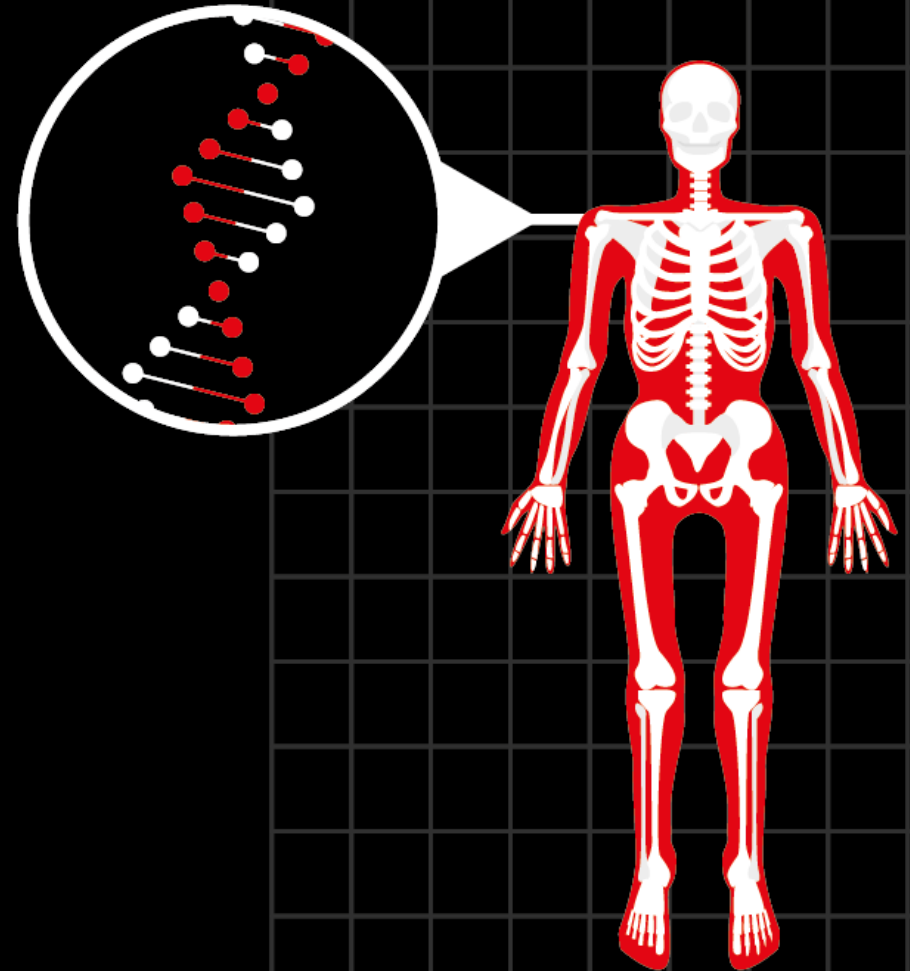


ANATOMY OF THE 2020 EVENT AUDIENCE

Live
Union



Getting under the skin of what people really want from events

Are you one of the three million people who went to Hyde Park's Winter Wonderland this Christmas? Perhaps you were more the type for the Great British Pudding Race or Christmas Carols with a Twist or Battersea's Après Ski Christmas Party?

Our appetite for shared live experiences has never been greater and our tastes are increasingly nuanced, but our time is finite and competition for it is fierce.

The same of course is true for business events. Experience rich audiences have more events competing for their time and strong opinions on what constitutes good use of face-to-face time.

In recent years at Live Union we've released Anatomy of a Delegate reports, getting under the skin of what event audiences really want. As we enter the new year, we've been chatting to a number of clients, hearing their thoughts on what their audiences will really value from being face-to-face in 2020.

What's clear is that audiences want events to embrace the fundamental power of being face-to-face, maximising, for example, community and connections. They're disappointed if your event doesn't seize the live opportunity or wastes time on things that could be achieved in other channels.

"We know customers are being invited to more events and that they're more protective of their diaries. Equally they crave useful experiences that bring value." Mel Noakes, Head of Events and Divisional Sponsorship, Santander.

