past year has been defined by the rise of event experiences. Many events have transitioned from simple conferences and tradeshows to multifaceted live activations.

Events like C2 and SXSW have innovated in bringing festival-like experiences to traditional meetings. Traditionally business-driven events like the LA Summit have evolved into multi-day, transformational

experiences with music, food, live performances, meditation – and yes, conference talks.

While the concept of an 'event experience' is new and still lacks a formal definition, a recent survey we conducted brought us as close as anyone has ever been to a consensus. Engagement was ranked in the top three most crucial elements by the most event professionals.

Attendee mapping, stronger attention to data, and innovative RFID and NFC data points are being introduced to deliver on the participants' objectives in a more cohesive, interaction-based way.

3. EVENT EXPERIENCE DESIGN TRUMPS TRADITIONAL PLANNING

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Mapping your attendee journey from registration or ticket purchase to feedback is becoming a de facto activity of your event planning process. Start defining your attendees' different touchpoints.

⚡ Incrementally disrupt touchpoints to bring delight, surprise and change. How can a speaker be truly memorable? How can a coffee break be used for connection? How can feedback be shared in an innovative way?

⚡ Consider underused technology to improve the user experience. Check-in technology is highly in demand to optimize the first interaction you have with your guests.

Tim Simpson

*Brand & Engagement Strategist, **Design Studio***

Tim is a global creative marketer with roots in the advertising, telecommunications, transportation and logistics industries. With an MFA in Poetry and an eclectic and varied background, Tim brings something unique to any organization looking to build an iconic brand and foster smart, original programs and initiatives.

In 2018, Tim joined forces with Maritz Global Events' Design Studio to support growth while delivering direct client strategy consulting. Tim is a versatile and dynamic creative director with a natural way of leading and setting the tempo for large teams of writers, strategists and designers while specializing in experience design, marketing strategy, brand development and redesign, strategic communications, and the development of transformations.

More Investment in Event Design and Experience Strategy Driving the Future of Human-centric Events

We are seeing a deeper investment in event design and experience strategy. Moreso today than at any other time, organizations' own perceptions of their events are shifting as the belief in human-to-human engagement as a critical growth driver expands. Rather than a high-cost line item on the budget, executives are seeing their events as strategic assets. This has led to more executive-level involvement in event design and a drive from the top levels to invest in the expertise required to elevate – or transform – their event strategies.

This signals that organizations are taking seriously and adopting the concepts of clear purpose and shared values. They are developing a deeper understanding of the need to design for the whole person – both the personal and professional selves. Let's just set the record straight: staging experiences for the sake of staging experiences is dead. Event goers are demanding far more!

People are seeking events that are purpose-driven and offer deep personalization. To curate experiences that deliver this, we believe

you need to understand people beyond the most basic, biological and behavioral levels. In 2019, many organizations embraced the idea that understanding attendee preferences and personal values structures is a critical factor in good design – more so than understanding satisfaction. We will see this area of impact grow in 2020. We anticipate our collaboration with organizations in design studies, onsite assessments or focus groups to increase dramatically.

Regardless of the delivery model, the gold is in the output! Those that adopt the model are and will be out-designing those that have not.
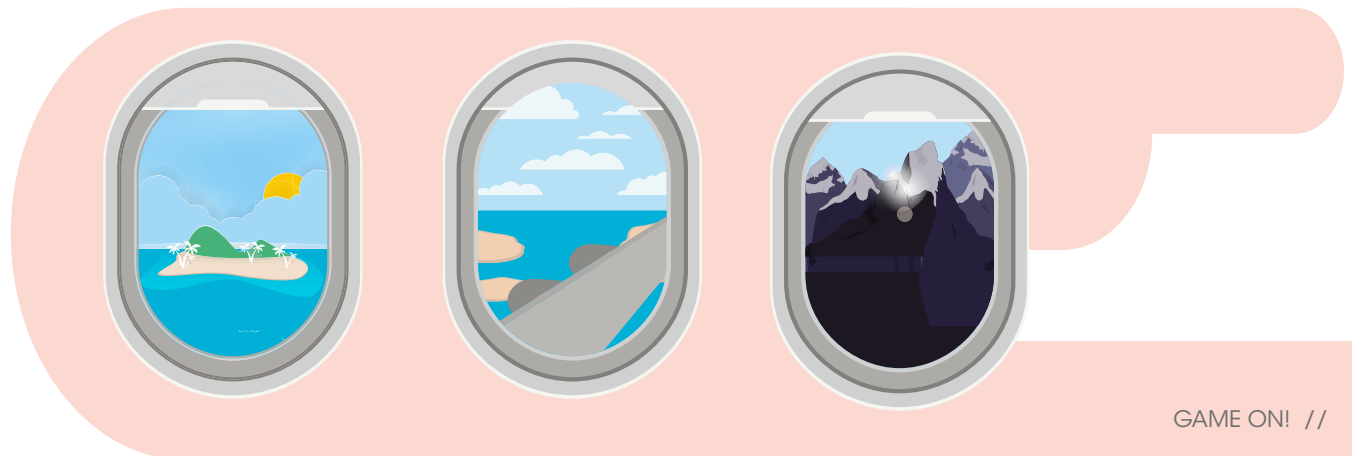
ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT OR TRAIN OR PLANE

