

BtoB Experiential Trends:

Glocal. Targeted. Scalable. Measurable.

Since time immemorial, BtoB marketers have used live experiences to reach business customers and partners. It's easy to see why.

Experiential marketing enables BtoB brands to engage target audiences face-to-face, in ways that are interactive, effective and extremely relevant to the scale and complexity of BtoB customer lifecycles. In the BtoB world, live experiences provide the critical momentum to turn contacts into sales and customers into advocates.

But since successful marketers never take great for granted, BtoB brands are always looking for new ways to derive even bigger value from their experiential programs. Some of the pressure is a factor of success: more than ever before is being spent on experiential marketing and therefore it's attracting increased scrutiny.¹ Additionally, marketers continue to reevaluate existing industry conferences and tradeshows in favor of the control and exclusivity of creating their own proprietary events—again increasing scrutiny on questions of effectiveness and efficiency.

This white paper looks at core trends in BtoB experiential marketing, with particular focus on tangible examples of how leading brands have increased the value of their experiential programs by:

- Improving delivery of global experiential programs
- Ensuring they attract the right audiences
- Designing scalable models
- Demonstrating ROI

GLOCAL

As globalization defines the business landscape, BtoB marketers need to do a better job of delivering experiential programs across multiple markets and geographies. For some facing this challenge, the sheer pragmatics of implementing global experiential programs can feel simply daunting. For others the challenge is more one of balancing the needs of consistent brand messaging with regional localization.

In both instances, the “glocal” model—thinking globally, acting locally—offers a strong foundation for success. For example, it's often wise for corporate teams to begin with a global audit. Beyond simply listing what events currently comprise the global program, they should agree on common definitions. Asking such basic questions as “How do we define experience?” (some brands might include webcasts or employee training, others not) is a surprisingly effective way to tackle bigger strategic questions about the intent and probable outcome of the overarching program.



It opens dialogue across teams about common priorities and standards. It also enables brands to map corporate, regional and agency resources against specific opportunities and needs.

Further, corporate teams can leverage “glocal” balance by establishing global experience “blueprints.” Such experiential blueprints are developed at the strategy and planning stage to establish objectives, broad experience design, message points, branding principles and measurement targets that should be consistent across any experience, wherever it is delivered.

With this core established, BtoB marketers at the corporate level—having established a consistent platform—may then engage local marketers to adapt and implement in ways that are appropriate to the specificities of on-the-ground cultures and relationships. Feedback and reporting from the local level foster an environment for continuous improvement of the global template.

Why is it so important that the experience be tailored to the individual demographic? “Marketers succeed when they tell us a story that fits our worldview, a story that we intuitively embrace,” explains Seth Godin in his book *All Marketers Are Liars*.² The local marketing representatives are charged with this critical task: making the messages relevant for their audience. The right messages need to be communicated at the right time to the right people to inspire understanding, action and advocacy.

Intel has used this model to grow their Intel Developer Forum, a global experiential program that provides a premiere forum for technical developers to share ideas and access Intel technology and experts. To ensure effectiveness, Intel’s US-based IDF Global Marketing team works with product marketers and strategists on consistent core messages. IDF Geos, consisting of the local country manager and sales team, partner with local agencies to translate corporate messaging tools into events that work for their particular audience. The model has created consistency and saved time and money for IDF, which reached 30,000 in a series of 15 events around the globe.

TARGETED

Since each attendee at a live experience represents an investment, it makes sense that marketers looking to increase their experiential return would not only scrutinize costs but also work to raise relative attendee value by attracting higher-potential audiences. Decreasing costs is a relatively straightforward challenge of maximizing efficiencies, which marketers should expect from an experienced partner or in-house team.

