

An anatomical sculpture of a human head and neck, showing detailed musculature and vascular structures. The sculpture is rendered in a dark, monochromatic style, possibly black or dark grey, against a lighter background. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Anatomy
of a
2018
Delegate

Getting Under the Skin

What delegates want from events is changing fast and becoming more complex. People's increased exposure to live experiences of all types coupled with broader societal and workplace trends have created far more sophisticated, demanding, open-minded audiences. The opportunities to design multi-dimensional, creative conferences and events have never been greater, but the start point needs to be a forensic understanding of today's delegate.

Our *Anatomy of a 2018 Delegate* outlines the five fundamental things people value from an event today.



Anatomy of a 2018 Delegate

A black and white photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket over a sweater and a collared shirt. He is looking down at a smartphone he is holding in his hands. The background is dark and out of focus, with some light spots.

Brain-friendly

People are increasingly aware of the things that help them perform at their best – they want healthy environments and compelling event agendas that engage the brain, focus their attention and improve learning.

Shareable

Delegates value content that can easily be shared with their networks, whether work teams or social media followers, extending the value of the experience beyond the event itself.

Entertaining

Audiences no longer distinguish between B2C and B2B and expect business events to surprise, excite and entertain them in the same way that consumer experiences do.

Personalisation

Delegates are used to being in control of their digital lives, accessing whatever they want, whenever they want. They can tailor almost anything and expect to be able to create event experiences that are close to their heart.

Connections

Delegates today value making connections over simply consuming more content. They will only judge an event a success if they're able to connect with like-minded people and make valuable contacts.

Experience Rich

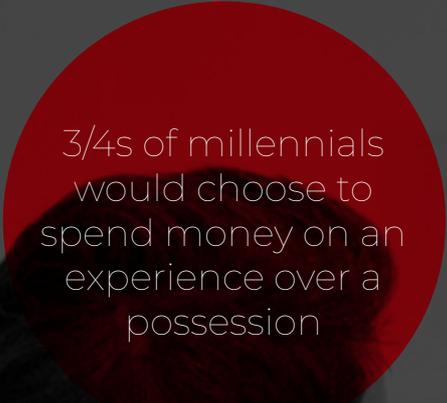
Before we delve deeper into the anatomy, it's useful to understand some of the key trends that are impacting audiences' personal and work lives.

The experience economy is booming, as we increasingly hit "peak-stuff" and value experiences over material possessions. With more of our personal time and money being spent on everything from festivals to immersive cinema and escape rooms, our expectations of business experiences are naturally higher.

More than three in four millennials (78%) would choose to spend money on an experience or event over buying something desirable according to a study conducted by Harris and sponsored by Eventbrite. But the fact that festivals and events are springing up specifically targeted at

a range of generations and passions, suggests that people of all ages are hungry for new experiences, not just young people.

The evolution of the workplace is also impacting events. Creative thinking and collaboration are key attributes of today's knowledge worker and offices are increasingly configured to foster these behaviours. As an extension of the workplace people expect events to be designed to spark connections and creativity.



3/4s of millennials
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Personalisation

We can now personalise everything from our car and trainers to Marmite jars and Coca Cola bottles, and more than a third of us (36%) are willing to pay more and wait longer for personalised products and services (Deloitte: Made to Order: The Rise of Mass Personalisation). This demand for personalisation has largely been driven by the online user experience, says Jez Paxman, creative & strategy director, at Live Union. "Websites learn our preferences and present content and products that are relevant to us. In the same way delegates value events that have been designed to give tailored experiences."

Delegates today are active, not passive. They want to be in control of how they spend their time at an event, rather than feel like sheep being herded from one session to another.

User-conferences, such as Oracle Open World, live stream keynotes beyond the plenary space to other areas of the event, giving people choice as to how they consume content.

Beyond that, content needs to be configured in different ways for different audience types. Psychological studies show that our personality type can impact how we take in, process and remember information presented to us at events. Extroverts tend to prefer more active learning styles and might want to take part in an interactive workshop, while an introvert might prefer a more independent and reflective approach, such as a deep dive into touchscreen or AR content. By presenting the same content in multiple ways, events can appeal to a broad range of personality types.

Delegates want control over how they spend their time at an event

Personalisation thought-starters:

- Live streaming keynotes into networking areas
- AR or touchscreens as a way of putting the audience in control

Brain-friendly

The frequently cited Microsoft study that unfavourably compared human attention span with goldfish has led to a misperception that event content needs to be short-form. At the recent PCMA Convening Leaders 2018 event, Nicholas Thompson, editor-in-chief of WIRED, argued that attention spans are not getting shorter and that if anything, all forms of media are getting more complex. He pointed to the success of Game of Thrones, with its complex plotlines, characters with four-syllable names and episodes that are up to 75 minutes long.

