

# THE EVENT TRENDS THAT WILL MATTER MOST IN 2024 And How to Meaningfully Deploy Them

*Business events are poised for transformation as content is revolutionized, sustainability takes center stage, artificial intelligence cracks open efficiencies and traditional formats are deconstructed. Oh, and don't forget fun.*

## ► INTRODUCTION

The swift pace at which culture, and the event industry, evolves has conditioned marketers to take a nimble approach to their programs that leaves plenty of wiggle room for incorporating the next big thing. The B2C realm has historically reigned supreme when it comes to embracing progressive tactics. But business events are quickly catching up as a growing number of companies strive to deliver on attendees' needs; not their own. The B2B brands taking the time to recognize what the current trends are, why they matter to their audience, and how to weave them into the broader event strategy, are giving even the flashiest consumer experiences a run for their money. Ready to dig into the B2B trends of 2024? Let's roll.

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# CIRCULAR SUSTAINABILITY

**Progressing sustainability, circular sustainability is a method of designing events with repurposing at its core.**

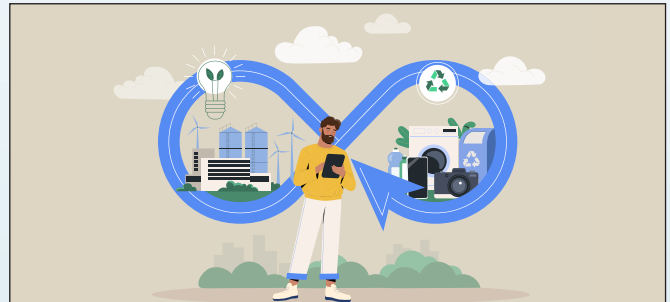
The words event and sustainability tend to be at odds with each other. One is focused on increasing environmental impact, while the other aims to reduce impact. The industry has long viewed strategies like the elimination of plastic bottles and food waste on-site as critical to moving the needle on sustainable event practices. Those initiatives are still important, but in 2024, they're table stakes. An argument could be made that the industry has been looking at it all wrong. It's not just waste reduction and recycling, but also equal parts reuse and repurposing.

*"Some of our clients are now starting to pivot towards circular sustainability—figuring out a way to reuse and redeploy what they produce. It's the 'circle of life' type of approach," says Danielle Malvesti, VP Strategy and Client Experience at Cramer. "The event industry inherently is going to produce waste, so it's unrealistic to think that events are going to get to a zero-carbon-impact place. But we can pack a big punch in how we get really intentional about repurposing or designing to repurpose."*

**Here's what's on our minds for 2024:**

## **TECH-POWERED MEASUREMENT**

AI-powered sustainability intelligence platforms are changing the B2B event game, too, by allowing marketers to track and measure nearly all aspects of their conferences in terms of their carbon footprint. By leveraging these kinds of



platforms, event pros can accurately measure what the carbon footprint of their event is, but just as important, they can use the data to inform better decision-making for future experiences, like selecting a venue that has stronger sustainability initiatives in place.

## **EXPERIENTIAL TO EXPERIENCED**

When you google 'Experiential' there's one thing evident—branding. Embrace the concept of reusable branding, like event signage. The harsh reality is that a number of major cities don't have the ability to recycle sustainably produced signage for various reasons. So rather than fabricating an event logo installation for one-time use, for instance, consider building the signage out of items that attendees will find valuable, which can later be raffled off to them (hello, gamification opportunity).

"Ultimately, people are still going to buy stuff outside of our industry. So, if we can give them branded things that they would actually want to use, we may be helping on some larger scale to reduce waste if people are going to buy it anyway. For example, we just pitched the concept of using branded kickboxing bags as the branding around an experiential event, with the concept that select attendees would be able to take them home," Malvesti says.

## SMART SWAG

Swag is another major offender when it comes to event sustainability. Stress balls and plastic tchotchkes aren't just terrible for the environment; they're not useful for the majority of conference attendees. And while items like branded plant seed packets are distributed with good intentions, they're still not a desirable giveaway. Digital or experiential swag, on the other hand, tends to be a win-win.

"People are so hungry for professional development when they attend most events," Malvesti says. "So why can't we offer them an audiobook, an e-book or one month free to Coursera? I think those would be more impactful for attendees in their day-to-day, and it's also not increasing the carbon footprint of an event at the same time."

