

StoryWorks

EXPERIENCE DESIGN

And the Winner Is...

Recognition and awards events are among the most difficult to keep different and fresh while appropriately recognizing leaders and high-performers. Tonya Almond, Vice President of Meetings and Continuing Education for the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, leads a discussion of ideas for transforming the traditional approach to awards ceremonies.

Idea sharing in awards and award ceremonies

- One example from participant
 - Awards are the sacred cows of what you need or want to change. Looking at money, resources, demographics of who was attending. Looked at the numbers of ticket sales, sponsorships. Venue that the president and leadership wanted the recognition and black tie dinner. Moved the awards out of the ceremony into the keynote would be more recognized in a general session. Tell the story earlier. Not a secret on who wins the awards. Announced and email in advance. Put it in the program book as part of the key note session. Video was put together for a prominent award. The recipient video was of her family friends and office staff not an interview of her.
 - The menu card became the agenda for the award dinner. And the one award became the highlight of the evening and it became more enjoyable for the attendees
 - Video was done by One Smooth Stone. Film crew went to the award winner and put together - the videographers schedule was a small challenge. Video was 2 1/2 to 3 minutes that told the story of her life. The consultant and producer worked with the winner to select who was interviewed

Challenges/ideas with awards

- Corporate client- division just merged with other businesses and issues with national sales meeting with 70 winners. Did not allow speeches. Do audio with the winners' family/friends. Because the winners didn't know in advance. Struggled with the way the winners/recipients interacted after their segment was completed.
- Scripting is very important it allows you to better understand your timing
- Use the app or other technology to announce in advance and build around sponsors
- Add some to the general session
- Talk to previous award winners on how they felt about the process
- Omit the handshake to give additional time
- Include PowerPoint with bio to save time
- Email announcement after the ceremony to promote winners
- Opportunity for flare and excitement during the presentations?

- Add emcee (professional)
- Read why they won vs. just a bio
- Use photos and slides as visuals
- Add video session
- Stagger timing for different awards
- Video on site with iPhones
- Include awards tips to presenters
- Awards to companies vs just people?
 - A little boring but how do you highlight the company
 - Do a six work memoir for each company
 - Use the booth area and trophy in the exhibit hall for the winner and place special food and beverage in their booth
 - Final night acknowledgement
- Convincing leadership on change
 - Hallway conversation on the site visit
 - Planting the seed
 - Follow up with important leadership
 - Come up with a specific plan to pitch
 - Include a budget for review and approval
 - Use an outside source to confirm your concepts for change
- Shorten awards?
 - Include visuals (photos of winners)
 - Use a video and pre-record in advance
 - Condense on each person on time for thanks at podium
 - Use music when recipient is walking up
 - Use dynamic words about the person
 - Put award winners up front and strategic seating in certain areas
 - Script the session
 - Survey attendees on the event
- Is there a reason leadership has the awards ceremony on the last night?
 - Mostly cultural
 - The way we've always done it
 - Challenge leadership to change
 - Is the winner on stage the motivation for other potential recipients?
 - On the front end allows the congratulations for the full week to the recipient
 - Create area in the exhibit hall to meet and greet the leadership and award winners
 - Strategy to incorporate the winners throughout the sessions



Attendee Moovement

How can we apply principles of experience design to better address moving crowds at larger events, where attendees often feel like cows in a herd? Cynthia Hornketh, Vice President of Experience Design for Experient, leads this call to action to stop herding attendees!

Crowds can evoke energy and inspiration but conversely can be overwhelming and off putting. And the environment we create for these crowds can be very uninviting and provoke negative emotions.

Cavernous convention space with a mile of stanchion and a person barking out orders which way to turn – like a livestock pen. Large ballrooms with fluorescent lighting, blank walls, and mind numbing noise. Seemingly endless walks to and thro, toe to heel.

How can we change the environment – make it more inviting and personal. How can we design the experience so it's memorable rather than tedious and exhausting?

Personalize the space.