Truly elevating the value of each attendee is a challenge of understanding and attracting the right audience. The first and fundamental question is to identify the target and segment them by importance and influence. If the audience can’t be reached at existing events, then the question is how to create an experience with enough value to get them to attend, be engaged and leave inspired to action or advocacy. If the audience has been identified but is simply not attending existing events, the challenge is to market the experience—to communicate why it’s a worthy investment for the attendee. Audience alignment and other market analysis provide a starting point.

In 2005, CA (formerly known as Computer Associates) conducted a comprehensive overhaul of its annual CA World user conference, an all-important proprietary customer experience. As part of the pre-conference outreach and audience acquisition, new emphasis was placed on branding the experience to convey its value to partners and attendees, with the theme “Technology Inside Out” promising more information and access, content and learning. Focus was put on achieving a much higher threshold of return per attendee versus gross attendance numbers.

Paradoxically, charging a premium to attend an experience, versus inviting people to attend for free, contributes to a perception of value that can enhance both the quality and even the quantity of attendees. As Joseph Pine and James Gilmore argue in their classic book *The Experience Economy*, if an experience is valuable, customers will gladly pay the company to sell to them. “What they gain from explicitly staged events—fresh insights, revealing self discovery and engaging interactions—is worth it.”³

Experiential marketing is among the fastest-growing segments of the media economy – which contributes to higher expectations for results

CASE STUDIES

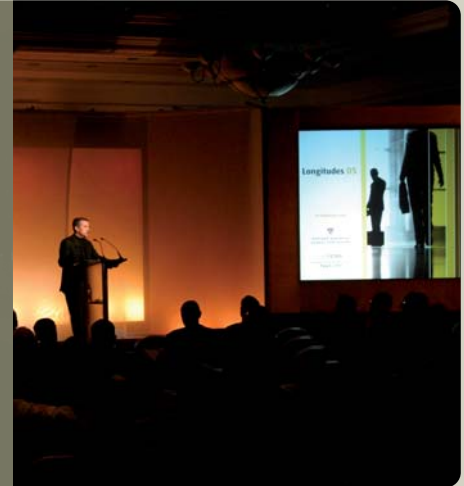
Intel Developer Forum

The Intel Developer Forum is one of the world's most successful programs of proprietary events. It began as a networking opportunity for 200 developers in San Francisco. Over 10 years, it became a series of events worldwide with a highly technical audience of thousands reaching 30,000 in 2006. IDF continues to evolve, with the 2007 calendar consolidated to three events worldwide in key markets—US, China and Taiwan. As a global program, IDF balances consistent messaging with relevance to these very important global markets in which it's implemented. IDF proves that "the closer your customers are to each other, the closer they are to you." In 2004, Jack Morton took over global strategy and US audience acquisition. Recent IDF events point to results—costs have decreased 15% and attendance has grown 20%.



UPS Longitudes

In 2003, UPS underwent a significant brand evolution that needed to be expressed in customer events that would reflect its expanded capability as a global business provider. The solution: Longitudes, a series of scalable global executive symposia in revolving US and international locations where C-level clients participate in a dialogue about the future of synchronized commerce with some of the world's leading thinkers on globalization. Speakers have included George H.W. Bush, Thomas L. Friedman and Daniel Yergin. Longitudes won the Silver Anvil, one of marketing's top awards. To date, the symposium has been delivered on four continents with attendees' spend growing at a rate that outpaces other customers.



CA World

In 2005, Jack Morton partnered with CA's Global Event Strategy team on its all-important CA World event—a user conference that connects customers and prospects to better understand CA's products and network with peers. CA was introducing new leadership, a new brand and the biggest release in the company's history. CA had to do more than tell customers about these changes. It had to create an experience that would reinforce its brand, products and partner relationships across every form of media. Branded "Technology Inside Out: Everything You Need Out There is Inside Here," the newly-designed event gave attendees access to CA's top executives and an increased amount of insider information. CA World featured many partner-led sessions and keynotes and introduced a redesigned exhibition center. Results were strong: paid attendance increased; the vast majority of attendees had a net buying influence; and brand awareness increased among key targets.