## LOCATION MATTERS

From a more analog perspective, event venue selection continues to be rife with eco-friendly avenues, whether it's choosing a location that's close to public transportation, or one that's close to a company's office building.

"I see some of our clients getting really smart about making sure they have an event that is easily accessible [in order] to produce less waste," Malvesti says. "And we continue to see the surge in getting people into the office. By having events in their office location, it's going to help [brands] reduce that much more of their carbon footprint. So, I think there's a lot of opportunity there."

**And for those unsure where to get started, the following tips will get you going:**

### 1. Start with benchmarking your current event.

"We start with asking the question, 'Is sustainability a priority?' Many clients have said 'yes,' but they just don't know where to start. On top of their day jobs, this is a beast of its own," says Malvesti. "In this scenario, we always start with benchmarking as the first step. This means leveraging a tech-powered sustainability platform to measure the impact of a current event—perhaps one that you haven't made sustainable efforts against. This creates your baseline.

### 2. Develop one goal for the next event.

For Cramer, ensuring that the internal team, the client, and event vendors are all on the same green page begins with one shared goal.

"Sustainability shouldn't be overwhelming, and the only way we will make progress is by taking small steps each event. To keep everyone on the same page, pick one area of focus. Too many priorities will create challenges."

For the companies that may be apprehensive about implementing sweeping sustainability initiatives, or whose budgets may not allow for them, there's plenty of low-hanging fruit to take a bite out of. Malvesti points to reducing food waste (like swapping out buffet-style fare for boxed meals that can be donated to food banks, or asking attendees if they plan to eat at the event) or using Pedi-cabs ("Is that a sponsored opportunity that also does some good for the environment?") as worthwhile options. For those more advanced, it could be more complex reduction goals or perhaps carbon offsetting measures.

### 3. Pause before you make a future decision.

The opportunity to make the most impact is at the time of venue booking, often happening years in advance. Industry indexes like the Cornell Hotel Sustainability Benchmarking Index have more than 25,000 hotels around the world reporting on their energy, water and carbon emission. Choosing a hotel on this list kickstarts your sustainability impact from day zero.

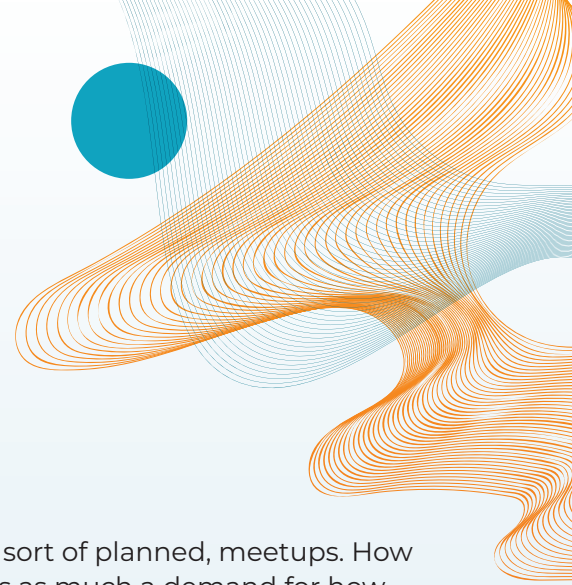
### 4. Stay realistic.

Events will always create a carbon footprint, even virtual. The goal is not net zero, but reduction and reuse. When you establish your benchmark and goals for the future, be realistic with what's possible. Stay focused on the positives, for example reducing your carbon footprint by X more than the next.

While some businesses are fulfilling their ESG requirements with greenwashing tactics and surface-level sustainability initiatives, the B2B event industry is busy making meaningful strides toward reducing the carbon footprint of conferences and meetings, with strategies powered by proactive decision-making and concerted benchmarking. From the brands that are just beginning to view their events through the lens of sustainability, to those leading the charge with tactics that are transforming the industry as a whole, a significant chunk of the event ecosystem is dedicated to planting the seeds of change, one step at a time.