Delegates will happily engage with a longer content session as long it's been crafted to hold their attention with a strong narrative, changes of pace and expert delivery.

Delegates value variety. They want agendas that are varied, content

that takes unexpected turns and sessions that incorporate different styles of learning. There are all sorts of active learning techniques that events can borrow from education such as flipped classroom sessions and paired learning.

People also need time and space to think and process information and don't want jam-packed agendas. We're all more aware of the importance of a good diet and physical activity on our well-being and productivity levels and expect conference agendas and environments to reflect this. There are many brain-friendly benefits to switching off and taking some form of exercise. Using facilitation techniques such as Wonder Walks - getting everyone up and moving discussing a topic in pairs while walking - can energise brains and bodies.

Varied agendas and content that takes unexpected turns

Brain-friendly thought-starters:

- Design audience discussion within individual presentations
- Identify engagement lulls and tackle them with moments of surprise

Connections

Delegates today value making connections over simply consuming more content. Face-to-face connections are what make events unique. In an increasingly digital world, the power of making real world contacts has never been greater.

“People want networking to be smarter – they want spaces and technologies designed to help them meet the right people and form better connections rather than it being left to chance,” says Paxman. Delegates will judge the event a success if they were able to connect with like-minded people and make valuable contacts. Simple things like creating guided tours in experiential zones improves networking as does providing more granular workshops that attract people with similar interests.

Of all the things technology can do for an event, helping facilitate better connections is perhaps the most valuable. Matchmaking apps help delegates self-categorise, prioritising who they want to meet. Platforms like Grip use artificial intelligence to help identify who you’re most likely to be interested in. Grip’s AI matchmaking engine can interpret data from attendees’ social media profiles, recommend people to meet and help you set up a meeting.

75% of event attendees report that networking and making connections is important to them

Decision to Attend Study (for Conventions & Exhibitions) by The Experience Institute

Connection thought-starters

- Build networking into the content delivery
- Experiment with a matchmaking app

Entertaining

The breakdown of barriers between work and leisure, between B2C and B2B mean people want and expect more exciting, surprising business events.

Business events should draw inspiration from other sectors such as TV, film and comedy. Comedians for example are experts in audience engagement, often having to single-handedly hold an audience for an hour or more, typically with no slides or props and be funny too. So, they forensically think about the peaks and troughs of attention and what we do and don't pay attention to.

"We know from research into memory that people tend to remember peaks and endings. In movies and TV scripts, we think in terms of transitions, something happens in the story to take it in a new direction and keep our

attention," says Danish motivational and learning expert and founder of Moving Minds, Bo Krüger. "We should think more like that when we plan events, and design peaks that are exciting and memorable endings. People will remember if something happened that they didn't expect."

A session at SXSW put a smile on people's faces by releasing Labrador puppies into the room, while Intel CEO Brian Krzanich's CES keynote included live VR gaming, mind-blowing graphics and a Guinness world record for the most drones flying simultaneously!

Watch Intel CEO Brian Krzanich's opening keynote at CES for a masterclass in how to make event presentations exciting, engaging and entertaining.

[Click to view](#)

Entertaining thought-starters:

- Identify which of your speakers are best suited to doing something different
- Think about the little touches that can put a smile on people's faces

Shareable

Audiences want highly shareable experiences. Events are seen as content generators for delegate's ongoing communications, whether with their teams or social media followers.

Delegates particularly value content that has been designed specifically for sharing. Stats, quotes or charts that photograph well or video clips posted to the event's social media stream are much appreciated.

Slide sharing platforms, such as Glisser, encourage delegates to directly share individual slides on twitter, live from their devices as they watch a presentation. If the objective is to get employees to cascade content back to their departments, they expect to be equipped with the tools to do that. Introducing RFID functionality across an event to help people

request content is an increasingly popular way to do this.

There are also engagement benefits to be had by making content shareable, according to Krüger. "There is scientific evidence that people learn more if they teach others what they learn. It can be part of the learning process if you have to digest and process that information and work out how to pass it onto others."

Events are seen as content generators for delegate's ongoing communications

Sharing thought-starters:

- Think about how you're going to reconfigure content for sharing
- Experiment with some new technology to help the cascade

Re-imagining your events

2018 is a hugely exciting time to be designing and creating events and there's no shortage of inspiration to draw on. As event organisers, it's our role to recognise that our audiences are the event, and their changing needs should dictate everything we do.

Delegates are craving more stimulating, personalised and entertaining experiences. This provides us with a unique opportunity to re-imagine the events we design, connecting with them at a much deeper level.

**If you're interested in having
a chat about re-imagining
your events:**

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'That's interesting' are two words you hear
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