

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO EVENT PLANNING SUCCESS



rapiergroup



INTRODUCTION

WHETHER IT'S YOUR FIRST OR YOUR FIFTIETH, HOSTING A CORPORATE EVENT CAN BE A DEMANDING AFFAIR. WE SHOULD KNOW; AFTER ALL, WE'VE BEEN DOING IT SINCE 1988.

That's why we've put together this book; a go-to guide to planning an engaging event for marketing teams in all fields and industries. In it, we cover the steps you should take when planning your event, the things most teams forget and the best ways to secure a return on your investment once the event is over.

Preparation is the key to effectiveness. The methods we outline here will maximise your chances of success before the venue doors even open.

Let's get started!



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**SINCE GOING LIVE
ONLINE, SIMON SINEK'S
'START WITH WHY'
PRESENTATION HAS BEEN
WATCHED MORE THAN
FOUR MILLION TIMES.**



Simon Sinek
Author, Motivational Speaker and Marketing Consultant

There's more to the video's popularity than anecdotes about Apple. 'Start with Why' focuses on an important, inescapable truth for businesses. Businesses must work out why they exist, because customers are drawn to purpose. If a business has purpose, it has direction.

The same is true of events. No two are created equal, but a well-defined purpose is common to all successful events. Without a clear understanding of the 'why' - the reason for running the event - and measurable tracking of the outcomes expected, an event is simply a waste of time and money. What business can afford that?

When a new business engages us to host their conference, event or exhibition, we always start by asking them why they want to invest in one.

So go on. Before we move forward, ask yourself the same. This will underpin everything that follows.



HAVING DEFINED YOUR WHY, YOU SHOULD NOW BEGIN BUILDING YOUR EVENT BRIEF. THIS WILL CLARIFY YOUR EVENT GOALS FURTHER AND HELP BUILD A STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING THEM.

Successful events are a matter of balance between paired factors: planning and delivery, vision and budget, and form and function.

To achieve the right blend, we undertake a detailed briefing exercise before each event. This serves as the starting point for our collaboration with our clients, covering every aspect of their requirements before, during and after the event.

A good brief is more than a set of instructions; it is a recipe for ensuring that the outcomes deliver on your expectations and, at the same time, build a foundation for creativity and innovation.

While each brief is different, yours should cover three aspects of event delivery: the **strategic, functional** and **pragmatic** – plus the KPIs you'll use to monitor your success. In this book, we'll cover each in more detail.

Write your brief down, get it signed off by key stakeholders, and circulate it across your team. This is the document your event will be built upon. Remember; no detail is too small to consider.

THE STRATEGIC...

Your strategy is the first port of call. It establishes the direction, style and measurements of success for your event. Outline the following:

WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU DO

For large corporate brands, this might seem obvious: Renault is Renault; Nestlé is Nestlé. Things might not be as straightforward as they appear, though. Different departments or sectors often operate as individual concerns within multi-national businesses, with different goals and procedures.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

What is the scope of your event ambition, and with which aspects will you need help? Context is everything. Is your event a short-term tactical activity or part of a long-term strategy?

HOW YOUR EVENT RELATES TO YOUR WIDER BUSINESS STRATEGY

Even for short-term, one-off tactical events, it's important to understand your wider business strategy and how your event fits within it. Does it form part of an existing campaign, or will it launch a new one? Is it about retaining existing clients or acquiring new ones?



SETTING GOALS AND BUILDING YOUR STRATEGY

THE STRATEGIC...

YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Once you have fleshed out your goals, turn your attention to your target audience. State the key demographics of your ideal event visitor, along with the nature of the B2B and B2C relationships that you may be looking to nurture. We'll revisit this topic in [Section 5](#).

THE COMPETITION

Once you know your target audience, it's important to establish who else might have them in their sights. Who are your competitors? What is the key difference between you and them? What can you offer that your competitors cannot?

YOUR EVENT TONE AND STYLE

This next element relates to your brand messaging. What image of your brand do you want to portray at your event? Will you be bold and friendly, or techy and approachable? The tone you set may be different to the one you use for your brand more widely. We'll cover the design of your event in [Section 3](#).

YOUR GOALS, AND HOW THEY'RE MEASURED

This is possibly the most important consideration of all. An event without a purpose is costume jewellery: sparkling and impressive from afar, but ultimately without substance or value.

You've already established why you want to host your event. Now drill into the specifics. Do you want to grow your mailing list, build brand awareness, launch a new product or amplify your brand on social media? Doing so will help determine what success looks like. Later in this section, we'll give more advice on setting goals.

THE FUNCTIONAL...

Strategy fixed, you should now consider your logistical and creative needs.

LOGISTICS

Time to drill into the detail. What event features do you have in your mind so far? Digital displays, VR headsets and other touches add flavour to an event, but if the basics are not covered, your event will unravel. Your plans must include:

- Staffing
- Security
- Food and drink
- Ticketing
- Insurance
- Parking and transport
- Accessibility
- Accommodation
- Speaker management and VIP hospitality



SETTING GOALS AND BUILDING YOUR STRATEGY

THE FUNCTIONAL...

ASSUMPTIONS

If possible, make a note of the assumptions you've made about your event, including the size of your target market, the validity of your strategy, and the parts of the event you can manage yourself. Doing so will highlight gaps in your knowledge, which you will need to fill before executing your plan.

