



Quarterly Event Insights

New Name and New Insights



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NOTE FROM OUR CHIEF STRATEGIST



It's remarkable when I reflect on all we've collectively achieved and endured since March of 2020- from the adrenaline rush of the first year of converting to digital events, to the deep disappointment, and reluctant acceptance, that we would have to

persist through another year of digital only experiences.

If we've learned one thing as an industry it's to not get too far ahead of ourselves.

As we look ahead to the spring and summer months, I think most in our industry are excited to see in person events coming back. On the other hand it feels like we still have a long way to get back to the vibrancy that was characteristic of our industry prior to the pandemic. Events are at 50-60% of prior attendance levels. Show floors are similarly at half capacity. Show producers and hosts are delaying events in the hopes things will normalize (whatever that means) by the summer and fall. Many are sticking with digital for the time being, waiting and watching. And audiences are being very selective with their time—convincing them to attend events is more difficult than ever.

Underscoring all of this are trying economic and geopolitical circumstances —inflation, supply chain shortages, and rising costs across the board, not to mention the heaviness we all feel in our hearts as the war in Ukraine continues to unfold.

Suffice it to say, the collective energy feels, admittedly, subdued.

As we all wait with baited breath to see how the event industry emerges, I for one remain optimistic.

If there is one thing I've learned in the past two years is that we must be together in person, now more than ever. We are human beings, not robots. We crave, and in fact, need human connection.

I believe our profession has been given a new, greater purpose—to thoughtfully facilitate the re-emergence of humanity by curating meaningful gatherings.

Digital may be here to stay, but we need to balance this with highly compelling in person experiences the likes of which we've never seen before.

This is no small task. We must think bigger and be bolder than we have before. We must push the envelope on experiences and not just go back to how it used to be. That means trying new formats that require more effort, more strategy and more risk—such as workshops, interactive discussions, reimagining our keynotes and other presenter-led formats to create intimacy and connection with audiences. We must advocate for content that is new, fresh and compelling. And provocative thought leadership and dialogue that inspires audiences and provides tangible guidance for navigating these times. We must say no to allowing executives to deliver sit-and-get presentations, because audiences can just stay home and watch that online. We must fight for budget to do things differently. And we must, we absolutely must, push to achieve a lower carbon footprint for our events—sustainability is no longer optional. And perhaps the biggest challenge of all, is to bring our leadership and our stakeholders along with us on this new adventure.

I know it may sound corny, but let it sink in for a moment. **Who else has this ability, to cultivate these types of gatherings, and help usher human beings back together than event professionals?**

We know how to do this. And together, we've got this. **Let's go help the world remember what it feels like to make eye contact, shake hands, and make truly meaningful connections** that move business, society and humanity forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erica Spoor".

Erica Spoor,
President & Chief Strategist
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II. By The Numbers

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DIGITAL EVENT AUDIT: BY THE NUMBERS

This audit and forecast incorporates our observations and analysis of digital events with case studies and updated metrics taken from events that transpired through October 2021 to March 2022.

Here's what unfolded, by the numbers.

