

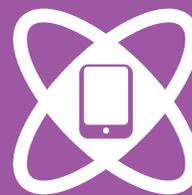


3 Steps to Smarter Event Technology

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Introduction

Event technology can be overwhelming, with so much available in the marketplace knowing where to start is a challenge even for the experienced planner.

Anyone can get lost in all the trends and popular technologies. Before you begin looking at technology options here are 3 steps to consider before moving forward with any activation.





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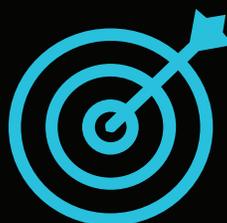
Start With Your Event Objectives.

Having a goal for your event is essential to achieving success. Can you imagine if sports had no goals, if a basketball court didn't have a hoop? How would the team score and assign a winner? It would be chaos! For events to provide value, they should have measurable goals that direct the approach and actions participants and team members make.

Having event goals also assist you get buy in from your audience, especially so, when you market your event. Whether you use social media, a website, or another means of communication; you will need to provide some information to the value and purpose of your event. Presenting attendees with what's in it for them, and why they should attend.

What's the difference between a goal and an objective?

A goal is a desired result you want to achieve, and is typically broad and long-term, whereas an objective, is more tangible, it defines the specific, measurable actions to take in order to achieve the overall goal. It could require multiple objectives to achieve a goal.





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Start With Your Event Objectives.

For every event, we need to define its overarching aim.

What is the purpose of having the event, the most fundamental reason for its existence? What impact does your organization hope the event will have?

Discussions with your team will help to define why your organization has invested budget and resources towards the project. Often the response is to grow company revenue. Yes, this is a valid goal for any event: to grow a business, and bring in more revenue. But try to dive deeper into the 'why' and 'what'- Why is this event the platform to achieve that result, and what behaviours will the event change in the associated stakeholders towards that aim?

It could be:

- An education objective: educate an audience so they buy differently, but first why do you want them to change the way they buy? Then, what is their buying behaviour today and how do you want them to behave in the future?
- Capture net new leads so we can expand our client base.
- Communicate a new solution to increase sales by (x).
- Bring team members together so they are motivated to grow your business.
- Collect donations (x amount) to raise funds for a cause or foundation.

These are just some examples, there are countless more.

Every event will be different. It will have different stakeholders with different behaviours, and thus, the aim, goal, and objectives should align to those different needs and wants.



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Start With Your Event Objectives.

What is the message you are trying to convey through the event experience?

What is the message you want your attendees to walk away with? What are you trying to achieve with bringing those individuals together, and what changes do you want in your audience?

We often talk about 'takeaways' as in what exactly are attendees bringing back to their team, organization, or lifestyle. What represents the 'Why' they attended.

Technology and its **design** must be focused on enhancing the way event stakeholders and attendees interact on a personal level. Having a clear message will make your event memorable, and impactful

*Design your technology around the human experience,
not your event around your technology*

If we look at the above examples, you come to a step in the process where you take the 'why' and expand it to the 'how'. If you know your attendees need specific education to buy your product or service, how can you construct a message that will motivate them to take that action?

Some events have even inserted the key message into a theme or power statement that ripples throughout the event. For example, WestJet's 'Oh the Places We'll Go' event that unified the employees and celebrated new destinations the airline added that year.

From that information, we are able to better understand the event narrative and purpose. Every event involves planning, but there is a difference between 'planning' and 'designing'. Planning implies you know exactly what you want to achieve. You have a critical path and a task list. You know deadlines and are working towards a defined destination. Designing is understanding the purpose and the process to define that destination. Importantly, it is understanding the people on the journey with you.



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Start With Your Event Objectives.

An event without a purpose is like a story without a destination.

Defining and clearly aligning aim, goals and event objectives can help to avoid misfocused tangents. It can limit the 'time drain' that comes from working on activities that do not contribute towards the end goal. It focuses the team members towards a common outcome, limiting the number of design iterations required and cutting back the mess associated with mis-alignment.

What connections are you trying to create between your various stakeholders?

As a minimum an event will have 2 stakeholders: a host, and attendee. Anything less is a solo enterprise and does not qualify as an event. In almost every case events have multiple stakeholder: sponsors, attendee, internal teams, CEO, the list goes on and on. Every event will have its own unique set of stakeholders. We challenge design teams to think outside of the standard financial and hierarchy stakeholders. Look at who has something to gain, both tangible and in-tangible.