According to Emily Wilson, Senior Event Manager at insurance broker and risk adviser Marsh: "Audiences' expectations are much higher, not so much in terms of the most expensive venue or latest caterer; it's more that they appreciate you being smarter about how you engage them."

"Do live what's best done live" is an expression we once

heard used by experience designer, David Pearl, and it seems pertinent for 2020.

Below are five areas that shone through our conversations. Five areas to focus on as you look to drive value for your 2020 audience.

AGILITY

Agile is the business buzzword of the decade, but it has real substance when it comes to events. Audiences value events that respond to their preferences and to changes in the narrative. They don't want events set on rails.

Technology now allows us to design experiences that deliver on peoples' objectives and more fluid formats are debunking the traditional plenary / breakout dynamic.

For Robert Quayle, Meeting Leader and Head of Events at AstraZeneca, the key to driving audience value in 2020 will be "responding to instant feedback from people so we can deliver what they want." For many clients 2020 will be about designing events that give people more control over how they spend their time.

COMMUNITY

Business life is becoming more atomised: remote working, distributed teams,

the proliferation of screen-based interaction. Audiences value events that succeed in creating real-world communities. This means helping people connect and collaborate around common interests. Event technology, formats and facilitation all have roles to play in this.

"Crucially, our events are about giving our clients a voice as part of the community, not preaching at them. That doesn't necessarily mean asking them to stand up and speak in front of peers. It's about giving them different platforms to contribute, such as live chat walls or voting tools." Emily Wilson, Marsh.

Santander are seeing real commercial value in the communities they create at their events and look to achieve joint ownership of the experience with the audience. "Our Manufacturing Industry Days have sparked new relationships between the attendees. The real power of these events is that they have created peer support

for senior audiences who often lack this resource." Mel Noakes, Santander.

BRAIN-FRIENDLY

This is a term we love at Live Union, it reflects peoples' increasing awareness of how they perform at their mental peak. Audiences want to be firing on all cylinders and they want you to help them achieve this. This means enlivening venues, healthy food, exercise and most importantly well-designed agendas which vary the pace and overcome energy lulls.

"We see learning as a physical process, for our audiences it's more than just content, it's about energizing formats." Paul Louis Heil III, Employee Experience at IBM.

Emily highlighted the huge importance Marsh places on helping audiences actively engage with event content, particularly around the support given to presenters to achieve more participative, conversational sessions.

An important part of creating more brain-friendly experiences is building in surprise and putting a smile on peoples' faces. Mel discussed the importance of drawing inspiration from the wider experience economy and understanding the richness of live interaction in peoples' everyday lives.

CONNECTING

If there's one thing that everyone I spoke to agreed on, it's the value audiences place on making real world connections. Robert Quayle says finding new ways to help people network is a key area of focus for the AstraZeneca team in 2020.

According to Mel, "The feedback from our internal events is that networking with peers is what people most value." Mel was keen to stress that content and connections aren't mutually exclusive, that networking should be built into how people consume content, with formats such as Campfires sparking connections.

When it comes to client events, Mel emphasised the importance of staff being briefed and having the insight to facilitate the most valuable connections between customers.

SUSTAINABLE

As we look to 2020, audiences not only value experiences designed to minimise their environmental impact, they actively reject unsustainable experiences. Audiences are asking: 'Am I going to be proud to be part of this event?' They're critiquing like never before.

People are also incredibly receptive to stories of more sustainable event planning. For Robert Quayle the focus in 2020 is on creating events that give back to local communities. For Emily, event technology plays a large part in sustainability, and cites how streaming events can dramatically reduce the amount of flights people would otherwise take.

The hunt for sustainable ways of producing events is creating innovative ideas that can add whole new dimension to the audience experience, for example, replacing traditional set and staging with an immersive screen-based solution. Sustainability and audience engagement can be two sides of the same coin.

WRAP UP

No two audiences are the same, but our conversations provide some great start-points for evolving your events in the year ahead. In short, the 2020 audience are experience rich and focused on what live experiences can deliver above and beyond other channels.

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.

Click **Here** to receive 'That's interesting'.