11

Events hosted by enterprise-scale technology providers serving a global audience

60

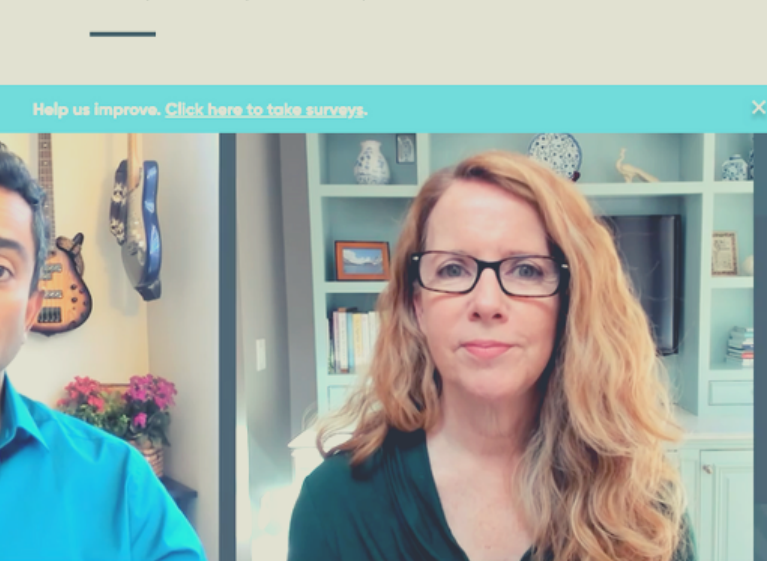
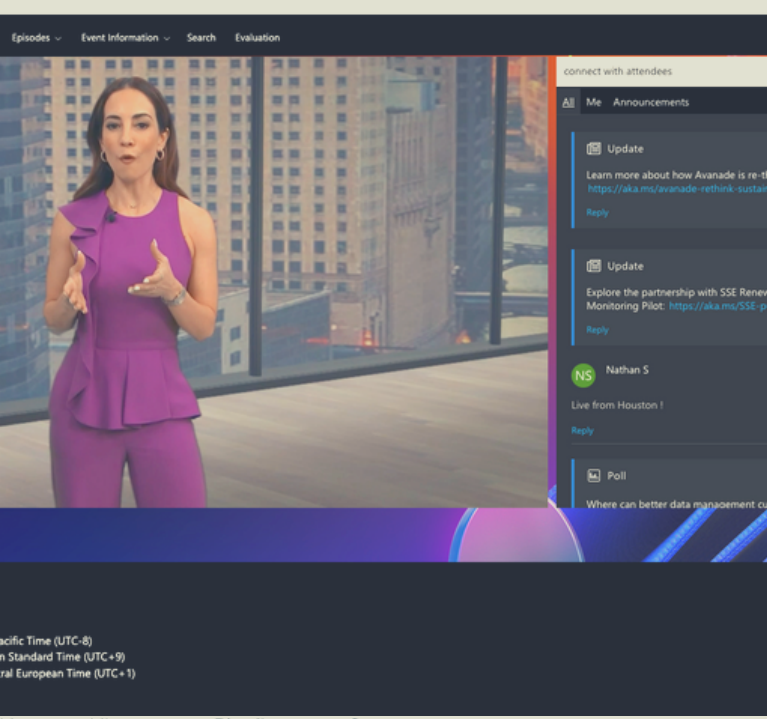
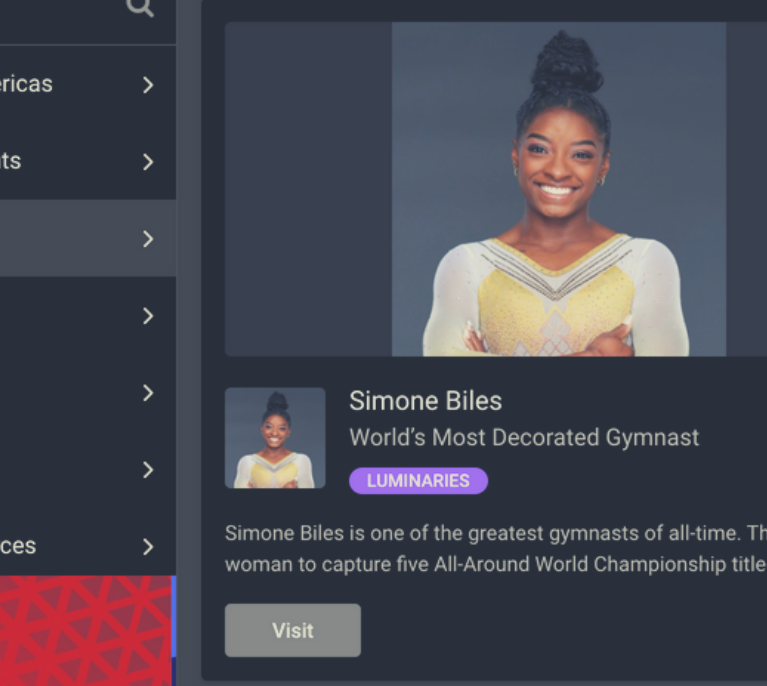
Average number of breakout sessions.

10 to 30

Average minutes for each session.

2,000 to 50,000

Range of attendees. Some totals were not published.



CONTENT DESIGN

Given the fluid nature of the Covid infection rates and public restrictions at the end of 2021, most organizers who had hoped to return to in person had to pivot again to their digital event content design and programming.