# DESTINATION NEW



## **Unique collision spaces and environment maximization will improve events for a multi-generational audience.**

The Future of Work (FoW) taught the world that work is evolving—and so are events. In the mid-2010s, FoW impacted office design with deep regard to the health and wellbeing of workers. And now, those same desires demand a new type of destination for events. It's also worth noting that this is the first time in history that there are four generations in the workforce—and attending events—at the same time. With both forces at play, the following is predicted for 2024 (starting micro to macro):

### **THE SPACES AND STEPS BETWEEN YOUR CONTENT SESSIONS ARE ARGUABLY MORE IMPORTANT**

As the four generations come together, each having mixed “work modalities” (fully remote, semi-remote, back-in-office), it's critical to maximize every moment of the event day—even the “in-between” time. For events, we will see the spaces and steps between content sessions—such as activity in the foyer, expo, networking areas or dining rooms, as equally, if not more important, moments to enhance the attendee experience. Think of it as leaning into negative space.

*“As you think about venues, an expo used to be a traditional second room apart from the General Session, and you walk from one room to the other—and anything in between didn't matter,” says Doug Hodge, Creative Director at Cramer.*

“It matters much more now. You can think about those areas between traditional spaces as opportunities for content consumption and

accidental, but sort of planned, meetups. How people collide is as much a demand for how content is consumed. And they're not separate anymore.”

“I think that people are going to continue to move into the direction of the open-space stages, get-your-hands-dirty demos and shorter content sessions. All of that is definitely where things are heading,” says Erin Martin, Strategist at Cramer. “So, start thinking now about what spaces you're booking and how you can reimagine the spaces you already have to lend themselves to new ways to deliver content. It's going to be key for programs going forward.”

### **A NEW SANDBOX**

Whether it's a traditional hotel ballroom or an offbeat art gallery, when it comes to the location of a B2B event, the venue matters. Over the last two years, hotels have been inundated with event bookings. No shock here, the tides are going to turn in 2024.

Cramer has been encouraging clients to swap traditional ballrooms for unconventional venues and formats (think: an executive forum held at a “speakeasy”) when it makes sense for the company's—and the audience's—objectives. For example, a high-touch C-suite event may take place in a company's experience or innovation center. Or a top customer event may be booked at up-and-coming event venues like Convene or sourced through Peerspace. Attendees are eager for a change, specifically in their environment.

Hodge says, “So, you can find spaces that are unique, that still meet your needs but it doesn't necessarily have to be ‘here's my hotel ballroom, here's my hotel breakout.’ It's something to think about—‘destination new’ could be ‘destination new space.’”

## DESTINATION OSMOSIS

And Cramer predicts that atypical venue locations will continue, largely due to the evolution in FoW. For example, Gen Z grew up in a work environment where remote participation is the norm and are pros at blending their life with the demands of a job. Can anyone stay two weeks in Hawaii while doing their job 9-to-5? The theme here is seamless flexibility. And as we pull this observation into the event industry, we should expect to see attendees wanting a very malleable event schedule. Meaning, event agendas will be semipermeable, and attendees should expect to participate for short durations of time each day.

“With more people working at WeWorks and the like, it will be interesting to see how this permeates into an event. I recently talked with a client about hosting their event in their own innovation center for a C-suite audience. Day 1 was a curated lunch experience with networking from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Day 2 was a thought leadership session from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. The down time was for the audience to choose—and many of those C-suite participants went to offices nearby or met with clients. And attrition was limited. I was shocked, but it worked. No doubt, we will see more of this,” says Hodge.

## EVERGREEN VIRTUAL

If the pandemic taught event professionals anything, it's the power of virtual events. And while the industry is reeling from a gluttonous three years of virtual, Cramer predicts that virtual is about to go evergreen. Rather than moment-in-time virtual events, the notion is virtual communities with ongoing engagement. It's less about content throughput but heavier emphasis on facilitated connection, content exclusivity and value delivered through upskilling.

“Virtual is about to get interesting. We saw the concept of communities become popular in the 2010s and I think the pandemic really helped it take off,” says Malvesti. “But what we learned about virtual during the pandemic was that people just don't have that much time to give. They can't tune in for two full days. They may, however, come back every three weeks for a 45-minute keynote, or come back a few weeks later for a curated roundtable chat or participate in online forums. I know I would, and I think others would, too.”

Tips to get going include:

### 1. Keep an audience-centric POV.

The sandbox should not define how attendees play in it. Rather, the audience should serve as the guiding principle in every decision made about the event flow and format, how and when content is delivered and the way demos and supplementary activities are activated. And as the industry moves toward a more cohesive approach that seamlessly ties every aspect of an event together, it's more critical than ever to select, or arrange, the venue for success, based on that shift.