Cruise ships, but also planes and trains, have become some of the hottest event venues for 2020. As the trend of designing experiences continues to build momentum in 2020, planners are choosing immersive environments to deliver such experiences.

Unconventional venues remain in demand, but some planners are making quite decisive choices when it comes to venue selection. Choosing the means of transportation as the actual event venue offers an interesting experiential twist to attendees searching for the leisure component in business travel. Engagement, being the primary metric for measuring event experiences, is

best achieved through designing strategic interactions. These venues can surely be correlated with more of both.

Traditional venues break the magic. You break the magic of the event when you walk outside of the venue; you break it when you bump into an attendee of another conference or trade show happening in the same space.

What if you could replicate the feeling of a theater in which all audience members participate in the same story, but are also compelled to interact with it? Will segregating attendees on a train or a boat hurt the free spirits? Probably. But transformation happens only through deep commitment, and focusing on a very immersive space could facilitate engagement from even the most distracted attendees.

4. ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT OR TRAIN OR PLANE

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Consider transportation as your next event venue. Can you start your event on a plane and end it in a traditional meeting room?

⚡ The logistics of making an event happen on a train or a boat can be challenging. Keep the flow of the event as lean as possible to avoid complications and limitations.

⚡ Playfulness is key in how you strategize for transportation-driven events, but make sure your audience is up for it before embarking on such delicate projects. You may need to consider waivers or checkpoints to ensure that everyone is in good shape to travel. Also, err on the side of inclusion and accessibility for those attendees who may struggle with such venues.

5. HOLLYWOODIFICATION OF EVENTS
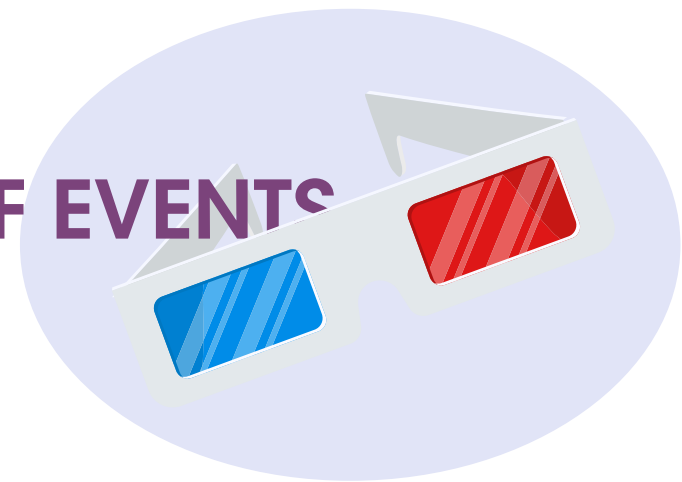
At EventMB, we never covered the festivalization of events as a trend. We still think festivalization is often conflated with the rise of transformational experiences. The axis of shared purpose and interaction, often referred to as 'co-creation', is where transformative experiences will occur in 2020. As events like *Fuerza Bruta* and amusement parks such as *Evermore* gain popularity, planners will resort to Hollywood-style storytelling to achieve true engagement.

As a result, the role of event staff, whether at a conference, trade show exhibit/activation or corporate team building event, will be that of actors more than waiting staff. The role of planners will be to direct the event more than coordinate logistics.

Interactivity and the element of surprise stimulate more parts of the brain than tepid classroom-style dictation. They achieve higher levels of engagement. Imagine actors engaged in a symbolic role play during a team building retreat, or booth personnel delivering a message in costume.