Here's what unfolded:

Live vs. Recorded—With the exception of one event that had the hybrid option, all of the eleven digital events that occurred were pre-recorded with simulated live broadcasts. These pre-recorded sessions were still at a high-level of production quality and provided various backgrounds and locations.

Speakers & Sessions—Keynotes were live or pre-recorded. Breakout sessions are averaging 10-30 minutes in length. Average length of the event ranged from 15 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Interaction—Many events still leveraged chat for live Q&A after a pre-recorded session, but interaction and accessibility seemed to be heightened by adding captions in multiple languages. With digital events being accessible globally, opening the door to multiple languages is a welcoming sign for all attendees.

Sponsors—Showcasing sponsors still seemed to be challenging even after nearly two years of digital events. From top bar navigation to speaking opportunities, organizers were still challenged on how to bring sponsors to the forefront of the event.

III. Trend Analysis

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Event Trend Analysis:

Microsoft Envision Season 2, Episode 1

Microsoft Envision Season 2, Episode 1 was a 90-minute event featuring two keynote speakers, a pre-recorded vignette, and three sponsors. The event was live and recorded, with no in-person component. The sessions were live, but there were pre-recorded vignettes between each of the sessions. The event was sponsored by Accenture, Microsoft, and Avanade.

Season 1, explored topics like digital resilience, unlocking employee potential, the importance of zero trust, and the power of a growth mindset.

Season 2, Episode 1 shared learnings that have enabled Accenture, Microsoft, and their customers to persevere over the past year and offer insights to apply to one's business.

What we liked: Outside of business insights, other types of sessions that were engaging were offered as well. The mix of topics from fighting climate change, diversity and inclusion, how AI and machine learning are protecting puffin colonies, business development through the Cloud, to inclusive economic development was so refreshing to see offered outside of just technology programs.

The entire program was 90 minutes with each session no longer than 10 minutes long. So the convenience of time was conducive for busy schedules and attention spans.

Feature Event Format:

Live & Recorded

On Demand Content Extension:

No in-person component. The sessions were live, but there were pre-recorded vignettes between each of the sessions.

Engagement:

2 Keynote Speakers

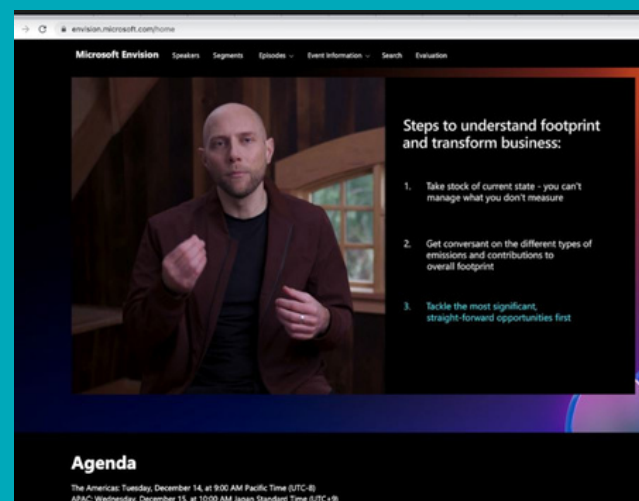
Sponsor Integration:

Speaking opportunity. Each Envision season has three sponsors - Accenture, Microsoft & Avanade

The production was very impressive and seemed to improve dramatically from the first season of this event. Creative locations were used for speakers such as a tree house versus a stage or a home office. During a session, videos were shown to demonstrate the relevance, allowing for engagement throughout the session.

Our recommendation: Keep up with the varied content and things that matter to your audience. It doesn't need to be tech all of the time. Give them refreshing, eye-opening content that makes your audience stay interested and feel they can relate to the speaker and brand.

Sample of session:



Event Trend Analysis:

Adobe Summit 2022

Feature Event Format:

Pre-recorded.

On Demand Content Extension:

No live engagement.

Engagement:

Multiple Keynotes. Over 200 sessions in two days (all were pre-recorded).

The annual Adobe Summit, shares their current strategy, vision for the future, and new product capabilities.

What we liked:

The production was very high and seemed to outdo their previous Summits. There were many vignettes to complement each speaker.

