



Live Events

Involve, stimulate and inspire your delegates



Introduction

What do you want to achieve as a result of your event?

Common objectives include understanding, commitment and support for products, services, management or strategies and the best way to achieve these is through involvement.

A live event provides just such an opportunity. Instead of passively reading, listening or watching a communication your delegates can personally experience it. Depending on the type of event they can also participate and contribute, moving from being a passive member of the audience to an integral part of the cast.

Why then do so many companies throw away this opportunity - choosing live communications for one-way information blasts? Instead of engaging, inspiring and involving the audience they create a barrier, or a 'cinema mentality.'

Delegates attend, rather than participate.

Resistance to change

Our research has shown the following reasons:

- Lack of time, experience or creativity to produce and manage an interactive event.
- A reluctance to break with tradition and try a new format.
- A fear of losing control of the audience and the communication.
- Poor understanding of the difference between live and written communications.

All these are understandable, but can easily be overcome by enlisting professional support. Any event management and production company worth its salt will be keen to work with you to push the boundaries and get the most out of your event communication. They should also be able to provide reassurance, in the form of solid case studies, showing how this approach has benefited other companies.

How much involvement?

The amount of involvement will vary with the event. In some business forums, for example those presenting papers from industry leaders, little participation is possible, necessary or wanted. A simple Q&A or panel discussion will suffice unless you want to encourage active, or even controversial, debate.

However, in the majority of client or employee focussed events, some level of involvement is vital. Whether it is getting delegates to try out a product, work through a concept, air their views or give input and feedback.

We're all familiar with the proverb:

*'Tell me and I shall forget
Show me and I shall remember
Involve me and I will understand'*

Nowhere is this more pertinent than in live events. But how much, and in what form should this involvement take place?

Draw the audience in

Six simple ways to immediately draw the audience in are as follows:

1. If delegate numbers allow, choose cabaret or classroom rather than theatre style seating.
2. Consider building your stage out into the audience or providing a natural walkway.
3. Look at a stage design and lighting that draws the audience in, rather than creates an 'us and them' scenario.
4. Avoid barriers, such as heavy lecterns and encourage the speaker to address the audience rather than the screen.
5. Move away from heavy one-way PowerPoint presentations and incorporate more panel discussions and Q&As.
6. Get the delegates working on, and presenting back on, key issues.

Focus on the audience

There are also a whole range of products available to facilitate participation and interaction. These vary from non-technical props such as 'Yes' and 'No' paddles, to simple keypads, or more complex radio-linked laptops. The laptops can form part of the presentations, initiate discussions and capture delegate feedback and input.

Using a technical interactive system requires expert assistance, but once set up it is simple to use, can be anonymous and is highly effective. Technology can help you in a number of ways:

Understand the audience

The audience will be most at ease and most honest in their responses when the feedback is anonymous. So if it is important to know what the audience's thinking is, then an interactive system is an immediate way to find out. This feedback can help you relate to the audience and make what you say more relevant.

Engage the audience

As you start a new topic you can re-focus the audience's attention on what you are about to tell them. For example find out how well they know the subject by asking a specific question, find out if there is a difference of opinion in the audience, ask if they are aware of the current trends or issues surrounding the subject. Ask plenty of questions to keep the audience engaged - the audience always find it interesting to know if their opinions are the same or different to everyone else's - providing it's anonymous.

Interact with the audience

Always explain or comment on the results and use them to highlight your point or go over things again if they haven't understood.

Listen to the audience

Some results to the questions may need explanation so ask the audience for their help. With the results up on the screen it becomes less intimidating for the audience to offer an objective explanation or even to disclose their own personal point of view.

Involve the audience

Where there are complex issues that need prioritisation brainstorm the issues and prioritise them against the most important criteria e.g. risk versus impact, opportunity versus cost, priority versus performance.

Challenge the audience

To have some fun and motivate the audience or to learn their product knowledge have a quiz based on rounds of business and trivia questions.

Feedback

Through feedback you can make people feel secure in the knowledge they are part of the majority. They can see they are not alone in their feeling and mindset. Ask their opinion and they will feel nurtured.

Measure how well you have communicated

If you are communicating information, ask specific questions to find out how much the audience has taken in. See if you have changed the audience's mind. If you are trying to change their thinking, ask a 'before and after question' and see if it has worked. Gauge the audience's level of support.

Finally, don't forget to measure the effectiveness of the conference as a whole – you should find a marked improvement.

Summary

Interaction is one of the single most important ways of ensuring message retention and getting buy-in. The delegates will move from passive to active, looking to seeing, hearing to listening and speaking to engaging.

Instead of being a passive audience they will take ownership of the communication and feel a valued, integral part of the team, working to achieve common goals and improved performance.

About Mirage

Mirage is a full-service live event management and production company.

We continue to delight clients, and exceed expectations, for the simple reason that Mirage does not produce events to a formula. We tailor our creativity to meet your brief and create a memorable, vibrant event, which is professional without being predictable. We help define your objectives, refine your messages and then we inject fun, velocity and life into your content, ensuring your key messages are understood, reinforced and embraced.

Mirage has an impressive portfolio of blue-chip clients whose events range from product launches, conferences, roadshows, business forums, AGMs through to themed parties and fun days, award ceremonies, team-building and motivational activities. Our complete range of services includes venue selection, programme content, logistics, staging, print and electronic media, delegate management, guest speakers and celebrities, video conferencing, speaker support and AV.

To learn more about how your events could have greater impact, relevance and creativity call us on +44 (0) 1883 740400, email diane@mirageemail.com or visit our website at www.miragewebsite.com or visit our party planners site: www.mirageparties.co.uk.



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