Reuters brightspot

Four years ago Reuters needed to create a unique experiential program to engage customers around the world. To maximize reach, the program comprised a number of scalable event formats that allowed local markets to benefit from the high quality marketing and experiential elements of the campaign without over-committing limited local marketing spend. The scalable approach was built around modular, color-coded pods of varying sizes. Depending on the market, brightspot experiences could be hosted at Reuters' offices, in customers' own premises or in suitable external locations. The result has enabled Reuters to not merely run large brightspot experiences in its larger markets, but to offer that same high quality, consistent brand experience to marketers and sales teams in local markets that couldn't typically afford such activity. Since its initial launch brightspot has engaged over 20,000 customers on four continents, and significantly exceeded anticipated leads.



SCALABLE

No one wants to invest more than the scale of the opportunity merits—so just as an experiential program should be customizable to local culture, it should also be scaled to suit the size of the market.

BtoB brands pursuing markets of varying sizes can approach scalability in various ways. The simplest solution is to design the program with a core idea and experience platform that can be achieved whether the audience is 500 or 5,000. Another angle on the problem is to design the program with an eye towards “modular” parts that can fit together—sometimes quite literally—to grow or shrink the experience to the market, and that can work in a variety of locations and contexts. To that end, Reuters developed brightspot, a successful global experiential program to showcase bright ideas and immerse customers in the brand. Continually evolving over its four-year history, brightspot has consistently emphasized scalability to maximize reach and frequency. The program comprises a number of event formats—built around modular, color-coded “pods,” some as big as a tradeshow booth, some the size of a table—that allow local markets to adjust scale and select the best venue (Reuters’ offices, customers’ premises or suitable external locations). Local markets can benefit from the high quality marketing and experiential elements of the campaign without over-committing limited local marketing spend. Since launch, brightspot has engaged over 20,000 customers, traveled to four continents and significantly exceeded anticipated leads.

MEASURABLE

Amazingly—especially given the category’s growth—over 60% of BtoB marketers recently reported that they do not measure their experiential marketing programs.⁴

It’s tempting to speculate that many marketers operate without metrics because they don’t know what to measure. Potentially they assume the only metric that matters is sales or revenue—which they may be hard-pressed to link directly to one experience versus another. Perhaps they lack confidence in tracking “soft” metrics such as the quality of the experience or the level of audience engagement. Arguably the two are inextricably linked.

The key is to establish measures up front and apply them consistently across the entire marketing program versus trying to work backwards to connect the dots to one moment in time. Following this principle, successful experiential measurement is often deceptively simple, a matter of establishing consistent metrics and weighting them for relative importance. For example, one BtoB brand tracks and weights the following combination of metrics across its entire experiential program: number of leads, quality of leads, quality of audience, quality of experience and Net Promoter Scores.

Companies that measure event effectiveness are more likely to increase budgets and expand programs. In 2003, UPS created what it thought was going to be a one-time series of executive symposia to reposition its offering. The program produced results that proved that attendees increased spend with UPS faster than other customers. Now in its third year, the experiential program has been extended and recently won a prestigious Silver Anvil award.

NOTES

¹ Experiential marketing is now among the fastest-growing segments of the media economy, predicted to rise 15% annually, according to Veronis Suhler Stevenson’s 2006 report on media trends.

² Seth Godin. *All Marketers are Liars*. 2005.

³ Joseph Pine III and James H. Gilmore. *The Experience Economy*. 1999.

⁴ Kate Maddox. “Survey shines spotlight on ‘experiential marketing.’” *BtoB*. August 14, 2006.

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A global experiential marketing agency founded in 1939, Jack Morton helps the world’s leading companies increase sales, build brands and improve performance, integrating live events, branded environments and interactive media. Jack Morton has a staff of 600 employees throughout the United States, Europe and Asia-Pacific, and is part of the Interpublic Group of Companies, Inc. (NYSE: IPG).

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