ISSUE #1
Formats

SUPER CONNECTORS

Creating smarter networking at events

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TODAY'S EVENT AUDIENCE VALUE CONNECTIONS OVER CONTENT.

This was the conclusion Oracle came to when they researched their 60,000 person event, OpenWorld.

Wider industry research confirms the increasing value of networking. A major report by the Experience Institute saw 76% of people sighting networking as a top driver for attending events, with younger audiences placing the greatest emphasis on connections.

In an ever more fragmented landscape, face-to-face events are valued as a rare opportunity to build real world connections. Event audiences - whether customers, employees or other stakeholders - are looking for smarter ways to help them connect. For brands, the holy grail is designing events that see audiences connecting around their content.

This series of reports will share ideas on formats, technologies, facilitation and content delivery that will help turn your delegates into super connectors.

ISSUE #1

FORMATS

Prioritising networking over content flies in the face of traditional presentation focused events. Helping people become super connectors opens up an exciting array of event formats.

Below we explore **five formats** that put networking at the heart of the audience experience.

CAMPUS

Is a Campus event the Super Connector format for you?

Ideal for larger audiences and content that lends itself to more experiential activations.

This festival inspired format places **emphasis on experiential** zones over presented content.

It helps audiences personalise their experience and is a far more conversational and inherently connecting format.

Presented content is often scheduled on more informal pop-up stages which audiences can drop in and out of. Main stage keynotes are live streamed into the campus allowing people to engage with content in a more social setting.

Whilst well-designed campus events provide the perfect setting for networking, facilitation and event technology are vital in helping people achieve the right connections.

MINI CASE STUDY

VISA

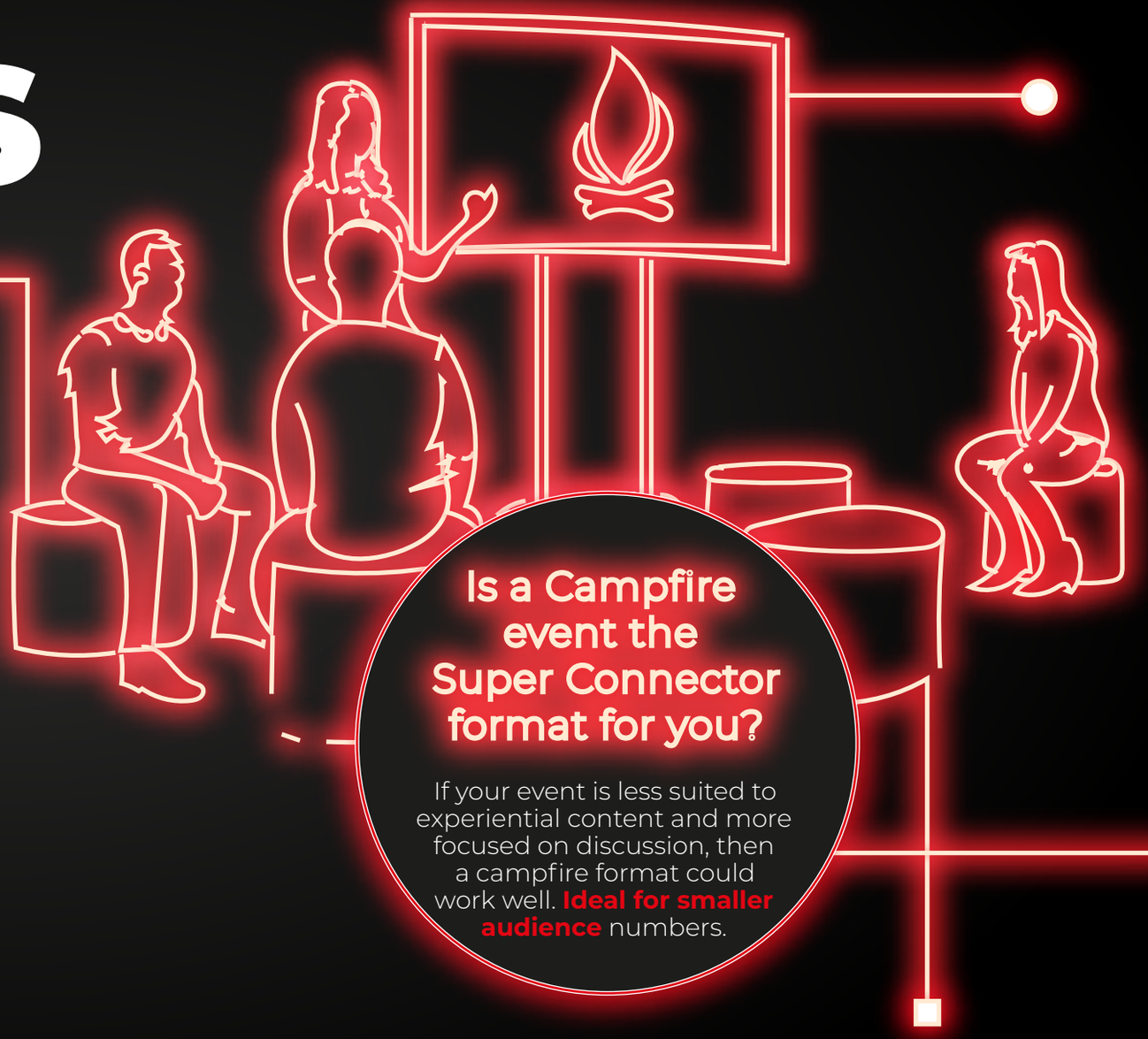
We worked with Visa to transform a stage-led thought leadership event into a format designed to spark connections. The Marketplace brought to life the future of payments across four zones. Combining product experiences, live demonstrations and pop-up stages, it was also where all catering and drinks took place. The campus format gave delegates the time, environment and stimulus to become super connectors.