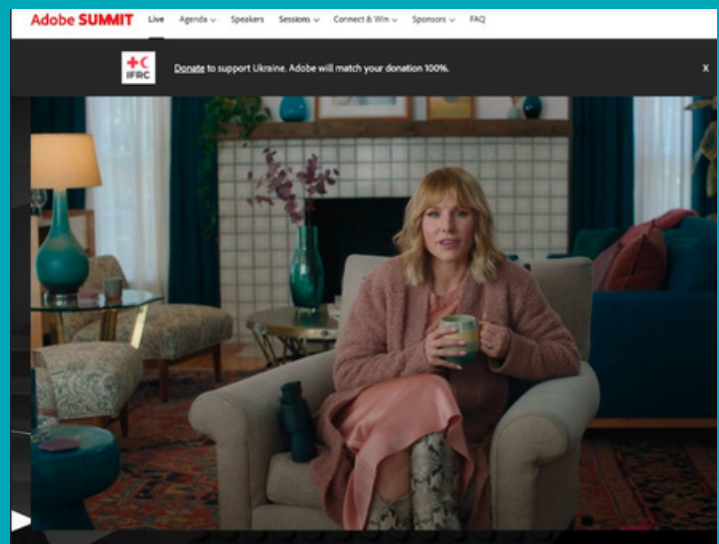
Within the event, there was a page that provided giveaways and offers to allow for sponsor engagement with attendees.

On Day 2 Kristen Bell was the host for a sneak peak of the latest product technologies. We appreciated the very entertaining and laid back approach of Kristen being curled up on the sofa as they circled back and forth on the latest products.

Our recommendation: To increase interaction, we suggest showing reactions during the keynotes from the Chat and applause features within the tool.

The true live component was the Q&A with the Adobe Experts which was great in concept. This seems as if organizers are trying to dip their toe in the water in getting back to live and preparing for in person. We recommend continuing to incorporate live back into digital events especially for training and 1:1 interactions.

Sample of session:



Event Trend Analysis:

Splunk .conf21

Feature Event Format:

Keynote was recorded live and breakout sessions were both live and recorded.

On Demand Content Extension:

Chat, Live Q&A, Communities

Reported attendance:

30,000

Sponsor Integration:

One major sponsor, McLaren

What we liked: Splunk .conf21 showcased how using their own CEO in a satirical, can't be taken too seriously kind of way as their opening, allowed for a feeling of being part of Splunk. It almost made you feel like you could sit down for a chat with Douglas Merritt. Splunk's ability to use this opportunity to provide a feeling of inclusion kept the audience engaged throughout 200 content sessions from other Splunk leaders, customers, and partners.

Our Recommendations: The registration process and sign in to attend continues to be an issue for attendees. We respect that digital allows for much data collection, but we recommend keeping the registration questions to a minimum based on strategic KPIs. Once an attendee agrees to the Terms & Conditions in registration, avoid having them agree every time they log in during the event itself.

ICE Q - What is the Metaverse and the Impact on Events

Feature Event Format:

Recorded

Content Extension:

On Demand

What we liked: This quarter we surveyed events like ICE Q that were outside of the technology industry to exchange ideas, learn new event technology and analyze trends to better serve our clients. This particular event was held for professional event planners. The topics were informative and relevant and the speakers broke down B2B events in relation to the metaverse, how to test it and approach this new concept.

Our Recommendations: There were instances during the conversations between the speakers where the lighting and sound wasn't working well. We suggest conducting dry runs to work through lighting, Internet and audio, which would be a good way to be prepared for any issues during their session. We also recommend prepping and coaching speakers prior to presenting to address any possible distractions such as background, audio, and presentability.

IV. Recommendations



Small may not be a bad thing

Who's convened the biggest audience used to be the top metric on the leaderboard. We have to retrain ourselves not to think that bigger is better. Think about caliber of the audience—getting the people into the room who matter, who can move the needle for your business, or who may champion advancement of your brand. Focus on quality of the experience and engagement. Value of connections made, content quality, and ability to apply what is learned are key ways to measure engagement. Those are the metrics we should be thinking about as we go forth into this new world.



Convincing audiences to attend

We've all gotten really comfortable attending events in our PJs. It's low effort and low investment. If it's not captivating, we fast-forward, tune out or multi-task. Getting attendees to get on a plane is going to require a pretty compelling value proposition. Differentiation of the in-person experience will be key. We implore our clients (and industry at large) to take risks by trying new, innovative formats that lean into the things that people can't get remotely like networking, hands-on learning, workshops and interactive group discussion formats. One lens to consider is if you can do it well digitally, don't do it in person. Differentiate, differentiate, differentiate.