The definition of a stakeholder is someone who holds success or is invested in the outcome of the event. Someone who has a 'stake' in how things work out / the result

The more stakeholders involved in your event, the more complex it becomes to plan the experience and technology. The key is to find the stakeholders that have the greatest impact. Who has a high level of interest and power, as it relates specifically to the event? Then focus the design on those high 'stake' groups. Ensure you focus the design to suit their objective as well as your objectives. By tailoring the experience and instructional design to those high impact stakeholders you are more likely to receive an equally high return on investment.

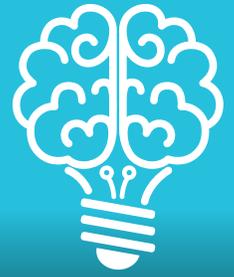


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Start With Your Event Objectives.

Once you had solidified your aim, goal, objectives, and determined the stakeholders to focus on- the next step is getting to know your events audience and stakeholders on a behavioural level. It is about understanding those stakeholders to the point where you can create personalized value. Tailoring and delivering the event experience with them front of mind. You need to put yourself in their shoes, in their minds and understand them on a deep level.



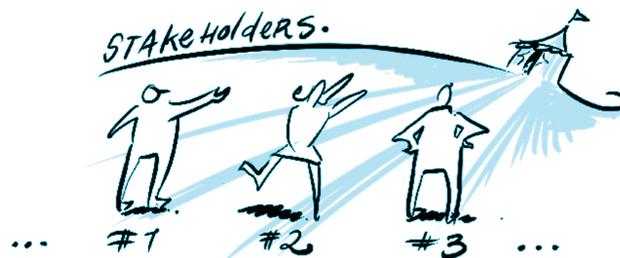


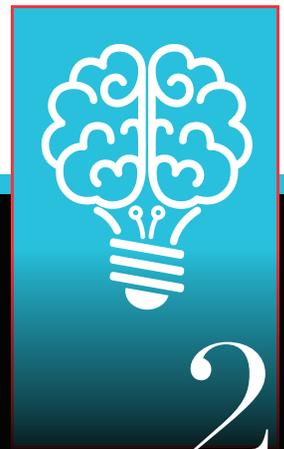
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Understand Your Audience & Stakeholders

A good place to start is **persona mapping**. Personas are made up characters that you create based on your research and experiences on how the different types of people would interact, use your service, product, site, or brand in a similar way. Adding in demographics such as age, gender, financial status, or education can also play into creating that persona- if you decide. Taking the information on how they behave combined with who they are and using those commonalities to create a 'character'.

Creating personas helps you to understand your stakeholder needs, experiences, behaviours and individual goals. Creating personas can help you empathize with your various audience and stakeholders. Assisting you identify that different people have different needs and different expectations, and it can also help you to identify with the person(s) you're designing your event for. Personas make the design process a little simpler, they guide your ideation processes, and they can help you to achieve the goal by creating a good user experience for your target group.





Understand Your Audience & Stakeholders

Potential questions to ask:

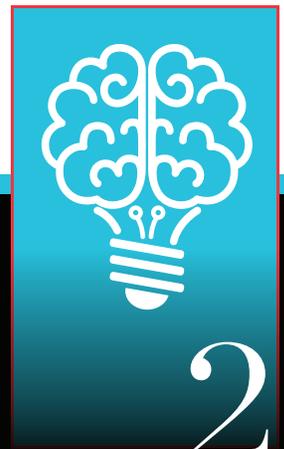
What is the level of comfort with technology?

If you are designing technology for an audience that is fearful of technology, you should be aware of how comfortable and savvy your audience is. If your audience is not confident technology adopters, using complex technology or devices may alienate them in the event experience. For example if your event is majority early Gen X'ers, hands on technology could pose a challenge, you might consider simpler solutions, and or staffing a volunteer to assist with app downloads or troubleshooting with users.

What will motivate that persona group?

Based on the action you want your stakeholder to take, ask yourself how you can use the information on their persona to motivate that group more effectively. For example, if your event goal is to raise money for a children's hospital, you might find the parents at the event are more likely to donate, so you might design your event and technology in a way that enables the parents to interact and engage with the events content.