CAMPFIRES

Like the campus format, it shifts the focus from static plenaries to a more **mobile distributed** experience.

Campfires are small huddle spaces, each one hosting no more than 25 people. They are designed to spark the connections and honest conversations that happen around a campfire. The campfire lead sets-up a topic and then facilitates a group discussion.

The open, discursive nature of campfires helps people uncover valuable connections and form relationships based on shared passions. The campfire format benefits from introducing physical props and hands-on demonstrations that further stimulate networking.



Is a Campfire event the Super Connector format for you?

If your event is less suited to experiential content and more focused on discussion, then a campfire format could work well. **Ideal for smaller audience** numbers.

MINI CASE STUDY

SANTANDER

The objective was to help Santander's leadership form deeper relationships and share ideas. We shunned traditional breakouts in favour of a whole series of campfire sessions around the entire venue. Each was designed and facilitated in a different way, many embracing fin-tech demonstrations. The result was varied and lively discussions that saw new relationships forming around relevant content.

BOX EVENTS

Creating super connectors means embracing more fluid formats; encouraging **interaction and discovery.** Box events are a creative solution with an open feel.

Robust branded cardboard boxes, multi-tasking as seating, signage and structures are used to create a variety of pop-up spaces.

These spaces can be configured as huddles, debates, live demos or mini-stages, delegates free to personalise their experience. Putting the audience in control of their own journey and populating it with stimulating content sparks connections in a way that's beyond a traditional format.

Is a Box Event the Super Connector format for you?

Ideal for internal events where you want to **remove ingrained behaviours and barriers,** encouraging honest open interactions.

MINI CASE STUDY

TRAVELPORT

Travel technology specialists, Travelport, were bringing a geographically distributed leadership team together. The brief was to create a format that allowed both plenary-led content and distributed group working, designed to foster connections. A box event solution saw a central presentation area surrounded by pop-up debates, huddles and demonstration spaces.

DIGITAL PLAYGROUND

Designated networking zones at events often create behaviours more akin to an awkward teenage disco.

The Digital Playground is the perfect format to spark connections within a lounge or coffee area.

Audiences get hands-on with fun, digital innovations, opening their minds to new consumer technologies and new ways of interacting. Technologies such as mixed reality, robotics and gesture control can be combined with brand specific innovations. The Digital Playground provides fantastic stimulus for relationship building.

Is a Digital Playground the Super Connector format for you?

If you're focusing on technology or innovation (and who isn't these days) then this is a great way to help people **form relationships around your content.**

MINI CASE STUDY

UNILEVER

An annual awards event was designed to bring senior marketeers together to celebrate innovation within marketing. A digital playground was created in the drinks area to stimulate connections.

Experiences included gesture-controlled projection, Google Tilt Brush, food innovations, such as edible mist, and super close-up photographs of peoples' eyes.

Is an Unconference the Super Connector format for you?

If you've got a motivated and passionate audience an unconference format frees people from the strictures of a traditional event and **galvanises relationship building.**

UNCONFERENCE

This **radical format** does away with a pre-ordained event agenda.