Sustainability is no longer optional

Our industry has touted efforts around sustainability for decades, yet we still struggle to achieve major progress in this area. The reality is that events simply have a big carbon footprint. As event producers, we may have to pay higher prices to remain committed to sustainability. Purchasing and processing recycled materials, sustainably farmed food, and sourcing materials produced with minimal carbon footprint and environmental impact comes at a cost. One way to think about this is doing less well. Be intentional about your choices and about informing your audiences. Our bet is that audiences will come along on this journey with us—if they know the experience is designed sustainably they will tolerate bare cement on the exhibit floors, water bubblers instead of bottles, and signage that's not uplit—just be sure the coffee is high quality, strong and hot... and sustainably sourced, of course.



Help audiences break through social awkwardness

The last two years have left many of us feeling socially awkward. Our social circles are smaller, we are more selective about who and what we spend free time on, and we've lost some of the desire and skills needed to meet new people and develop new relationships. Gone are the days of putting a sign on a table for "birds of a feather" and assuming everyone will connect on their own. Help attendees re-engage by providing scheduled networking meetings and roundtable discussions that are facilitated by a third party or industry thought leader to help them make meaningful connections. Putting in the extra effort to curate connections for people will go a long way in differentiating in person from digital experiences.

V. Forecast



Go where the attendees and customers are

With the feeling that in-person events are returning but worry about how many people are willing or have the budget to travel, we are seeing companies take the show on the road. Bringing a smaller, repeatable event to various locations where larger numbers of customers are located reduces costs for the attendee and allows for more conversation and meaningful connections.



Executive level experiences

Curating topics and conversations specific to executive careabouts seems to be the way to draw these busy people together in person. Utilizing a matrix to connect the careabouts of executives and their peers, allows for a personalized experience. Beyond the content, create moments where these peers are matched up and connected to continue their conversations.



Free registration for in-person and digital, fees for training

With the return of in-person events organizers are still battling with reduced travel budgets, concerns over safety and let's be honest, getting people out of their PJs. By offering free attendance for either experience and charging for specific training sessions or exclusive content/tracks in person, entices attendees to leave their desks, dress in business-casual, and make a case for travel.



Registration is forever changed

New options are being added during the registration process that are making a big impact. An example of this is to offset the emissions caused by your flight by donating, during the registration process, the amount equivalent for your flight time to programs around the world who work together to reduce carbon emissions.

Another change we see in the near future is the reduction of information collected. With digital, an unlimited amount of data was able to be collected but organizers are hearing the outcry that there is too much being asked and registering just takes too long. Strategists who really nail down their KPIs to only collect the minimal information will reduce this grip & frustration on their attendees.



Coming back

Three cheers for those who are starting to experience the return of in person, but going back to the same old, same old is not going to be acceptable. As mentioned in Recommendations, organizers need to break away from the old formats, room layouts, and event flow and try new things. Long gone are the days of back-to-back sessions and aimlessly walking a show floor. We foresee these changes allowing for more interactions, activations and a leveling up of engagement by audiences.



Progressive sponsorships

To get sponsors back on board for in person and making the most of their investment, we expect event organizers and producers to offer more in-person networking opportunities as part of their sponsorships potentially running consecutively with others as a type of "progressive party" approach. Depending on the location/venue size, this allows for keeping as many attendees as possible on property and creates value for the sponsors. These can range in size, open, invite-only. In the past, one sponsor got an exclusive event to be held at one time sending many attendees offsite for their own activities, thus drawing away from the venue. Now, organizers can reinvent how they keep attendees together while making the investment worthwhile for sponsors.



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V. Appendix

11 events, tracked for this report

[Adobe Summit 2022](#)

[Microsoft Envision - Season 2, Episode 1](#)

[Atlassian Team Talks: Open DevOps](#)

[Now at Work 2021](#)

[Atlassian's Team Tour: Government](#)

[Splunk \(.conf21\)](#)

[AdobeMax](#)

[WebexOne 2021](#)

[Experiential Marketing Summit \(hybrid\)](#)

[Hubspot Inbound](#)

[ICE Q What is the Metaverse and the Impact on Events](#)