Understand Your Audience & Stakeholders

The emotional connection

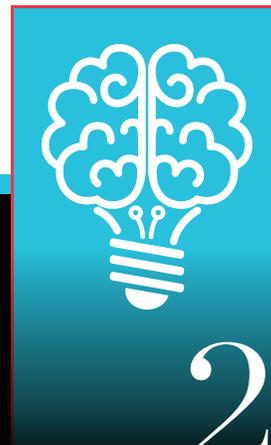
Event impacts draws from the power of emotion.

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” - Maya Angelou

Why is this? Scientifically speaking our emotions are fed by the chemicals in our brain. We speak about capturing the ‘hearts and minds’ of our audience. But, if we literal we are only need their minds. It is not necessary to be a neuroscientist when designing an event. Having someone on your team who has studied human behaviour and neuroscience is a benefit. However, every designer and planner can see results from understanding the basics of the human brain physiology. Our emotions are closely linked to our abilities to connect with information. Our brains use chemicals to create and manage emotions. Understanding how we harness those chemicals is a powerful way to deliver learning in sticky ways.

Some chemicals we work with are:

Oxytocin - Often referred to as the ‘love drug’, it is key to Empathy. It is the hormone that allows us to connect and understand each other. In an event scenario, if a keynote speaker is telling an effective and personal story, the audience member’s brain will release oxytocin. This release helps the listen connect with the presenter’s story, aligning their brain activity to the speaker and their experience. Creating empathy and understanding, allowing the brain to connect its pathways and store the information.



Understand Your Audience & Stakeholders

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Cortisol - The stress hormone is one of the most powerful tools at a designer's disposal. It seems counterintuitive. We normally try and eliminate stress in the attendee experience. As crazy as it sounds, many studies have uncovered the power of emotive storytelling to create positive behaviour change. Part of effective storytelling and the creation of emotive environments is controlled discomfort. By taking the stakeholder to the edge of their comfort zone and imparting messaging as part of the experience can provide them with a deeper emotional connection to the content and instruction. The deep feeling, both comfortable and uncomfortable, triggers recall of the information in the future.

Dopamine - Our neural system (brains and nerve pathways) includes several distinct dopamine pathways, which perform the task of motivating us. Specifically, the management of reward-motivated behavior. Motivation drives us to take action. Because of the motivational response, the brain is more likely to remember the moment. It's the reason we remember moments like winning a race, or receiving an award. It's why we remember being recognized for a job well done when we worked hard towards a goal. In live events, we are charged with getting people to change their behaviour, to act differently. Without the motivation and a reward for positive change that aim becomes almost impossible.

What role does technology play in sparking emotion?

Technology is a tool to enhance emotion, to support the mood and feeling, and to reinforce the message and/or educational content. Technology powers your instructional design and experience journey. It is a mechanism that **connects with your audience** on a human level.



3

Be Strategic On When & How You Use Technology

What does all this have to do with event technology?

Choosing smart event technology starts with understanding the goal/purpose your stakeholder needs and wants.

By deploying an event design process at a deeper level, you can apply various technology to empower the emotion and behaviour change you are charged with creating.

What do you want people walking away with from your event, work back from there?

Does the technology serve a purpose towards that aim? Avoid jumping into fashionable tech trends if it doesn't make sense to your events purpose and aim.



Technology and its design is about getting the right rhythm and pace. Allowing your audience to engage in their own way, but also have time breathe and reflect. The role of your Audiovisual and Event Technology provider is to understand you and your stakeholders. Then recommend and deploy solutions that do not distract or divert attention from the important instructional content. The solutions must be focused and intentional, they must align with the other activities and be an active contributor to an overall integrated experience.



3

Be Strategic On When & How You Use Technology

Here are a few things you can start doing:

1. Make a list of your audience in the room, and then a second list of anyone that has interest in the event?
2. List your event goals and objectives! How will you know if you event was successful?
3. Make a list of all your suppliers and organize by who will be able to contribute the most in achieving event success? Ideally, involving those as early as possible in your design process.

Smart technology design should not a solo endeavour, and can not solely rest on the shoulders of the planner or technology supplier. The most effective technology solutions are often born from collaborative design. Through a defined co-creation process, smart event and meeting planners surround themselves with engineers, designers, artists and scientists. This cross modal collaboration allows team members to bring unique perspectives and strengths. Ultimately contributing to a powerful, outcome focused experience achieving the requirements of high impact stakeholders!