ASSETS

What brand assets do you have to work from? Do you own brand guidelines and digital artwork files, for example? If not, you'll need to pull these together – or find a substitute for them – before you proceed. If in doubt, you can always ask us for advice.

THE PRAGMATIC...

Strategy is your event fuel; logistics are the engine it runs on. The pragmatic is the chassis: solid, a bit dull, but essential for holding everything together.

TECHNICAL AND BUSINESS CONSTRAINTS

Creativity might not like to be constrained, but when the constraints aren't taken into consideration, delivery hits obstacles.

Consider practical technicalities for your event, like the size and nature of your target venue, and any associated building regulations or architectural limitations. Take in the business constraints, such as the availability of your key staff, or your hours of operation during the event. Finally, establish the potential logistical constraints associated with moving large amounts of equipment, product or people.



SETTING GOALS AND BUILDING YOUR STRATEGY

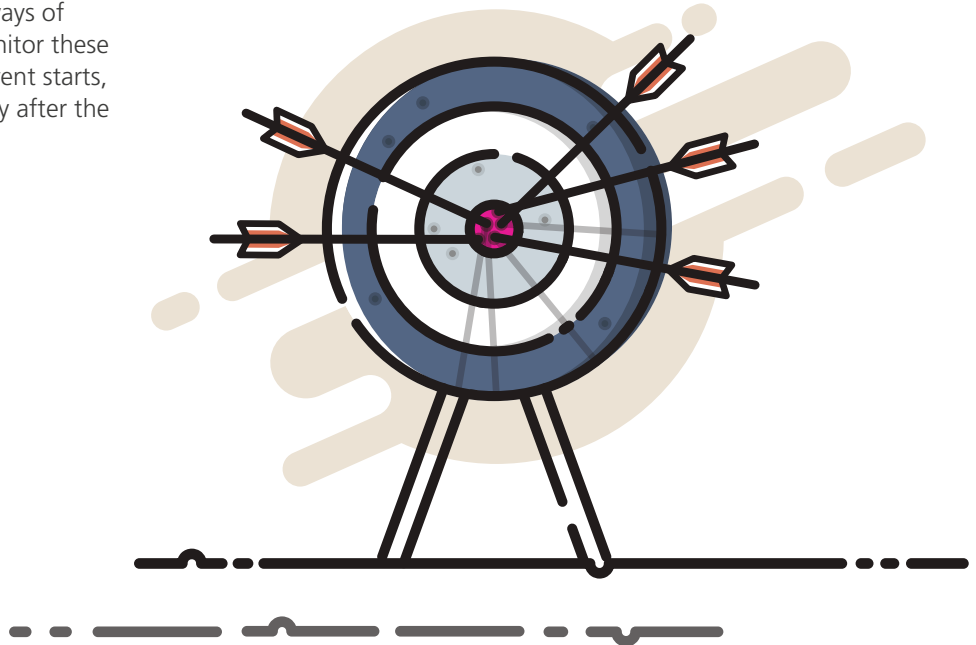
THE PRAGMATIC...

YOUR BUDGET

The most important consideration of all is your budget. Without having an idea of your budget in advance, it's virtually impossible to create a practical solution. Occasionally, vision can be in danger of overreaching your budget. Establish the limitations you're working with as early as possible to avoid conflict between ambition and resources.

MEASURING YOUR EVENT SUCCESS...

Here we've outlined the most common event goals (the 'whys') and the metrics businesses should use to track the success for each, plus some ways of achieving the right results. Systems to monitor these metrics must be put in place before the event starts, and will form the backbone of your activity after the doors close.



**EVENT
GOAL****#1****TO BOOST ENGAGEMENT****KEY METRICS**

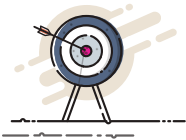
Engagement has been a hot topic within the marketing world for some time, largely due to the increased role played by social media and digital technology at events. With this in mind, the most appropriate metric for event engagement is based on your digital and social marketing strategy.

For social media, consider tracking brand mentions on chosen networks, and event-specific hashtags too. For other technologies, monitor activity. For an event app, this means downloads and registrations. For a VR or AR experience, this means the number of delegates trying the experience, and their responses. For a digital game or competition, this means the number of players who completed a round and whose data was collected.

KEY TACTICS

The simplest way to boost social media chatter is to increase social activity for the brand itself. Search for users mentioning the event online, ask these delegates questions, and invite them to your location. Hosting social media competitions is also a useful means of extending engagement beyond an event.

Entertaining and immersive digital experiences – whether VR or AR apps or touchscreen games – are useful for increasing delegate dwell time. But beware - digital experiences should be relevant to your brand message or offering. Otherwise, they will fail to offer meaningful engagement.



EVENT
GOAL

#2

TO BUILD BRAND AWARENESS

KEY METRICS

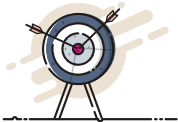
Metrics for brand awareness are similar to those for engagement. In addition to social media mentions and on-stand activity, businesses should also track newsletter and competition sign-ups.

KEY TACTICS

The key to building brand awareness is to increase brand visibility and consistency before, during and after the event.