- a. Pictures, Posters, Gobos, "Tapestry"
 - b. Architectural Image Projection
 - c. Plants – landscape – bring the outdoors in
 - i. Zen Garden – sand, plants, planks of wood
 - d. Shave off the corners with pipe and drape or other devices
 - e. Lighting, Spot Lights, up lighting
 - f. Dividers – change up the site lines. Partially opened ballroom divider walls?
 - g. Giant props scattered in the meal room
 - h. Mixed seating – up and down –
 - i. Neighborhoods – by décor, menu,
 - i. Happy and Health
 - ii. Fast Food (box lunch)
 - iii. International Flare
 - j. Video Walls
 - k. Sponsor Banners to lower the ceiling height. But don't hang a cacophony of colors and images
 - l. Multiple rooms (break up the ballroom into pieces)
 - m. Divide the group – take your food to a meeting room and watch a 'Movie'
 - n. Quiet Zones (Amtrak quiet car sells out)
- Entertain
 - a. Movie with subtitles during meals

Fun/Pleasant Lines

- DJ – place it at registration then move him around – have it in unexpected locations
- Jugglers
- Look a likes

The Long Walk

- Interesting Directional Staff or Escorts
- Personality Cut Outs – people take their picture with the life size cutouts
- Executives greeters – surprisingly showing up
- Humorous Signage that changes daily
 - Sponsor it

Bridging the Gap

Event designers attempting to create experiences that satisfy several generations simultaneously must often balance progressive practices with familiarity. Join Deborah Minor, the Director of Business and Finance for the American Academy of Religion, to discuss the compromises, opportunities, and pitfalls of designing events for multiple generations.

- Having a generation specific committee to create their own experience and education. (I.e. Graduate student committee)
- Having an app help desk to assist the older generation
- Mentoring programs:
- Speed mentoring - getting directors to meet with younger directors for 3 minutes and rotating.
 - using the program to educate new young members on how to make the most out of the conference.
- Leadership Program - make them feel like they are making a difference.
- Reaching out to affiliate associations for help on bringing the groups together
- Mobility: sending a person with mobility/hearing/sight issues go on the site visit. Using the front row in sessions for hearing/sight issues. Write into the city requirement that they provide transportation to the center.
- "Un-meeting" - not clarifying objectives of the session, but selecting a topic and then asking for attendee input to direct the discussion. (I.e. Like the campfires!)
- Using Idea Generator MindMixer.com website to procure educational content.
- Using student volunteers to introduce speakers, collect evaluations, etc.

No, REALLY Sustainable!

The events industry has come a long way with regard to creating greener meetings, but how can we tap our collective creativity to produce events that are truly sustainable (including how to pay for them)? Frank Netherwood, the Manager of Sales, Events & Sponsorship for the International Association of Business Communicators, leads this lively brainstorming session to generate sustainable event ideas we can all use to help secure the future of our industry and our planet.

- Not everyone should be doing green meetings!
- Sustainable Event Practices
- www.sustainablebrands.com
- Six questions to ask if you'll be able to do a green meeting
- Buypartisan.com
- It all comes down to making a lot of small changes.
- Talked about the ASTM green meeting standards

Engaging Emotion

While some in the business world shun emotion, event designers understand the critical role it plays in transforming audiences in a positive way. Greg Bogue, Vice President of Experience Design for MTC, leads this discussion about how we can engage and possibly measure emotional response throughout events.

- Butter should be an emotion.
- Personal connections drive emotions. How can we do more in events to create personal connections. Choice increases people's willingness to connect.
- Neuroscience tells us the first level of attention is physical. So if a room is cold attendees will focus on that first. Then the 2nd was novelty. 3rd is connection.
- When we measure events everyone wants an ROI. The first thing we do is eliminate emotions because they are not easily measured. We need to figure out how to measure them because it is most important.
- In order to have a memory stick, you need to have an emotional experience.
- Someone shared about closing the opening keynote with a poet who incorporated things around their industry. David Bowden was highly effective and thrilled the attendees.
- There is an emotional richness in stories.
- We experience things and remember things and we need to learn to design for both.

Ignite!

How can event pros break out of the “same old, same old” to create greater levels of excitement and energy at their events? Jennifer Hoff, COO of VP International, leads this discussion addressing how to create more exhilarating experiences and elements within meetings and events.

- The group appreciated the idea of the general session seating mixed with comfortable seating for campfires or a deeper dive into session topics
- How do you work with your speakers to get them to try something new including getting away from always using PowerPoint?
 - Jeff Hurt has materials available on working with your speakers (did a session for the PCMA Capital Chapter)
- How do you get the attendees to engage in the content as well as managing attendee fatigue over the course of a conference
- Engaging exhibitors
 - Educate them on how best to start conversations or engage with attendees
 - Talk to your exhibitors and sponsors during the sales process to find out what they feel will bring the most value rather than just selling the standard booth and thinking it will meet everyone's needs
 - Create opportunities for peer to peer conversations with exhibitors but bring it up a notch by taking it off the show floor and giving them a nicer meeting location to put everyone on the same playing field
- Branding your event
 - It is important to branch out from the basic entrance units or signage
- Sponsorship
 - Experient and ASAE are good examples of organizations that provide greater value/exposure to sponsors beyond just listing the name and logo on signage because they allow sponsors to engage as attendees