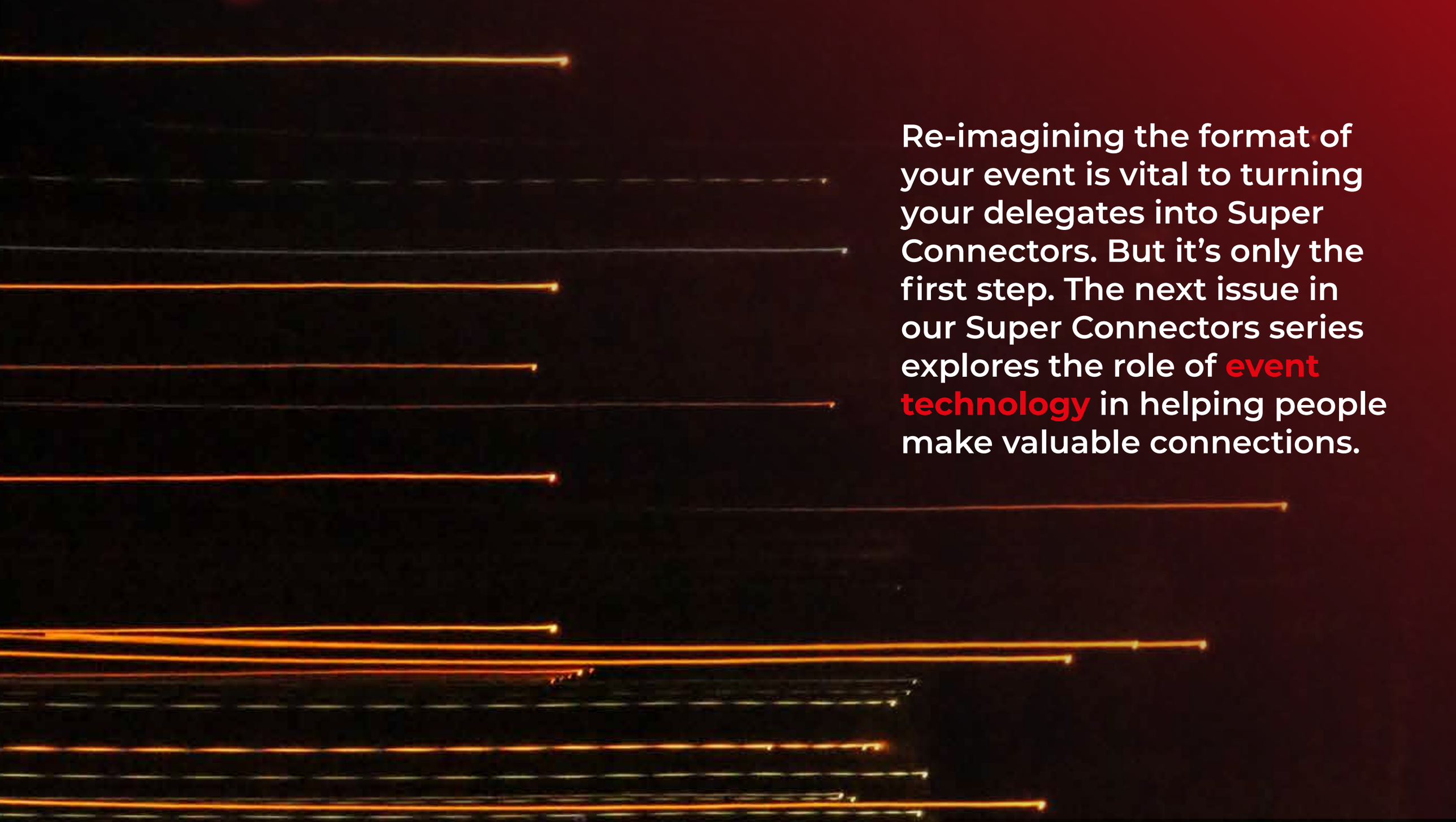
Instead the audience - live at the event - generate the subjects they'd like to discuss and volunteer to facilitate topics. Time slots and spaces are made available and people are encouraged to leave sessions if they're not of value.

Many variants of unconference exist, but they all strive to empower the audience. Putting the audience in control supercharges the networking, helping bring together people around shared passions.

MINI CASE STUDY

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CLIENT

A professional services firm wanted to re-imagine their annual global partners event to focus on relationship building. Using an unconference approach we replaced a traditional plenary format with partner initiated sessions. We designed a Big Debate session at the heart of the event as a striking way for people to connect around the Firm's major topics.



Re-imagining the format of your event is vital to turning your delegates into Super Connectors. But it’s only the first step. The next issue in our Super Connectors series explores the role of **event technology** in helping people make valuable connections.

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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 a lot in the Live Union office. Once a month we share the most interesting and useful event things we've come across.

If you'd like to receive this direct to your inbox, just click here.