### 2. Remove barriers to engage.

The format and layout of product demos and other ancillary experiences at business events is another essential aspect to plan ahead for—and get right. While there are different attendee types (i.e., active participants vs. passive viewers) to cater to, removing the barriers to entry and making those experiences as accessible as possible should be at the top of the priority list.

“As opposed to persona types, there are human trait types,” says Hodge. “I'm more of a director. I'm going to sit back and sort of observe first. I'm not going to jump in first and try out that activation. But we need to think about content and the spaces to allow for both those people who are the go-getters, who are like, 'I'm going to jump in and just do it,' and those who get something out of it by being more of an observer. So, it's content-driven, but it's also space-driven. If the flow is right, the space is right, the dynamic is right, you're going to be able to engage a lot more people in their level of comfort to be part of that.”

### 3. Keep the realities of their day-to-day at the forefront.

It may seem counterintuitive, but carving out space for attendees to answer emails, make calls and complete other work-related tasks has become paramount. The fact is, today's attendees are going to get their work done on-site whether there's a dedicated spot for it or not. It only behooves the event host to support those attendees by designating areas to accommodate them. The key is to keep those worker bees entrenched in the event and on the fringe of the activities taking place.

"Let's recognize that the way that people work today is, 'I'm going to take my hour meeting after lunch, or I'm going to take a meeting after the morning GS. I can either go up to my hotel room and do it there, or if you leave me space to catch up on my email within the venue, I'm only going to disconnect for a half an hour instead of the hour it takes me to go back to my private space,'" says Martin.

For a recent B2B program, Cramer completely deconstructed an expo and planted the main stage in the center of the show floor, rather than in a ballroom. The team then turned the hallways and other "blank" areas into the event space, transforming the areas into a mock neighborhood,



complete with plants, street signs and buildings. And smack-dab in the middle of the "town center" was a designated place for attendees to plug in and get some work done at picnic tables. The setup also enabled impromptu networking moments.

Great content and meaningful person-to-person connections will always be hallmarks of successful conferences and meetings, but as business and audiences evolve, shaking up traditional B2B formats is the name of the game.



# AI-RICH BRAND EXPERIENCES

**The amplification of personalization and convenience thanks to AI will forever alter brand experiences.**

GenAI is no longer an industry buzzword. It's a powerful tool that is transforming the way events are designed and executed. Internally, generative artificial intelligence platforms are giving event teams the space to bypass the slog of data input and other menial tasks. Now, they can spend more time crafting a worthwhile attendee experience. On the attendee-facing side, all of those efficiencies are providing B2B audiences with more engaging, tailored on-site experiences. In 2024, you can expect AI through the following brand experiences:

## AI FACILITATORS

For a client's flagship event, Cramer created an avatar that acted as a co-host and staffer that interacted with real humans on and off the stage to help them with wayfinding, hotel information, the agenda and more.

"We were using our program avatar as event staff, so instead of people with 'Ask Me' t-shirts, we had kiosks where you were asking questions of the avatar," says Mark Wilson, Chief Creative Officer. "So, think of them as an adjunct to your event staff, because there are lots of different ways to program them so you can ask a fairly robust number of questions, and all the questions are going to be pretty much the same, and you get good answers back."

Of course, attendees go to conferences for the human aspects of the event, so balancing AI and the human touch is paramount. At Cramer, GenAI is thought of as a facilitator that supports human connection, not an entity meant to replace or detract from it.

## AI EXPERIENTIAL TOUCHPOINTS

On that front, the agency is on the heels of producing a GenAI-powered photo booth experience for a client that was built using the Midjourney platform. At the event, attendees were invited to submit a photo, which the platform transformed into a Pixar-style 2D avatar designed to make them look a little younger. Not only was it an entertaining and personalized touchpoint, everyone wanted to participate thanks to speakers who leveraged their avatars in place of traditional headshots when taking the stage. And that's a lesson in and of itself.

"A younger generation might be more technically savvy, so they're going to be drawn to that. That doesn't mean that an older generational person isn't curious," says Hodge. "If I'm an older generational person and I'm nervous about this tech, by having the speakers on the stage go, 'Look at my avatar. I look 10 years younger,' I'm there. It's just about making it easy and accessible. Taking the fear out of certain things makes people want to be part of them."

GenAI is also a great tool for fostering inter-attendee interactions that don't feel forced and offer a little levity. Cramer's current go-to is a sip-and-paint-style networking activity that invites participants to form groups and create an AI-generated piece of art, then explain how and why they created the image.