- Challenging to educate sponsors on the importance of getting engaged in the event they are sponsoring
- Give sponsors the opportunity to bring together a group of clients or prospects
 - Focus groups over breakfast (doesn't have to be at an additional cost to show management if you are already providing breakfast)
 - Rapid 1:1 appointments with sponsors (Healthcare a Financial Management Association)
 - Offer the opportunity to manage the invitation process for the sponsors
- Educational delivery options
 - You can continue to use the same session format of panels or lecture but change up the room set with lounge furniture making it different for the attendees but comfortable for the presenters
 - How do you spice up a panel discussion?
 - Strong moderator
 - Panelists the are open to conflict or differing opinions and won't shy away from them
 - Try to do Q&A at the beginning instead of the intros since often times the sessions doesn't get good until then end
 - Use audience response and have panelists respond to the audience
 - Ask the panelists to create their 6 word memoir as their introduction
- Managing the inevitable drop in attendance on the last day
 - Be very selective about presenters for those attendees or attendee types that tend to stay until the end and ask they to lead the group in small group discussions - Solutions Lab - (Healthcare a Financial Management Association)
 - - Include grab and go type snacks in the center of the tables so you are still providing breakfast or lunch but people can keep talking
- Ignite some fun into your events
 - Develop a contest for attendees based on the theme of the meeting or your industry
 - Don't be afraid to speak up and make an extreme suggestion as a means of getting the conversation started
 - Photo scavenger hunt
 - Find a tagline or activity that will spark social media interaction
 - Find ways to bring in students or younger attendees to ignite excitement

Push Me Pull You

With many attendees unable to live without their printed event guides, paperless meetings are still a pipe dream for countless event organizers who must now prepare both the guides and full-featured electronic solutions instead. Join Susan Bennett with Experient, for this conversation about how and when to introduce paperless meeting solutions to cross-generational audiences.

Power shift from going from print to digital will happen in the next 20 years. Key points that college this year were born after google was launched. Is digital a generation issue?

- Under 40 don't use any needs. No tv - video only don't typically read the newspaper. Would be more likely pay for news content
- Most customers are in between the need to print or need to go to digital print
- Solutions
 - Hybrid of on demand print
 - Up to date information if you use digital
 - Omit bags (survey attendees)

- Small meetings can be personalized
- Send out an attachment of digital books in advance of the meeting
- Charge for print programs
- Donate money for those that opt out of the print version
- Sponsors for printed version. Click throughs on app are huge can provide analytical data on click through
- Consumption of content is important to understand of your attendees
- User engagement and knowledge to app
- Use tech bars and experienced people for help desk areas
- Components in program guide
 - Sessions and description
 - Locations
 - Other pertinent info
 - Can all be included in app
- Assumption because that people are more advanced with technology than they really are
 - Poll audience to understand where they are with technology
 - Define to the audience what product and technology is in advance of engagement
 - Opportunity of a trend if groups in their own connecting through social media
 - Wifi cost is a harnessing factor
 - Look at network ninja through PSAV and trends and how to gauge how much bandwidth you actually need



Tastemakers

As the palates of event guests continue to get more discerning, and choices abound with regard to the content, origin, health, and “friendliness” of choices, organizers must now pay attention to F&B as a key event design element. Sandy Smith, National Conference Project Manager for the National Association of College & University Food Services, and Jeri Dixon, Director of Sales and National Accounts for Aramark Sports & Entertainment, and Courtney Davis, Director of Events and Membership for the National Confectioners Association, and Halle Weinberg, Director of Event Management for Experient led this discussion about the latest trends and tips for food and beverage at events.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Create a Pinterest story board for each meeting – share board with facility culinary team, DMC, internal staff => create a vision /story for event
- ✓ Farm to table- discussion as to what's in season?
- ✓ Lunch tends to be the biggest complaints. Attendees are least satisfied.
- ✓ Recommend sharing total budget versus breaking down per event – shift dollars based on highest impact events
- ✓ Seeing facilities creating more seasonal menus – increased prices, season dishes. More frequent changes
- ✓ Request Site in kitchen- “back stage tour” – engage culinary team from the start
- ✓ Looking for interactive “show” type of receptions/lunches in hall = Salad in a margarita mixer- logo; Mojito parfaits in mason jars; Sushi lollipops- candy wrapped
- ✓ Personalized F& B - build your own trail mix, mashed potato bar with unique accompaniments
- ✓ Everything is better with bacon – not just for breakfast anymore
- ✓ Qr code on cupcakes- scan if you win prize -- interact during first timers