Before the event, businesses should promote their brand's stand or event sponsorship. At the event, all elements of their stand should be on-brand, including staff behaviours, signage, and printed and digital promotional materials.

Exhibitors could also offer a useful branded gift for delegates to take away after the event, and should – as a minimum – encourage delegates to sign-up to a competition or post-event newsletter to boost awareness and engagement further. This tactic is more relevant to certain industries than others – gifting being outlawed at pharmaceutical events, for example.



EVENT
GOAL

#3

TO GENERATE CONTACTS

KEY METRICS

Data collection: it indicates visitors' interest in a business' offering. Having a mailing list to sign people up to is an easily measurable metric to follow.

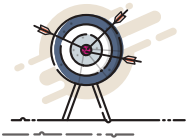
KEY TACTICS

Businesses can boost their lead numbers in three ways.

First, by using event teams to qualify prospective sales at the event itself, through in-depth training and by offering a quiet space for delegates to engage in sales conversations.

Second, by building a mailing list with information about why a delegate is interested in receiving information (thereby qualifying the sales process).

Finally, to close the loop, by adding a form to their websites that encourages online newsletter followers to indicate where and how they first heard about the business, at the upcoming event or otherwise. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) should be considered here; for more information, turn to [Section 4](#).

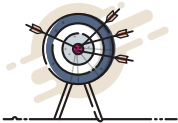


**EVENT
GOAL****#4****TO GENERATE REVENUE****KEY METRICS**

Sales made at the event, or the number of later sales tracked back to the event.

KEY TACTICS

This goal is perhaps the simplest of all: tracking the number of sales made at, or because of, an event. For this reason, think twice about applying it to your event. Is there a more specific or more appropriate goal that refers to a different stage in the sales process (for example, the awareness and lead stages)?



EVENT
GOAL

#5

TO LAUNCH A PRODUCT OR SERVICE

KEY METRICS

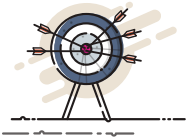
Measuring the success of a launch is similar to tracking brand awareness, but at the level of the product or service. For this reason, track mentions on social media, and newsletter and competition sign-ups.

There are two important points to consider here. Social media campaigns, competitions and newsletters should all specifically target the new product or service - otherwise, the business ends up tracking brand awareness in general terms. Separate the social media coverage and sign-ups generated by the event from the social media coverage and sign-ups generated by other launch marketing activity, like PR.

KEY TACTICS

A successful launch event will focus on three things: providing information, demonstrating a product or service, and driving delegates to find out more about the offering. The mechanics for offering information and demonstration will change depending on the product or service in question. Strategies for boosting further engagement, though, are the same across industries. Offer an email sign-up form, distribute promotional materials, and provide a dedicated and trained sales team at your event.

An effective launch campaign will use an event as a springboard for increased product awareness, encouraging sales conversations beyond the event. For this reason, it should be made easy for delegates to find and share information about your new product or service online, and your event should be supported by an integrated campaign involving PR, SEO, content, and more.





**THIS IS THE FUN BIT.
WITH YOUR BRIEF
ALMOST COMPLETE,
YOU CAN NOW START
CONSIDERING THE
DESIGN REQUIREMENTS
AND POSSIBILITIES FOR
YOUR EVENT.**

Design will set the scene for your visitors, guide them in the right direction and make them more receptive to your stories, content and messages.

While design itself is highly subjective, your goal should be to work with your agency to create something that feels right. Your design should not overpower or distract from your brand message. Instead, the design should support and amplify the message you already transmit, making your brand more memorable by adding depth, meaning and emotion.

There are two parts of the design question to consider: form and function.

FORM...

Have you ever walked into a room and immediately felt calm and relaxed? The atmosphere in a space, and the emotions felt on entering, are often down to the design of the environment itself. Our surroundings are proven to have an impact on our emotions and psychological and physical comfort.

This doesn't mean that getting spaces and environments right is easy. In the context of events and exhibitions, stands battle for attention, footfall is frenetic, and brands vie for floor space. Great event design is hard. When you walk into a room or stand, the space, light, form, composition and colour must all work together to create a shared feeling of engagement.

Poorly combined colours can agitate guests. Inappropriate furniture can determine whether a guest decides to stay, or move on to another area. Small mistakes like these can distract from the brand message you seek to convey. More often than not, subtle and clever design is most appropriate, being the secret of the most successful, timeless products. In order to consider form, first consider how you want visitors to feel. Agree this with your stakeholders, and you are well on your way to building a creative brief that everyone understands and keeps expectation management simple.



FUNCTION...

Designers are taught that form follows function. Something beautiful that doesn't work is still beautiful – but users feel disappointed, because it doesn't do what it needs to do.

This thinking translates to events and exhibitions. An event designed by the likes of Ilse Crawford would no doubt be stunning, but if it was difficult for visitors to order a coffee, or find a seat, that inconvenience is what delegates would remember and talk about afterwards.

Your environment must work as intended, effortlessly. Visitors should not be aware of whether it works or not. It just should – function being an essential part of design.

Listing out the functional elements required of your event, and emphasising the priority and importance of each, is wise. Combined with information on how you want your visitors to feel will ensure a powerful creative brief.