On the other hand, attendees are sucked into the experience and have a role to play in the event. They need to massively step out of their comfort zone in order to make the story progress. When it comes to large audience, they get to decide how the story unfolds using technology – like a cross between a video game and the Netflix series 'Birdbox'.

The role of audio-visual effects (AV) will be paramount in delivering on such high-involvement experiences. Whether it's projection mapping, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) or mobile event apps, the tools available give planners the ability to immerse their audience in a story – even if the venue is just a large blank canvas.

Can this be applied to business events? There is no choice here. It will happen to most events; it's a matter of survival.
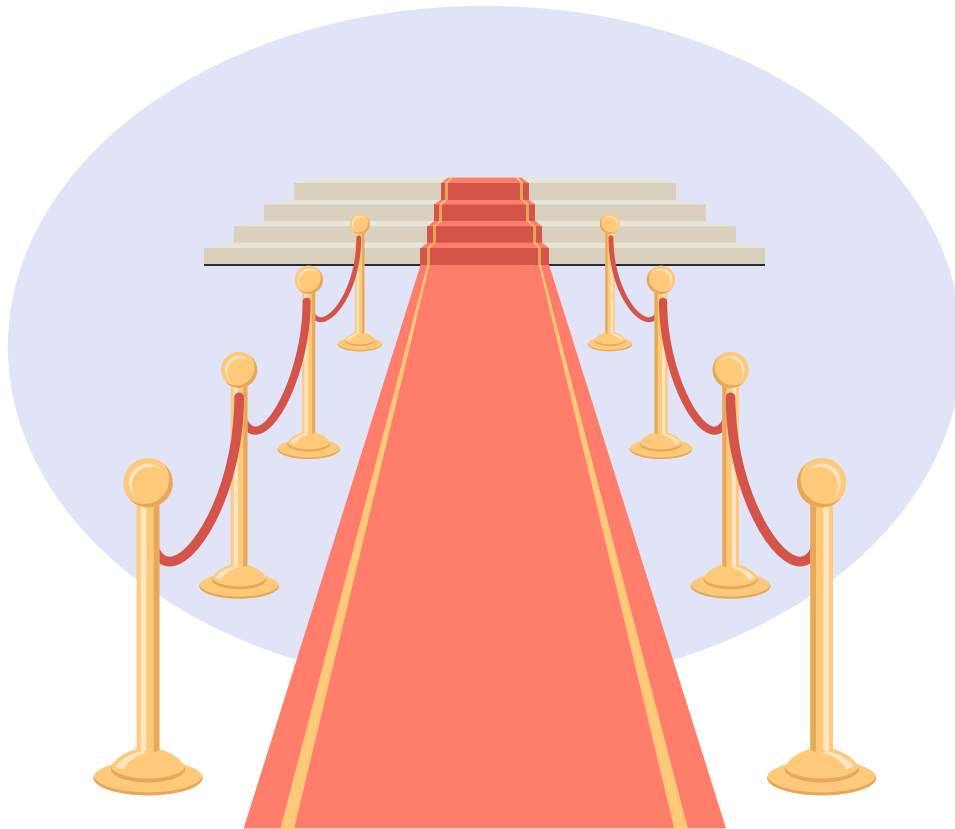
5. HOLLYWOODIFICATION OF EVENTS

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Start thinking about how to incorporate your staff as active members of the event content. This could start with an out-of-the-ordinary MC for traditional business events.

⚡ Don't be afraid to risk it with the use of team builders and actors who can enrich the formal narrative of internal meetings, but bear in mind that risk does not mean being silly.

⚡ Disrupt but respect business, specially if you plan team building or internal sales events. It's good to mix things up, but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Always combine traditional with unconventional to make the boss happy.

6. MICRO MAPPING

Projection mapping has been around for a while now, though usually dedicated to very large projects with high budgets. With the advent of projects like Lightform, Arduino and depth cameras, projection mapping is becoming more accessible for business events and activations.

To bring an event to life, we can no longer count on the usual elements:

CONFERENCE: a presentation, a speaker, some music, lighting, a screen/mega screen focal point

TRADESHOW: booth furniture, booth staff, music

Micro mapping adds an interactive dimension to projection mapping thanks to the use of sensors and cameras that interpret and react to attendee input. Planners can turn any surface into a touchscreen, allowing attendees to change elements in the projection by interacting with them. Imagine

retrieving company information by tapping on a brand name in a projected exhibitor listing or trade show floor plan. All projected on a surface, no mobile device.