"For conferences of various sizes, we've put together competitions around artwork where the attendees are using DALL-E or Midjourney to create artwork together and then displaying it," says Wilson. "And it's so easy to do. It's fun. You can drink, you can laugh, you can put images up, and then whoever your host or your emcee is can pull everything together and talk about it."

## AI-POWERED PERSONALIZATION

The amount of personalization is endless with AI. Cramer's favorite ideas include chatbots on the event app for personalized support, event badges that are designed by attendees based on the branding of the conference, or even creating original songs or playlists based on attendees' preferences.

In the months to come, the technology will take the event industry further. On the cusp are activities like facial recognition technology that delivers a personalized welcome on entrance or post-event, AI-generated landing pages for specific communities within the event. And it goes without saying that smart networking has been on the rise for years at this point, but AI-fueled networking is about to take it to the next level.

"I'm excited for AI to really take hold in networking. Smart networking apps only connect attendees based on the data attendees provide. But imagine if AI could see data points during the event that would help attendees connect in different ways or with new connections based on those data points?" says Vinny Higgins, Senior Director of Creative Technology at Cramer.

### Where to get started?

#### 1. Remember that telling AI what to do is as important as telling it what not to do.

Naturally, there are pitfalls to avoid while working with an emerging technology. One of the biggest rookie mistakes marketers make when first working with GenAI is telling the technology what to do. To yield the most accurate results, it's critical to identify exactly what you want the tech not to do. Ironically enough, platforms like ChatGPT are a great resource for learning how to become a better prompt engineer.

It's imperative to recognize that AI is likely to have inherent biases based on the way it's been trained, too. Higgins points to a recent image creation



activation during which the GenAI platform being used was changing the race of participants unless prompted not to do so. "If all the training is of people that look a certain way, when you ask it to create that image, it's going to create it based on its training unless you tell it not to," he says. "Until people take those things into account, it's not going to know."

#### 2. Give yourself grace.

GenAI also comes with a learning curve and a mindset shift. No one will become a master prompt engineer overnight. And that means internal teams should be prepared to alter their creative processes. Rather than searching, identifying, selecting and modifying event assets as they've been trained to do in the past, event marketers now need to become experts in describing exactly the tasks they need the technology to perform.

"It's a new way of being," Wilson says. "So, there is a limitation in that it's a new tool, and it's clumsy, even though it's brilliant. But we'll get over that hump, and it'll be second nature. We won't have this conversation a year from now."





# ▶ REVOLUTIONIZED CONTENT

## **Content atomization just met the jetpack of AI. Buckle up, content is going through a revolution!**

There's a reason marketers continue to view content as king after all of these years—it works. Events live and die by the content strategies behind them, which makes a content-first approach absolutely essential. Over the last several years, Cramer has emphasized the need to consider content as a continuum to maximize the message of that content, while extending engagement and reach. AI is revolutionizing content. 2024 is the year the content continuum receives its jetpack.

### **Here's what's up in 2024:**

#### **CONTENT EQUALITY**

DEIB has been a core tenant for event organizers over the last several years, with content being the forgotten part of the equation. AI is about to enable content equality for all. From real-time language translations to instant visualization of speeches to appeal to the different ways people build understanding, or even enhanced closed captioning, there will be a boost in content equality in 2024.

#### **REAL-TIME CONTENT GENERATION (CONVENIENCE)**

Pivoting or creating new content in real-time at the event has been a challenge for us all. Never mind, both enjoying and absorbing the conference experience while also ensuring attendees have enough practical applications from the event content when their superiors ask for tangible takeaways. With access to audience data and the help of AI, event marketers can decipher the kinds of content that resonated with specific attendees on-site, then feed

them more of that content post-event on the channel(s) that makes the most sense, whether it's a targeted email or LinkedIn video series.

#### **PERSONALIZATION**

And to add to real-time content generation, personalization quickly follows. Bottom line is, no one wants to be lectured at. Attendees want to be participants. And that means content needs to be both interactive and digestible in order to be sticky. "It's really the storytelling aspect," says Martin. "Content is evolving in that way. It's: 'I'm not being lectured at, I'm experiencing it. I'm learning it in a way that I don't even realize I'm learning it.'"