A good brief provides designers with clear direction and sets a benchmark for objective assessment of any design or creative work – so that work is judged on whether it meets a brief, as opposed to the individual likes or dislikes of those involved. This empowers everyone involved to decide – with confidence – if a design is right or not.



HAVING DEFINED YOUR WHY, SET YOUR GOALS AND SKETCHED OUT YOUR DESIGN, IT'S WORTH CONSIDERING THREE THINGS MANY FORGET IN THE RUSH TO GET THINGS DONE:

DATA PROTECTION, EVENT APPS, AND SUSTAINABILITY.

Visitors are fickle. However high profile your speakers, however flawless your team training, what many guests will remember and discuss with their colleagues are the aspects of your event they didn't rate highly. Event apps are a case in point. Get them right, and digital software can add a whole new level of engagement to your event or conference.

Get them wrong, and you've effectively asked visitors to download software that will add frustration to their time with you. Data protection and sustainability are less visible elements in event planning, but arguably even more important. Get them wrong, and the effects could be damaging, or even, in the case of data protection, illegal.

PROTECTING YOUR EVENT DATA...

The General Data Protection Regulation are data protection laws, in place across Europe from May 2018. Although they are an EU Directive, the British Government has supported GDPR and is likely to adopt similar standards to cover British citizens.

Any business which holds the personal data of European citizens may find its practices challenged under GDPR, and could face a fine of 4% of their global revenues or €20 million (whichever is greater) for non-compliance.

Corporate events often involve “regular and systematic collection of personal data on a large scale” through collecting business cards, sign-ups or feedback forms. GDPR applies here.

If you are collecting delegates’ data, you need their explicit and informed consent. You have to tell them what information you’re going to collect, what you’re going to use it for, and how you’re going to communicate with them. You need their consent to collect the data, and you also need it for each use of the data, including any new initiatives you devise later on.



THE BIG LITTLE THINGS

PROTECTING YOUR EVENT DATA...

In practical terms, this means you might be unable to buy-in a mailing list to market your event as you may have done in the past (if you do, you'll need to ensure that the list is GDPR compliant). If GDPR has yet to be implemented, make the most of the opportunity before it disappears. Buy lists, warm them up, and get those opt-ins while you can. We predict that event promotion and marketing will become more ask-driven, as a means of securing consent. Approach an individual asking if they would like to know about the product or service rather than assume they are interested because they haven't said otherwise.

GDPR is retroactive. It applies to the data you've already collected in addition to new data. This requires you to re-contact everyone whose data you hold, and secure their consent to remain on your list (and to any other correspondence you may want to send them). It also demands increased data hygiene: review your backup practices for electronic data, and look through physical records, including drawers full of business cards, to make sure you're not holding 'expired' data acquired without consent.

BUILDING AN EVENT APP...

With their range of activities, talks and seminars, events can be a minefield to navigate for visitors. Once, maps and schedules had to be printed and carried around; they were cumbersome but necessary. Today, many event organisers are turning to custom-designed event apps to aid visitors and provide feedback data.



THE BIG LITTLE THINGS

BUILDING AN EVENT APP...

HOW WELL DOES THIS WORK?

In short: done well, event apps can be a blessing for organisers and visitors alike. If misjudged, they can waste a great deal of time and money, leaving a sour taste in the mouth for everyone.

APPS THAT ADD VALUE

Event apps can be expensive, costing anything from £1,000 to £50,000. For that kind of money, the software has to offer some serious return on investment.

Think about what you want the app to achieve. If your answer is 'well, our competitors have them' or 'it seems like a cool thing to have', then the app isn't worth the expense or hassle.

The goals of your app should be tied to your overall event objectives, and its functionality designed to help you achieve specific aims. It should also add value to the event for visitors. A design that serves your goals but doesn't help the users is a bad design.

Here's how a well-designed mobile app can offer value to different event objectives:

#1

CREATING A GREEN EVENT

If your focus is on ensuring a minimal impact on the environment, an app can add value by demonstrating your commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

You avoid chopping down acres and acres of forest to print schedules, maps and sales materials that delegates will bin after the event. You also ensure that attendees have all the information they need at their fingertips.

Some event apps also include business card sharing functionality, and offer entire presentations as downloads, reducing paper wastage still further.



#2

IMPROVING BRAND IMAGE AND INCREASING LOYALTY

The best event apps are available and useful both before and after the event itself.

Allowing potential visitors and exhibitors access before the event, gives them a chance to get to grips with your company, gaining a better understanding of who you are and what you do, as well as an advance insight into the event itself, helping them determine whether to attend.

On a practical level, it also helps users learn the app in advance, so they're not frustrated by having to master it on arrival. Download before attending should be encouraged, as venue WiFi will likely be unable to cope with hundreds of simultaneous downloads on-site.

And don't forget about after the event too. Push notifications, offering access to exclusive post-event content, can foster brand engagement far beyond the few days of your event. If you're recording keynotes, for instance, make them available to attendees via the app. Perhaps run a competition offering free tickets to next year's event. There are a multitude of ways to keep your brand front-of-mind via an app.



#3

TO FACILITATE NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Networking is a key attraction of events for exhibitors, visitors and sponsors alike - but it can be hard to pin down the right people on the day, particularly at large events.