This solves a practical barrier for AR activations. While battling the tendency for attendees to spend the whole event with their noses in their phones, tapping on a surface or moving physical objects brings people back to the event, to real life.

2020 is the start of a new era in which AI will push the event technology frontier, where online will meet offline.
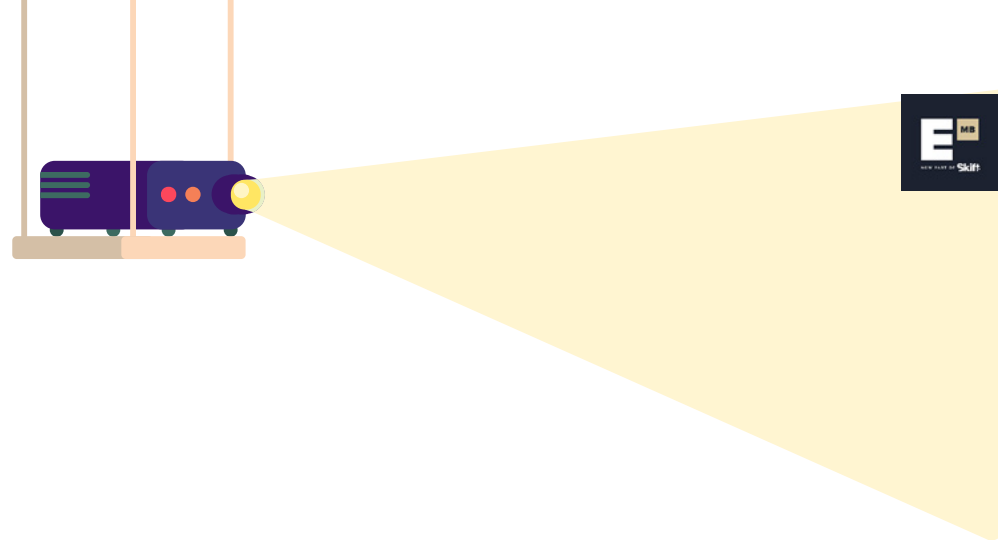
6. MICRO MAPPING

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Sponsorship is the easiest way to get started with micromapping. Start talking to that sponsor who wants to do things differently. Get them on board to try something new.

⚡ Understand the logistics and requirements. Contracting an AV agency to get started with micromapping is a good idea if this is your first time.

⚡ Watching micromapping is not as good as interacting with micromapping. Use it as an engagement tool; if you just want a static animated piece, use AR.

Mike Dietrich

Vice President, Product Marketing **Cvent**

Mike Dietrich leads the Product Marketing team at Cvent and is responsible for delivering double-digit growth for Cvent's industry-leading portfolio of SaaS based event technology software.

Measured Event Experiences Meet Heightened Expectations

A major trend is the heightened expectations of relevance and value. It's never been harder to break through the noise out there, reach your attendees and persuade them to come to your events. Meeting that expectation starts at how you market your event, how you turn prospects into registrants, and continues through to the personalized attendee experience you must deliver onsite.

Correspondingly, there is a heightened expectation of an event's proof of impact. Up to 40% of B2B marketing budgets are spent on events, representing millions of dollars of investment. The need to increase ROI and justify this level of spend is driving event tech integrations with marketing tech that provides rich data, so the people that wrote those checks need to see the proof of impact from that investment.

Experiential marketing and the use of AR and VR to deliver highly engaging content experiences for your attendees is increasing to support impact goals. Marketers need to evolve well past the standard panel and presentation formats for their event sessions.

7. BEYOND RECYCLING

This year's Game On theme is really all about planners fully embracing the theme, policy, technology, venue choice and all other decisions inherent to planning and executing events. When it comes to sustainability, this is even more the case.

The recent push of sustainable initiatives in the event industry has been treated as a meteoric trend. The same happened in 2008, right before the economic crisis hit the meetings industry. Many sustainability initiatives popped up, only to be forgotten when the money needed to implement them dried up.

What many in the industry don't seem to understand is that sustainability is not a trend. While the worsening effects of climate change are compelling, that's not the only reason event stakeholders should pay attention. It is, of course, a matter of urgency, but above all, it is a matter of expectations for our guests.