** Pictures were shared

OTHER NOTES

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/h2/bfam/followyournola/truly-unbelievable-dishes-found-only-in-nola?b=1>

<http://hotelfb.cmail1.com/t/ViewEmail/y/E2A5F580586A49DD/0A369709132EFD3C2438807772DD75D1>

<http://www.foxnews.com/leisure/2013/11/07/top-12-hottest-food-and-beverage-trends-for-2014/>

<http://meetingsimagined.com/inspiration/dessert-muffins>

- Get ready to turn your menus into works of art – presentation, ingredients= engage the 5 senses in every course/items
- Food trucks are still around
- Sliders still hot but seeing a lot of different kinds savory tacos and reimagined comfort food
- Local specialties - examples include fresh-roasted pecans from local Pecan Candy & Gift Company as well as the many pecan trees on property. Housemade chuckwagon trail mix features spicy wheat pillows, with chocolate covered coffee beans, pretzels, and dried cherries. House-smoked brisket quesadillas with poblano ranch dressing.
- Labeling food and menu designated as Gluten Free/Vegan/Vegetarian - Gluten Free breaks and meals - Prompted by health-consciousness, meeting planners see this offering on the menu and are often excited about choosing it. Break can include seasonally inspired local fruits, tomato mozzarella skewers with housemade pesto, garlic crostini with olive tapenade, sweet pea and morel mushroom risotto fritters with truffle bits and parmesan, freshly baked (rice flour) chocolate chip cookies, and flourless rockslide brownies.
- **Education and Storytelling** – from educating culinary/banquet staff to featuring menu cards describing back-story and sourcing. Electronic plasma screens being used with graphics, videos and descriptive words showcasing the menu.
- **Sodas:** With contraptions like SodaStream hitting the market, soda has gone DIY. Restaurants are following suit, offering their versions of house-made sodas. Like the craft beer market, industry is entering the age of craft soda

- **Pressed Juices:** With Jamba Juice leading the way, juice bars are no longer just for the people who pound wheatgrass shots after yoga class. Juice has gone mainstream and, according to the report, we'll be seeing a lot more of it in the coming year
- **Bar Culture:** Mixologists, flavored ice cubes, misting essences over cocktails, gin connoisseurship, hard cider, dispensed highbrow slushy cocktails, locally made rye and bourbon and more beer and wine in fast-casual food chains (ie chipotle)
- **Breads and Spreads:** For example, at The Pass in Houston, you get black garlic mostarda, vanilla tapenade and tomato jam with your dinner rolls. Other places offer chef-driven spreads like whipped lardo, rosemary hummus, roasted garlic butter, smoked ricotta, whipped beet butter, porcini oil, jalapeno oil, smoked eggplant dip, salsa butter and whipped chicken liver butter
- **"Green" they mean" healthy."** The niche market of healthy eating has moved into the mainstream. Americans are starting to change the way they eat, going gluten-free, watching their diet due to diabetes and weight gain, becoming vegetarian and vegan. More farm-to-fork movements to expand to more chains and facilities
- From LED light shows to smell diffusers to life-size image projections, restaurants are leaning on more than just a menu to **create a fully entertaining dining experience**. For example, a restaurant in Brooklyn serves meals in utter silence while other restaurants serve meals in utter darkness. Next year, keep an eye out for restaurants that look to stimulate all the four senses, not just taste
- **Asian flavors** (and menu items) : One has to look no further than Lay's sriracha potato chips or "Better learn about gochujang, okonomiyaki and Parilla
- Extend the event by creating this interactive engaging environment - Drinking and Eating increases the time they linger - According to Baum & Whiteman, Tommy Bahama's stores with restaurants generate two-and-a-half times the sales per square foot
- HYATT: Menus are inspired by Hyatt's "Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served." program, which suggests use of local vendors, locally inspired cuisine, and meals with a healthy balance
- MARRIOTT: Meetings Imagined

Where's Waldo?

Personalization is one of the surest routes to creating memorable experiences at events, but sheer numbers at large conferences make customization efforts quite challenging, at the very least. James Riela, Senior Vice President of Conference Services for LPL Financial, leads a discussion about how to drive personalization within a large conference framework.

Jim - Has passion to bring people together and personalize the experience since a child growing up in a huge Italian family. How do we surprise our attendees and make them feel special. Little things count...engaged home office by creating Ambassadors so they all reached out to every attending advisor/client. No cost, minimal time since emails were scripted so just had to push them out. Changed advisor and employee experience.

Had executive team welcome 1st timers with 5 points to cover. Reached out to them prior to event. Asked repeat advisors to be Ambassadors pre-event for 1st timers. Many ideas require no budget just different thought processes.