Event apps can offer solutions such as 'brain dating', profile-based matchmaking, and push notifications that inform users of any opportunities they may be missing. For sponsors and exhibitors, an app could offer key insights such as the number of banner clicks, content downloads and even - using GPS - detailed analysis of footfall throughout the venue, leading to better targeting and data for future sales.



#4

MAKING A PROFIT

If revenue is a key driver for hosting your event, an app can help. While there will be cost implications in design and creation, it could save you money in other ways. Think savings on printed materials; no need for branded folders or bags to carry programmes and show guides, and a reduction in man hours through automated appointment setting.

It could also mean that fewer sales team hours are required, thanks to the detailed analytics that can be used in pitches to potential sponsors and exhibitors for your next event. An app is a means of collecting visitor data; an asset that will appeal to sponsors, who could use your app for sign-ups, to run competitions, or for other purposes in exchange for leads.

An event app can fulfil a number of key objectives but, as with any event investment, it's important to undertake a detailed cost-benefit analysis before making your final decision and to understand how 'success' will be measured should you decide to go ahead.



MAKING YOUR EVENT SUSTAINABLE...

Events are perfect to engage, inform and entertain your clients, colleagues and wider network. But, how good are they for the planet?

Making sustainability a focal point of your event offers benefits for both the environment and your PR. It may even help cut costs, too.

While many may think that 'going green' requires a complete overhaul of their current event logistics, the truth is, that even the smallest of steps in the right direction can make a big difference. From coffee cups to renewable power, here are five cost-effective changes that can have a big impact on your event's sustainability.



#1

CONCENTRATE ON COFFEE

Every day, the UK disposes of up to 7 million paper cups – fewer than 1% of which are recycled. Scale this up globally, and coffee waste is a major environmental problem. Cups dumped in landfill could take up to 30 years to break down and, as anyone who's sat through a particularly arduous keynote will attest, caffeine is the fuel for many an event.

This is one area where event organisers can significantly minimise waste. You could use 100% recyclable or compostable cups, from a company such as Frugalpac (ensuring that they are recycled), or consider recycling your event cups with a service such as that offered by Simply Cups, who reprocess them into second-life materials.

Alternatively, branded and reusable KeepCups will serve a dual purpose. They'll help to reduce the coffee cup mountain, and act as a branded souvenir that delegates will continue to use long after they have left.



#2

CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE SUPPLIERS

Suppliers chosen with sustainability in mind need not cost the earth. Consider a venue close to public transport to encourage delegates to leave their cars behind. This will be more likely if you highlight its accessibility on your event communications, as well as detailing walking and cycle routes to the venue. Many organisations also offer incentives to those travelling green, including discounts and employee recognition schemes for company-only events.

For a truly sustainable event, work within a local supply network. This will cut your carbon footprint and help support local communities simultaneously. Where possible, opt for suppliers that have ISO 20121 in place or, if not possible, those for whom sustainability is a priority. You might also consider recycling your components locally at the end of the event, thereby reducing travel emissions still further. Many charities accept stand components as donations.

Encourage exhibitors to work with sustainable suppliers too, by using eco-flooring options, recyclable fibres and reusable stand elements, for example, as well as focusing on digital rather than paper-based content.



#3

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Set carbon goals for your event and make yourself accountable. This will make you more likely to stick to your plans. Better still, offset any carbon you do spend via a specialised supplier following the event.

Your footprint calculations could factor in the energy used by the event itself, including mobile generators and emissions created by the waste from the event. It could go a step further and include mains electricity and fuel used at the event venue, transport used by employees, emissions created when manufacturing physical assets for the event, and even delegate travel emissions.

If you're finding it difficult to set targets for your event, seek help. Rapiergroup offers a benchmark reporting service for businesses seeking to measure and improve their carbon impact.



#4

FOCUS ON FOOD

Keeping delegates, exhibitors and employees well fed and watered is a must for any event. Various degrees of sustainability are possible here; both the production and transportation of food and drink have a considerable impact on the environment.

Sustainable food is not just about the distance that the food has to travel. It can also impact on the local economy, and on health. Choose local suppliers who use local ingredients where possible, as fresh, local and seasonal ingredients will require less energy to produce and fewer miles to transport.

Organic and Fairtrade choices can cement your sustainable credentials even further, while a 100% vegetarian event will help to reduce carbon emissions. Consider choosing suppliers who avoid disposable packaging, and eliminate bottled water by using water dispensers to save on transport and resources. Food waste is a significant problem in itself. Some event organisers even build worm farms to deal with theirs!



THE BIG LITTLE THINGS

MAKING YOUR EVENT SUSTAINABLE...

#5

REVIEW YOUR PERFORMANCE

Finally, it's important to recognise that event sustainability is an ongoing process. By measuring and recording your sustainability performance after each event, you can commit to improving your efforts at the next. Doing so provides positive PR opportunities on an ongoing basis, and needn't be difficult. Rapiergroup works with MeetGreen to offer businesses a sustainability calculator for all events, making benchmarking and measurements simple.





**IN MANY WAYS, THE
LAST THING YOU WANT
AT YOUR EVENT ARE
VISITORS. VISITORS TURN
UP, LOOK AROUND, HAVE
A COFFEE AND GO BACK
TO WORK, AND PLAY
WITH A FLYER OR TWO.**

What you really want are participants; people who are involved physically, mentally and emotionally with your event. Delegates may start as visitors, but a crafted and curated experience will delight, surprise and engage them completely.