Many households across the country (and the world) have been recycling for over 40 years. It is a basic process everybody is used to. Thinking about waste, differentiating trash and more recently eliminating single-use plastics is the norm. Some areas of California have completely banned plastic straws. Many hotels eliminated plastic bottles.

Failing to respect the basic expectations of the guests exposes our events to substantial risks: the risk of disappointment, the risk of loud criticism. Planners paving the way are not only ticking the box for the basics, they are also going full-on sustainability. Recyclable or digital signage, water stations, recyclable silverware, and tree planting activities during the event are just a few green initiatives that make an impact. In fact, they say *__the single most impactful way to help the environment is to adopt a vegetarian diet__*, and catered events are a perfect opportunity to showcase that.

Brands are also taking notice: alternatives such as *__Falconboard__* and *__Xanita__* provide recyclable exhibition booths that look incredible and do not impact the environment.

In 2020, planners will be required to be all-in when it comes to sustainability. No half initiatives, no stopping at the basics. For an event to be called sustainable, the bar will be much higher.

7. BEYOND RECYCLING

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Make your sustainability initiative clear on your website. Only 10% of the venues we reviewed in ***our latest research*** published information about their sustainability policy.

⚡ Collect lanyards and name badge holders at the end of the conference, avoid using paper cups, limit the lunch menu to meat-free options, and include reusable water bottles in attendee gift bags.

⚡ Make sustainability part of the experience. ***An event we researched*** planted 10 trees during the conference; another cleaned up public spaces or beaches; others helped at local food banks.

8. MORE COLLABORATION, LESS PRESENTATION

The event industry has fought a 50-year-long battle with presentations. Attendees have traditionally complained about the lack of presentation engagement. Death by Powerpoint is the most notable example. Recently, panels are subject to the same harsh treatment, with innumerable threads on social media bashing panels and how planners still resort to them despite their bad reputation.

2020 will shift the bar tremendously when it comes to collaboration. *Our recent analysis* tells us that 73% of conferences and 50% of trade shows offer some level of workshop as a component of their event.

Most literature and scientific papers on the subject tend to agree: transformation happens through collaboration. Horizontal, attendee-to-attendee interaction. Thinking that attendees will receive a transformative experience by enduring a keynote is not only unrealistic, it's presumptuous.

Planners designing a content program for their event will have essentially two options:

1. **The choice of an unrelated, entertaining, awe-inspiring keynote that can trigger many social media updates and selfie opportunities.**

2. **The choice of a very relevant keynote name followed by many opportunities to discuss, interact and collaborate on what was presented in groups.**

The latter is the ***science-backed approach***. The former is a short-term strategy that requires constant fuel. Technology plays a strong role in opening up the collaborative opportunities beyond analog group interactions. It helps to facilitate a connection in large groups and to organize the learning in a digestible way.
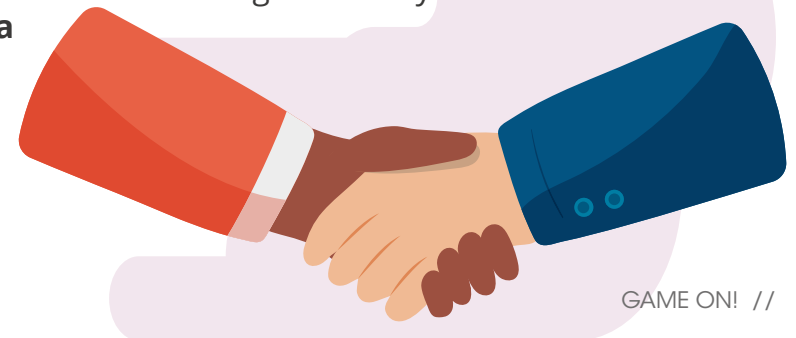
8. MORE COLLABORATION, LESS PRESENTATION

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Choose keynotes that inspire but relate to your audience. Invest in memorability over sensationalism. Remembering a session months later is more valuable than getting a few Instagram shares – that is what will perpetuate real conversation and engagement beyond the event.

⚡ Invest in technology to connect your audience. Not all events can facilitate peer-to-peer discussion. Use technology strategically to get attendees in teams and collaborating with one another. Slidesharing, annotation, group work, leaderboards, and voting on question relevance during Q&A's are just some of the features you should be looking for.