#### **SPEED TO FUEL MARKETING EFFORTS**

In 2024, we see substantial opportunity for campaigns all thanks to the intelligence AI will provide and the jetpack that AI will power for content. To be ambitious, campaigns might be born on-site at an event and deployed in very short time following. Dare we say deployed at the end of the conference. At minimum, we will see content repurposed to fuel existing campaigns in market. Content generation is about to speed up and fuel other marketing efforts.

### **But here's what you can't forget:**

#### **1. What your audience wants to hear.**

Before getting in the weeds of how, when and where event content will be offered, it's critical to establish the lens through which the content will be delivered. Gone are the days of establishing company objectives and force-feeding them to attendees through content. Modern strategies are built around what the audience wants to hear, not what the host wants to tell them.

“If you meet your audience needs, your business objectives will be met because they’re showing up for a purpose,” Martin says.

“Get very clear on your business objective, but then get even clearer on what the audience is expecting when they show up so that you don’t miss the mark there. Because if you miss the mark there, they’re not coming back next year. That business objective is lost.”

The same goes for transforming an established, information-centric event into a format that’s more focused on thought leadership. The shift may be well-intentioned, but if attendees have been counting on that event’s content to provide them with tangible tools and tactics, and it transitions into more inspiration-focused subject matter, they’ll leave feeling emptyhanded.

## 2. Attention spans are still a thing.

Despite this revolution, what hasn’t changed is our attention spans—or lack thereof. We’ll keep this one short and sweet. Invest in cinematic-style video content, even if it’s an explainer video. Invest in visualizing your whitepaper or keynote presentation. Walk away from the 30- and 60-minute presentations. Attention spans are miniscule and in the social media age, everyone wants to be entertained.

## 3. It’s not just the message, but the messenger.

We’ve all been here: the content is killer and it completely falls flat because of delivery. Paying just as much attention to the message as the messenger is critical. Just because a celebrity speaker is exciting to put on the reg page, or the [put your company executive’s title here] has always been on stage, doesn’t mean they’ll resonate with modern audiences and convey information in an impactful way.

“It’s that intentionality between what are you trying to say and who’s saying it to get really clear on what you want the audience to walk away with feeling or thinking about,” says Martin.

It’s the same idea when it comes to moderators, whether they’re facilitating panels on stage or assisting with breakouts. The messenger not only has to be engaging and perceptive; they have to know their stuff. “It’s the same idea when it comes to moderators, whether they’re facilitating panels on stage or assisting with breakouts. The messenger

not only has to be engaging and perceptive, but they have to know their stuff. “Panels really live and die by the moderator and that person’s ability to think in the moment and build upon what the participants are saying. The preparation of the panelists is equally as important,” says Micarelli.

## 4. Give the content a place to live on and ensure it matches channel needs.

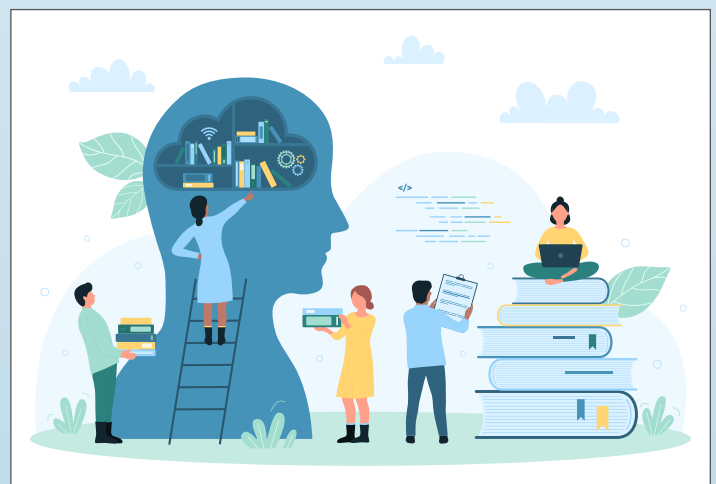
Our atomized jetpack content still needs a home post-event. And unfortunately, AI won’t do that task for you... yet.

“A lot of companies have gotten better about putting things online after the event. But it’s still a step to take to go to the website to download something, and often times someone forgets to even upload the content in a place attendees can access” Angel Micarelli, SVP Content & Strategy at Cramer says.

And while the home for content is important, the content format needs to match that home.