Engagement doesn't happen by chance. Instead, it takes careful consideration of your audience, their expectations and their event behaviour online.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Spam emails make us fully aware how frustrating it is receiving information that we don't want.

Smart companies send mailers tailored to your needs and interests. They understand who you are, market accordingly, and it works. According to email marketing platform Campaign Monitor, personalised email campaigns are 26% more likely to be opened than catch-all campaigns.

Great events mirror this level of audience understanding. So how can you do the same in your event?

NEW OR NEWSWORTHY

If your event promises something fresh, disruptive or unrecognised, bring it to the attention of your participants. Some events and conferences are better suited to this than others. TechCrunch, for instance, is a past master of this. Its Disrupt events are almost overloaded with new tech and newsworthy stunts, which resonate beyond the world of technology.

It may be trickier for, say, the insurance industry to make as big a splash on such a wide scale. That said, news doesn't have to mean as many people talking about something as possible; it's better to have the right people engaging. Know your audience to understand what will appeal most.



GET PEOPLE TALKING

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE...

HIGH PROFILE

For all the design and planning that goes into an event, it's the talks that really offer depth, particularly keynotes. Keynote talks manifest a common theme to anchor an event and give it direction.

The Content Marketing Institute, for example, hosts Content Marketing World every year, featuring speakers including Kevin Spacey and Mark Hamill.

High profile doesn't have to mean celebrity, though; most industries have a rock star guru who can draw the crowds. Get the right person, and it's newsworthy, too. If that fails, offer something that's exclusive to the event and makes it worth attending.

SAY GOODBYE TO THE STAGE SET

Transform your setting while the participants are in it. Kinetic scenery – automated changes of lights, backgrounds and objects – is a powerful tool for building engagement. Something unexpected gets people excited; they want to see what's coming next.

Moreover, if you're going to keep people in a venue all day, you can repurpose the venue around them to pace their experience, guiding them seamlessly from introduction and development to refreshment and relaxation – an approach we took with the Renault Annual Dealer Conference.

GET PEOPLE TALKING

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE...

OUT OF THE ORDINARY

In our everyday lives, we turn information on and off at our convenience. Visitors have come to expect this level of control in an event environment too. You can't count on a captive audience. Attendees will walk away if confronted with the same old, same old.

If everyone at an industry event is attending the same exposition, or if clients are attending presentations and launches for a dozen firms, offer standalone events for targeted clients. Invite them into your brand space, an environment which you control, and which they've entered on their own terms. Cutting edge technology works well here, as do personalised experiences.

Out of the ordinary means creating something memorable. Our launch exhibit for Amgen's Repatha led visitors through an immersive space, delivering information through touch and technology. It was more than just another product briefing; it was engaging, powerful and interactive, which made an innovative experience out of a new product.



GET PEOPLE TALKING KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE...

LIVE AND IMMEDIATE

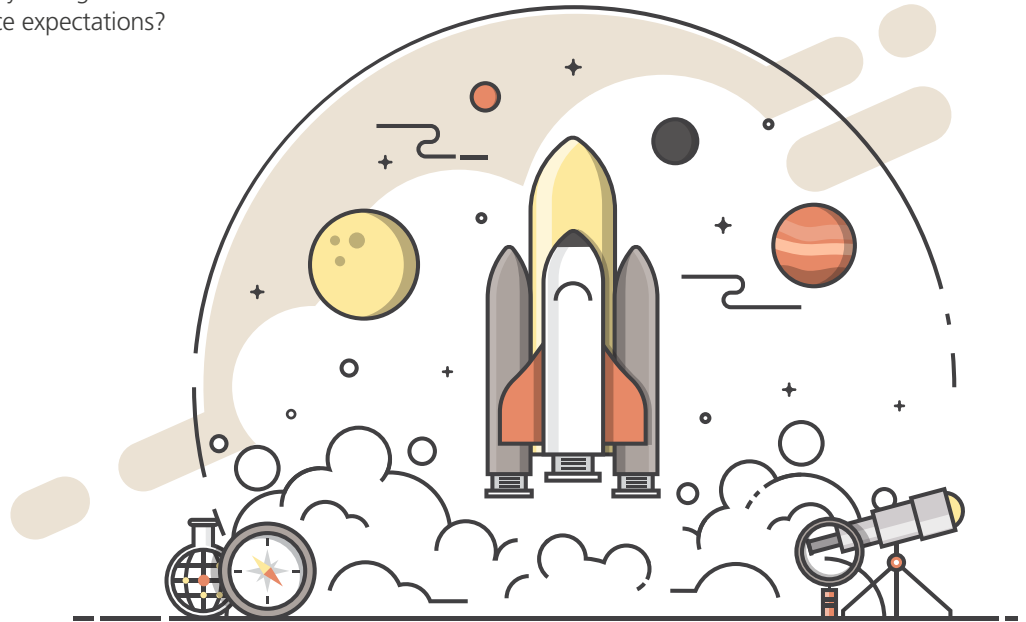
Rather than scripted, dry presentations, the best events use real people and mockups of real situations, and present your offering in context as live theatre. It's authentic, it's human, it makes for great streamable and follow-up content, and above all, it's exclusive.