⚡ Work on your room design to facilitate interaction. Front-facing lecture-style seating will never engage attendees. Think of round tables, nests, and mixed furniture seating to stimulate attendees to connect.

Kiel Jared
VP of Digital, **GES**

As VP of Digital at GES, a leader in face-to-face event marketing, Kiel Jared is committed to saving the world – one website at a time. Dedicated to bridging the gap between traditional marketing and hi-tech modernization, Kiel leverages his extensive experience in digital marketing to transform user experiences, website best practices, cutting-edge technology and content marketing. He has over 17 years of experience in architecting, designing and developing digital experiences on the web and beyond.

Digital Marketing and Defining Customer Journeys

It will always be the case that growing awareness is the primary focus when growing an event, closely followed by increasing customer leads and prospects. The most practical way to integrate online marketing into your event marketing strategy is to consider communications from a customer point-of-view through the customer journey.

This always-on type of lifecycle marketing entails the combination of online and offline media across the customer journey. Digital media is effective in creating a unified customer experience throughout the event and supporting event goals including customer retention. However, many digital campaigns are strong in top-of-funnel in activities but lacking in the middle and bottom-of-funnel nurture and re-targeting activities. It will continue to evolve as a central event strategy.

Many businesses are adopting marketing automation and account-based marketing technology to better implement these touchpoints. The biggest advantage of a digital-first approach to marketing are the analytics and insights, which allow you to optimize your digital

marketing strategy and drive business performance. Mckinsey research suggests that intensive users of customer analytics are 23 times more likely to clearly outperform their competitors in terms of new customer acquisition than non-intensive users, and nine times more likely to surpass them in customer loyalty. Improving data-driven marketing is the aim of many businesses, and data analysis is a skill in high demand.

The most significant digital technology for marketers deal with personification, real-time communication and conversational marketing. Engaging in more web, email and mobile-based conversations can have a bigger impact on your perceived relevance and facilitate a more personal, relatable tone in your event experience and supporting marketing content.

9. NETWORKING, HELLO STRANGER

We increasingly attend events because we want to meet relevant contacts. In a chaotic and information-overloaded social media world, we are desperate for curated opportunities to find new peers and partners. This is what business events should be.

Networking is the most neglected element in most events. There is a tendency to delegate networking to alcohol, or to a live band. 2020 will clearly be a defining year for networking implementation at events.

Planners who seriously intend to deliver on the networking piece will need to step up the networking opportunities within the formal event schedule. Including a networking lounge will not be enough in 2020. Activities such as braindates that deliver more meaningful connections will become mainstream at events.

Event technology will also need to step up their game. The battlefield for event apps in 2020 will be networking – so far, a severely under-delivered piece of the puzzle. With the availability of data and the progress in AI, event apps will need to lift some serious weight to support networking at events. Money talks, the fact that very, very few event networking apps have raised substantial funding is a signal that the offer is still below par.

Another crucial aspect of networking in 2020 will be inclusivity: thinking about younger, non-drinking, introverted, disabled, underrepresented audiences. Networking will need to deliver for all these audiences, changing forever the way we used to do things. Take alcohol – a big no-no at events for its exclusive nature. 'Happy hours' (as if there was a correlation between the amount of alcohol consumed and happiness) will be remembered as an activity of the '10s, and will give way to the rise of mocktails and booze-free bars.

9. NETWORKING, HELLO STRANGER

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Alcohol ranks above heroine and cocaine for the devastating effects it has on others (not those consuming it)[1]. Enabling attendees to hurt others is not 'hospitality.' Evaluate different ways to stimulate networking.

⚡ Research networking apps that leverage artificial intelligence to better connect attendees. Few apps really deliver on the networking promise. Ask for case studies and hard adoption numbers before you invest.

⚡ Don't throw people in a room and expect networking to happen. What formats can you use to get more people to interact? Networking tools like badges that indicate what someone is looking for or activities like braindates are great to establish meaningful connections.

[1] Boseley, Sarah. "Alcohol 'More Harmful than Heroin or Crack'." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 1 Nov. 2010, *https://www.theguardian.com/society/2010/nov/01/alcohol-more-harmful-than-heroin-crack*.

Heather Haigler

*Co-Founder, Switch Four/**WorkTrip***

As part of an events team that handled well over 100 events a year, Heather knew firsthand the pains associated with planning, executing and traveling to corporate events. This experience fuelled the integration of disparate event management, travel management and communication systems behind Worktrip's web-based and mobile software solution.