Who's Waldo - what do we know about them and how is it leveraged? Trying to gain info and leveraging it to personalize experience. Hannah - going to segment members and staff by what's your reason for coming, etc. recognize first timers at welcome reception, top sponsor reception and dinner.

Do we have a pre and post strategy to touch attendees? Hannah - don't do a good job especially post conference. Too busy pre and on site to think about post strategy. Jim- has marketing content team to push follow up links and videos. Push it in 2 min/ short segments (bite size pieces) so people watch.

LPL has execs push twitter feed - some pre-scripted.

Cheryl - registration is first touch point. Q: what do you want to find this year at conference.

Cynthia - uses unique confirmation letter for 1st timers. Important to find out who's not coming and why. Jim - send non-attenders snippets of what they missed.

Amy - schools are members so attendees vary. Have info on schools but not specific attendees. Make sure they know they're part of core school team so need to think about the bigger picture. Pre online and hub focus groups to generate pre and post conversations. Everyone sees same general session and then different tracks speak to the impact of the keynote on their track. Hannah - has similar divergent attendees (suburban, rural, etc) and manually put them in contact with other similar doctors and had a facilitator. Corp stayed out of them so they feel comfortable talking about whatever they want.

Hannah - what's done during the event to personalize? LPL Created home office ambassadors on expo floor to help advisors with "Can I help you" buttons. Prep home office with pre-event documents - over communicate. All home office can then be on the same page with advisor answers. Showed home office they weren't 2nd class citizens. Became vested in the outcome.

Wow Me!

Especially for incentive meetings, the “wow factor” must remain high every year, requiring fresh thinking and ideas that create the memories and foster the stories that drive continued performance. Join Dana Weaver, Senior Manager of Marketing Services for GROWMARK, to discuss how to generate great ideas while avoiding the duds.

- Incentives are all about the Wow factor, and engaging the client to work hard to get there year after year.
 - What defines a Wow?
 - Doing things to differentiate yourself from your competition. Bring in the local flare of the destination to make memorable experiences.
 - You don't have to one up the year before, making the destination different and experience different can work. Sometimes the destination can do it alone.
 - Touching all 5 senses.
 - Larger nets can be harder so how do you touch that one individual?
- Personal notes on arrival. How do you do that for 5,000 people?
 - First time receptions are wonderful ideas. Make sure the leadership is there and talking with those individuals. Keep them engaged and feeling welcome.
 - Regional support, have them call individuals to welcome them, tell them they could ask them questions. Encourage first time attendees to volunteer, even it's for an hour. It will help them feel connected.
 - The different colored pins were a great idea.
 - NCA described the custom registration page, she showed us what Experient helped them create. It was a big hit, and well received.

- Stars on badges on number of years they have qualified. Also, surveys after asking specific questions so they can improve on anything needed. It also helps them feel heard.
- Tent in an airplane hangar for private lunch, and their luggage was right there at the private jet.
- Flash Mobs are interesting and create memorable experiences.
- Before the trip, be sure the logo, letterhead, gift, theme is crisp from the start. It impresses the attendee, and helps them look forward to the next form of communication.
- Announcing the location of the next year is important. Staff lining up to clap and thank you for being there. Providing small basic need (food and beverages) on the floor. Feel good moments (blankets here for the campfire theme, a small token of appreciation as people leave.)
- Pedometer, make it a game, create competition and networking opportunities. Give people something to talk about. The excursions here give people something to talk about.
- Use badges to promote favorite hobby, instead of location. Another great conversation starter.
- Awards - how do you feel about a special logo wear? Is it outdated? A catalog of gifts to choose from so it's your personal style might be better. It should be a pride moment, but personal preference comes in as well.
- Be willing to ship items if you give them something that might be too heavy. Don't give them a cumbersome item.
- Do people like the personal text message to welcome them? There is cost to that program, and you only have a certain number of texts so they have to be strategic.
- Ice cream or Popsicles available at check-in if it's hot, coffee if it's cooler.
- Try checking people into the hotel on the bus. Try to avoid lines. Is this only important for incentive groups? Is it different for larger associations?
- Stage wow factors if on a bus for a longer period of time. Stage hitch hikers, it can be a surprise.

Theme Builder

Are meeting themes useful experience design tools or just meaningless taglines we put on websites, brochures, and cocktail napkins? Join Dan Sundt, Chief eXperience Officer at CXO Marketing, to explore a strategically grounded approach to building themes that define event experiences in more meaningful ways - with or without a tagline.

SEE SEPARATE HANDOUT PDF.