“It’s understanding what’s the right content for the right platforms and where is your audience actually showing up. If it’s a B2B brand, yes, LinkedIn is somewhere that you need to be,” Martin says. “So how are you packaging up your content to be accessible on LinkedIn? Is it that you’re building a carousel post? Is it that you’re building a short video that drives to a landing page? Or are you doing a long-form blog post that’s organically posted on your page? So being intentional about where you want to go based on where your audience is going to be, and then building content for those channels, is the ideal scenario.”

For 2024, content atomization and AI will help brands live beyond one moment in time.





# FUN- DERESTIMATED



**Don't underestimate the power of fun. It unifies our multi-generational audiences.**

At some point, we've all rolled our eyes at a "fun" event activity that was essentially a requirement to participate in. Coming out of an unprecedented time, something Cramer ensures we don't lose sight of is the fact that attendees are still humans, regardless of their rank, age, role or industry. A good laugh brings humans together. And an unexpected event experience proves that we are all innately attracted to fun.

"People are people, and people want to have a good time," says Hodge. "So, it's important that we say, 'Can you sprinkle little nuggets around that experience that are optional?' It allows attendees to say, 'I can be more of my true self in this space.'"

How should you expect fun to show up in 2024? Through unexpected moments from speakers. We're talking slides (like the ones at a playground) that bring presenters onto the stage or ball pits for speakers to jump off stage when they are done. Humans are hustling every day in their 9-to-5s. If they are going to give us two or more days of their time, let's ensure they leave having had a few smiles throughout. And, through group activities. We're talking ways the audience gets more involved in content sessions. For example, think a speed-style Trivia game to kick off the general session or a 'Family Feud' style game show to generate an enjoyable way of making takeaways from the event easier to retain.

"It helps to go through an exercise where there are usually multiple outcomes that you'd want an attendee to experience. If entertainment isn't the No. 1, then fun isn't going to be the focus," says Joe Case, Creative Director at Cramer. "Yes,

everybody's going to know the answer to some of these trivia questions by the time they walk out of this hour-long session. But what we really want is when the "Family Feud" music plays, everyone's clapping to the beat just like they do in the game."

Injecting fun into a B2B event can be daunting, not only because the definition is subjective, but because of the need to map that "fun" activity back to the broader event objectives. With the right strategy and a comprehensive understanding of the audience, however, marketers can build entertainment value into a conference without losing sight of the bigger picture.

**Where to start this year:**

## **GET TO REALLY KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

A key component of designing fun engagements is recognizing how the audience is likely to define their version of a good time. Whereas competitions and gamification tactics are likely to resonate with a competitive audience, a subtler, more easygoing approach is going to be a better fit for a sophisticated audience. Regardless of what persona types are in the audience, however, offering fun as an option is critical—and providing multiple ways to participate in the activity is vital to making everyone feel invited.

"You have to think about the way you create the fun," says Hodge. "Can it be for those who want to jump in, but also those around the fringe where it may be enough for them to be able to 'participate' by watching and observing? And then they might feel more comfortable [participating] next time."

## AS THE SAYING GOES, 'LESS IS MORE'

Not every method of injecting fun into an event has to be laced with pomp and circumstance. Sometimes a touchpoint that provides some surprise and delight, but offers a low barrier to entry, makes the biggest impact. Consider the strategy behind one of Cramer's recent conferences for an audience that had been identified as experiencing workplace burnout. During the event, attendees could stop by a coffee cart dishing out drinks with playful names that tapped into the audience's need to be recharged.

*"Something as low-barrier as a specialty coffee cart with drinks named after experiences [works]. You don't have to do anything. You want coffee, you're going to order your cappuccino, but you might have to read it off the menu. And it's like, 'Oh, I can relate to feeling that. I feel seen.' We love making things that are huge and amazing and sparkly and have a lot of components to them. But some can be really straightforward and very analog."*  
Macey Ley, Creative Director Events & Experiences at Cramer



## MAP IT BACK TO YOUR OBJECTIVES

At Cramer, every aspect of an event is anchored in the overarching strategy. The team begins by asking the client to define the “why” of their event—the purpose for hosting it. That same question needs to have a meaningful answer when it comes to building fun activities into the agenda. Fun for fun's sake may work in some scenarios, but for the most part, moments of delight need to fit into the broader purpose for hosting the event.

At the end of the day, “fun” is about creating energy in the room and ensuring everyone has an avenue for participation.