Heather is committed to making event planners lives easier and business more efficient.

Unique, Personalized Experiences in Digestible Formats

Personalization can be a unique way to increase engagement among attendees at events. Whether it's customized registration or personalized invitations, personalizing aspects of the event catches attendees' attention. When attendees feel special, it creates a connection to the person or brand responsible. Ultimately, that's what companies want: to create a connection and build that relationship. Even at larger events, this is a great way to feel connected at scale.

Creating smaller, snack-sized event experiences will enable attendees to fully engage without getting overwhelmed. It also allows the event to be more focused on a particular theme or topic rather than filling the event with so much that attendees are left drained and unable to feel the value planners are trying to deliver.

Coming up with unique event experiences is nothing new, but event attendees expect more now. They want the same level of experience they have as consumers in their daily lives. Think about what we are used to when we order from Amazon or shop at our favorite department store. Convenience, service, flexibility, and options – these are the table stakes these days. Planners will have to think outside the box and apply the same standards in their events.

10. A NEW DAY: THE RISE OF THE EVENT STRATEGIST

2020 will start a new decade in events – the end of many bad practices, the beginning of more modern, data-driven events. Inevitably, the role of the event professional will transition from that of a list executioner to a more strategic, data-centric role charged with planning and executing experiences that achieve business objectives but also change attendees' lives.

Many challenges are ahead. We are in the longest growth cycle North America has ever seen. It is not senseless to think that an economic downturn is around the corner. In 2008/2009, many event professional jobs were the first to be cut because events were the first budget item to cut. They were seen as an unnecessary expense.

What happened in 2008 cannot happen again. The only way to protect against further industry carnage is to rethink the role planners have in the organization and the value events deliver to businesses and attendees.

The event strategist won't be cut. Thanks to the data-driven, attendee-oriented vision they apply to their event programs, strategists will be able to always show progression, engagement, sales, change, and above all, ROI.

The attention to data is central to the survival of the industry. Only those planners extremely fluent in data analysis will be able to retain (if not increase) their budget allocation in 2020 and beyond. They will be able to constantly deliver on sponsors objectives, whether internal or external.

Evolving the delivery of traditional business events like trade shows and conferences is also crucial to keeping the industry safe. The challenge for planners will be to deliver better on the need for education and networking via innovation and attendee-centric experience design.

A true revolution is ahead and planners are ready for it. Game on!
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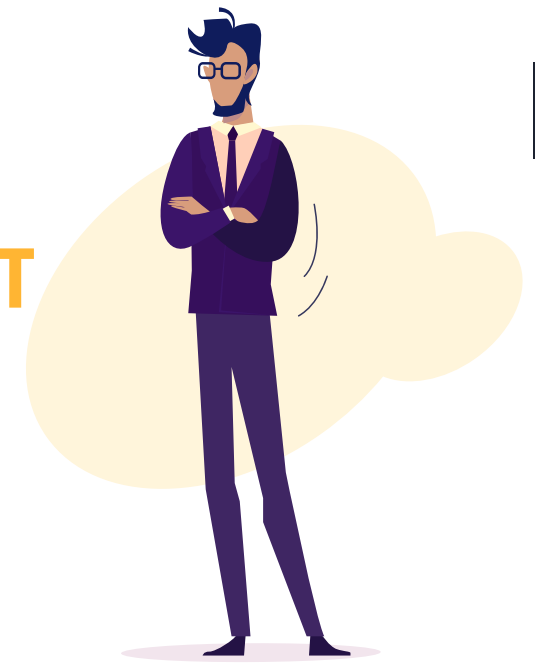
10. A NEW DAY: THE RISE OF THE EVENT STRATEGIST

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

⚡ Start digging into your data. Data analysis will be your strongest skill in changing times. Ask your team to share all their data with you, plan a session to go through it, and then start planning for next year.

⚡ Challenge your tech provider to help you with data. If they are not able to contribute, bring your business elsewhere. Event tech companies in 2020 have to deliver guidance and support to planners.

⚡ Gather data wherever you can: feedback forms, app stats, website analytics, surveys, RFID tracking – whatever you can implement to start tracking more data, do it.

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Disclaimer

This report is based on research carried out between January and November 2019.

While this report has been sponsored, the analysis is completely unbiased.

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