The goal is to make the event feel like something that's happening, right here and right now and nowhere else. Get your attendees saying "You should have been there", and you've won.

Previously, we supported and developed Renault's presence at Goodwood Festival of Speed. Every year is different, every visitor experience is different, and a quick look at the #Goodwood hashtag on Twitter hints at dozens of unique stories on the other side of the camera.

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS

Concept, design and clear goal-setting all play their part in a successful event. Strategic insight adds a final dimension to the mix. Which industry changes should your event tap into to meet audience expectations?



GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

DEMANDS, NOT DEMOGRAPHICS

18-34 year-olds, so-called 'millennials', are the focus of marketing efforts for many brands – but does an 18-year old male have the same needs as a 34-year old woman? Clearly not.

It's the millennial mindset that's changed audience expectations – not the age group per se. People of all ages and backgrounds are always connected – they have easy access to a wealth of information. At a logistical level, this means they expect free and easy access to WiFi with clear, clean and quiet places to work - and that's as a minimum.

The way we want to receive information has also changed. We live in a bullet-point world, where a time-poor population wants bite-sized comms. In the events industry, this means short, punchy emails to be read and understood at speed, with a link to more information if required.

At a grander scale, this wealth of information at people's fingertips means you need to deliver something special at your event. Attendees won't turn up to discussions or happenings unless the benefits are clear to see.

GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

A SEGMENTATION OF NETWORKING

Feedback surveys always list networking as one of the key reasons to attend an event. There are various forms of networking, however, with different forms appealing to different attendees. Four types to consider are:

- **Raw networking:** Essentially networking without predetermination
- **Familiar networking:** Existing association, though not necessarily existing collaboration
- **Closing networking:** Where a deal is on the table
- **Present networking:** Where a current relationship is in place and you want to deepen it

The challenge, is to establish which of these networking types are required at your event, and whether to opt for a conventional or a more left-field approach. Raw networking, for example, can sometimes prove awkward. For the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology (RCOG), we instead matched delegates for networking based on their responses to the event app. Activity of this type goes some way to eliminating the 'who are you' and 'why do you want my time?' factor.



GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

VALUE FOR MONEY

This question of value permeates the whole events industry. However, value doesn't have to mean cheap. Commercial and profit-driven events, for example, will take advantage of every sponsorship opportunity, from lanyards, lunches, coffee stations, lounges and more.

On the flipside, there is often less focus on infrastructure, set design signage and show branding. More niche events can be highly tailored, and specific to a narrow target audience, thereby commanding higher ticket prices.

Which approach will your budget allow for, and which will offer your delegates the best experience?

GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

BEYOND THE PHYSICAL

Delegates who attend any event are just a small proportion of your target audience. While one large financial services event, for example, now reaches circa 8,000 delegates in-event, the potential audience – those working in financial services – is around one million people. Those who don't attend can still be part of the show.

Facebook live streaming of keynote sessions and debates is becoming more popular, for instance, and Twitter hashtags to share event highlights with a wider audience are commonplace.

The approach of sharing slide banks, post-event blogs and Q&As continues, but suits some industries better than others: it is less popular in the financial industry than others, for example, due to its security-conscious audience. And while this kind of post-event sharing via email is currently widely used, consider the aforementioned GDPR regulations to ensure that this sharing is done lawfully.

Extension can also be used when considering keynote and other speakers. While it can be hard to secure speakers from the other side of the globe, simple technology like Skype, Google Hangouts or Facetime can extend the event to them, and have them contribute live from the comfort of their own home or office.



GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

PERSONALISATION

Personalisation is another buzzword making its way into the events space. For your event, personalisation could mean personalised emails or social media contact with attendees, or a more developed approach, including using data collected at the point of registration, from previous event feedback surveys or from event apps to offer a more personalised experience. Tailored schedules, drinks tailored to individual attendees, delegate quotes displayed on big screens – the opportunities are endless and needn't cost the earth.

Personalisation can have multiple benefits. It helps engage exhibitors and delegates alike, can help events run more smoothly, and can also help provide feedback and ideas for future events. 'Crowd' systems, for example, can enable attendees to rate elements of the event in real time, and to view the results while they are there. These systems encourage exhibitors to work harder.

GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

HASHTAGS

People are going to tweet about your event. It's par for the course with conferences and seminars in the age of social media. People will be live-tweeting their experience as a form of note-taking; people who couldn't make the event will want to be kept in the loop.

Both groups benefit from a planned approach to tagging. Your note-taking, live-tweeting attendees will be able to organise their thoughts, and your remote audience will know where to look for the latest news.

If you're working with a major brand, its name will work if you generate enough tweets and snapshots to dominate the hashtag for the duration. A set of three – your name, the event title, and theirs – is better still.

A short, distinctive hashtag that you share and promote well in advance – something you've established and controlled – is another powerful option. You can use that as the lynchpin for a Storify or a Moment too: something like #Goodwood17 is self-filtering in a way that #Renault won't be.

The peak of the personalised hashtag, though, is the branded hashtag. This is a paid-for, automated feature on Twitter. Every time someone uses the hashtag you've bought, an emoji you've designed is added to their tweet.



