



The future is here

WAYS IN WHICH TECHNOLOGY IS RESHAPING THE GLOBAL EVENTS INDUSTRY

To manage and launch a successful event, businesses need to look to digital innovations that encourage active participation while also considering new ways to enhance the experiential value of an event. Given the transformative impact new technology and social media is having on the way people find and engage with events it is high time for businesses get their act together – and quickly at that.

Richard Green

IN 2016, THE COMBINED REVENUE FROM THE GLOBAL BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS (B2B) EVENTS INDUSTRY AMOUNTED TO \$30.3BILLION, A RISE OF EXACTLY \$1BILLION ON THE YEAR BEFORE.

This is according to the latest available data from Statista, which also found that 43.6 per cent of this revenue came from the US, 19.8 per cent from emerging markets, 14.4 per cent from continental Europe, 5.8 per cent from the UK and 16.4 per cent from the rest of world.

While demonstrating the continuing growth of the worldwide events industry,

what the statistics do not illustrate is the way in which this sector is changing. And yet it is, significantly and at pace.

The change in the events industry – like so many markets around the globe – is being driven by new technologies. Indeed, shifting consumer demands coupled with the proliferation of new digital solutions has altered the way organisers, venues and businesses host successful events.

Creating a better event experience

One of the fundamental shifts taking place across the B2B events sector is that attendees are becoming more demanding.

Tired formats in the same old venues will no longer attract professionals to part with their time and/or their employer's money.

Instead, companies hosting events must do more. Whether it is a small networking gathering or a thousand-person conference, organisers need to understand that attendees are looking for a smoother and more interesting experience. And while choosing unique locations or exciting catering options are two ways a business can put on a better event, they must also embrace technology.

Wi-Fi is an obvious example of this; providing a reliable, fast internet connection at



an event is key in catering to the technological expectations of attendants. In fact, a recent survey found that 79 per cent of event planners believe Wi-Fi availability and performance is still one of their biggest challenges.

Importantly, the advantages on offer from good Wi-Fi is not just limited to those attending; the event's organisers also stand to benefit. By enabling professionals to share updates from the event across their personal or company social media accounts – particularly Twitter and LinkedIn – the organiser will benefit from added exposure for their event, heightening its appeal and creating more buzz for future iterations of their events.

Of course, creating a better event experience goes far beyond simply improving Wi-Fi connectivity. Other technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), can also deliver an entirely new experience for event attendees. Within the legal industry it could be as simple as enabling someone at a business seminar to view a crime scene or enter a virtual courtroom via a VR headset, but this will create a more immersive experience and create value for those at the seminar.

Elsewhere, for larger conferences it has become increasingly popular for them to have their own app. If you are hosting a large financial services expo, for example, an app can be used for attendees to register for particular sessions, view a map of the venue, provide feedback on speakers and access supplementary content. Providing all of these details and services via an easy-to-use app will enhance the customer experience and thus make the event more marketable to both sponsors and attendees alike.

Effectively marketing an event

Technology is not just disrupting the way events are run, it is also impacting the way businesses are able to market their events. After all, there is no value in investing a huge

amount of time and money in creating a fantastic B2B event if the organiser is unable to get enough professionals to attend it.

Traditionally, marketing an event has been a time-consuming endeavour; one that involved manually making individual listings to be hosted on different event sites or social media pages in the hope of securing ticket sales. It was an inefficient and cumbersome process, but thankfully digital innovations are completely changing this.

Events marketing technologies can simplify the process of attracting attendees, making sure an event has the biggest possible reach. Furthermore, social media is also a valuable resource at every event organiser's disposal – in fact, nearly 25 per cent of traffic to ticketing and registration pages comes from social media platforms.

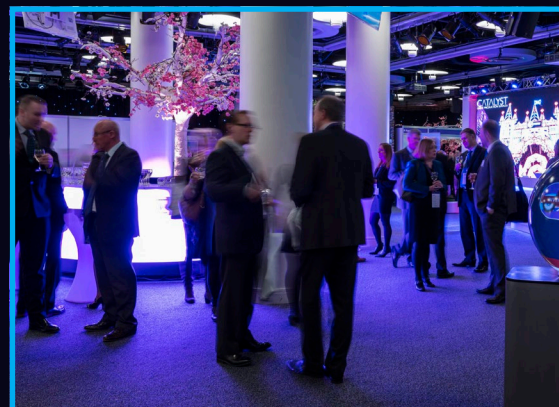
Yet some social media networks might be more effective for your event than others, so choosing the right platform to focus on is important. Facebook and Instagram, for instance, might not be appropriate platforms for a financial services firm to advertise its upcoming event on. LinkedIn, on the hand, can be used to promote B2B events like industry networking; but it is important that businesses explain the professional benefits of their event, as this is vital when looking to engage potential attendees.

Embracing change

It can be easy to assume that B2B event organisers do not need to place as much emphasis on innovative and engaging

events. But the truth is that the increased use of smartphones and social media means that individuals around the world have changing demands – and for a professional to justify time out of their day-to-day working lives to attend an event, they need to be confident that they will be educated, entertained and furthered in some way.

Therefore, whether it is a workshop or a networking lunch, a training day or an industry debate, companies hosting events in the financial and legal sectors must look to embrace new technologies. Not only will it ensure they deliver a superior experience for the individuals attending and any sponsors paying to be associated with the event; it will also dramatically improve their chances of securing enough registrations for the event to make it worthwhile. ●



Richard Green is founder and CEO at Evvnt, a UK-based events marketing consultancy. Established in 2012, the company publishes events on a network of event listing sites, offering its services in various categories including classes and courses, comedy, conference, exhibition, live music, nightlife, sports and leisure, social, and association.