GET PEOPLE TALKING

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS...

COMPETITIONS

Like and share this post for your chance to win. Fave and retweet this tweet for a free ticket. The traditional marketer's giveaway becomes effortless on social media. Give delegates a chance to win something with only a click or two, and they'll take you up on it.

It takes almost no effort to set up. All you need is a branded image with the rules added as text and you're basically set. Twitter's guidelines recommend asking replies to mention you, so that they are easier for you to track, and picking a hashtag to help the contest take off.

MUSIC AND VIDEO

A Cisco white paper claims video will account for 80% of all internet traffic by 2019. Social media is no different. People are visual by nature; we share things we can watch and listen to, and which convey information quickly (ideally, in under five minutes).

Creating an event video yourself is one option, and an increasingly reliable way of building anticipation for your events (and putting a human face to your brand with a regular presenter).

Building a space that lends itself well to 360-degree video encourages delegates and visitors to create their own shareable content, engaging creatively as well as in discussion.



**IF YOU'RE PLANNING
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EVENT, IT'S IMPORTANT
TO REMEMBER THAT
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AFTER IT.**

Hosting the best event possible is therefore the most effective way to encourage re-engagement by visitors. That said, organisers can also boost their chances by actively listening to delegates, and closing the loop with them once the doors close on an event.

ACTIVE LISTENING...

Even longstanding members of a network can be surprisingly fickle. It doesn't take much for a mistake or shortcoming to dissuade visitors from attending your next event. Fortunately, you can reduce your chances of this happening by actively seeking delegates' opinions and demonstrating an active response to them.

This goes beyond monitoring your success as set out in your brief. At your event, seek to engage with delegates via print or digital surveys, or in-person interviews, encouraging them with a competition where necessary. In your event programme, direct visitors to an information point where they can discuss any issue they might have with a trained spokesperson during the event. "Not being listened to", is a key reason that small issues become much bigger ones in customers' minds. Events are no different.



CLOSING THE LOOP..

Next, demonstrate your gratitude and responsiveness to visitors' comments by following-up with them directly after the event.

Post-event contact shouldn't be restricted to those delegates who were unhappy. The period immediately after your event closes is the best time to encourage sign-ups for your next event.

So, be prepared.

- Create a web sign-up form, with payment functionality, for delegates to sign up to your next event before your current one is over
- Plan a direct email campaign to nurture these delegates into re-engagement – and be prepared to send multiple messages to drive conversion. Follow and engage with those delegates who followed your event or discussed it via social media
- For both groups, consider offering an exclusive 'early bird' deal if they sign up for the next event in a limited timeframe – including a special 'VIP' package, with additional features usually reserved for premium delegates
- More importantly, balance your sales-oriented communications with content-focused ones. Events are an excellent means of creating high-value corporate content without additional work. Gather the videos, recordings and presentation documents from your event into an easily-accessible site online, and share this content periodically with delegates after the event finishes. This content has the most power to drive lasting engagement, being the primary motivation for attending the event in the first place – and by getting people talking, you'll drive sales for future events



IN THEIR SHOES

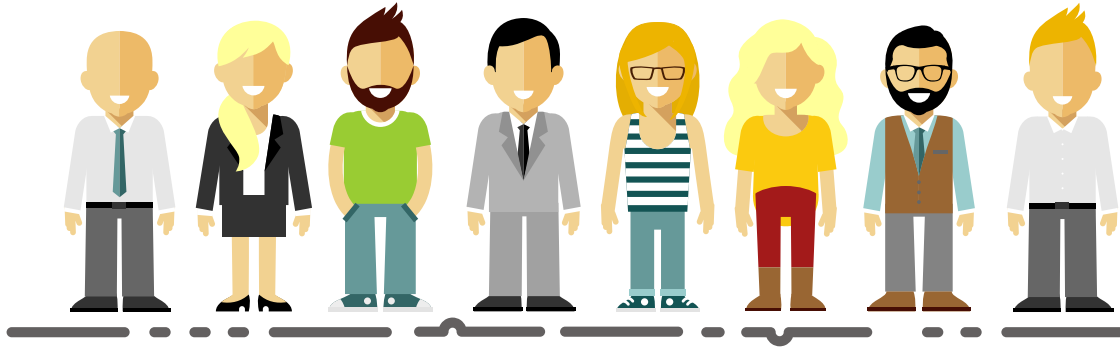
**OUR BRAND MISSION
IS SIMPLE, IT'S TO
GET PEOPLE TALKING.
IT'S WHAT WE DO
EVERY DAY, WHILE
PLANNING, PRODUCING
AND MANAGING
CONFERENCES, EVENTS
AND EXHIBITIONS
ACROSS THE GLOBE.**

But for event planners, listening is equally important. A successful event is one where the organiser has put themselves in the shoes of their visitor and built an environment and event programme that will hold their interest, teach them something new, and has them leaving the venue wanting more.

It all starts with a plan.
It's time to make yours.

**NEED FURTHER SUPPORT
ON HOSTING YOUR NEXT
EVENT, EXHIBITION OR
CONFERENCE?**

Rapiergroup can help. Call the team today for impartial, expert advice on: +44 (0)1920 885 100 or email: enquiries@rapiergroup.com





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