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24

BRAND EXPERIENCE TRENDS

Covering the topics
and tactics currently
making waves

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ALL BRAND EXPERIENCE TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

Gen Z is an audience we've been studying. Why? Because there's a lot that we can learn from them that influences the evolving needs of all audiences and generations.

Studying the edges of an audience spectrum can help reveal or amplify the needs and motivations of a broader population. This is the central tenet of design thinking which encourages observation of extreme users—think newbies, fanatics, non-participants, etc.

Through our observations and research, we've developed some unique perspectives on some interesting topics like: the increased value people place on personalized and exclusive experiences. How smart brands are using authenticity to drive loyalty. Getting serious about social responsibility, the return of fun, and figuring out how to embrace technology without compromising your brand's humanity.

Dive into the pages ahead to get just as excited as we are for what's ahead!





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#01

AI-RICH BRAND EXPERIENCES

In 2024, Generative AI (GenAI) has finally graduated from its buzzword phase and entered its practical tool era. We're seeing it deployed a lot—in the front and back of the house.

It sounds like an oxymoron, but AI is making events more personal.

#03 AI-RICH BRAND EXPERIENCES



Event apps and chatbots powered by AI make it easier to offer attendees customized agenda recommendations, connect them to expo or sponsorship content directly tied to their interests, and answer specific questions in real-time.

AI-POWERED CUSTOMIZATION



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For a client's flagship event, Cramer created an AI persona that helped with everything. After creating the character in our studio, "she" became the event host and interacted with speakers on the mainstage, worked the registration desk as a greeter, and even had a presence on the show floor, helping with wayfinding, or answering hotel and agenda questions. **Not only did it help guests, it gave the entire experience more consistency.**

AI FACILITATORS

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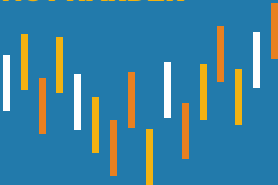
EXPERIENTIAL TOUCHPOINTS



AI isn't just for logistics. It is a powerful creative tool too. Using it to generate unique one-of-a-kind content or memorable attendee experiences can help with creative content creation too. For example, on-site GenAI-powered portrait booths can turn a basic photo up into an engaging, customizable character experience.



NETWORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER



"I'm most excited about how AI can transform networking and real-time content transcription and summarization."

Networking apps are great, but very dependent on attendee-provided data, which can limit their potential. But if AI can automatically collect certain data during the event, it could make suggestions or trigger experiences that help attendees connect in new and different ways."

-VINNY HIGGINS
SR. DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

YOUR AI STRATEGY STARTS HERE.

#1

Balance customization and personalization with transparency and trust.

Event planners must be clear about how they use GenAI and attendee data. Whether you're using it behind the scenes or on the show floor, disclosing its use to attendees fosters trust and builds confidence in your brand.

#3

AI can enhance creativity— not drive it

Creativity is influenced by personal experiences, emotional intelligence and personal and societal influences. AI lacks this perspective, which is why its best utilization is accelerating the creative process, not co-opting it.

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#2

GenAI is not free from bias.

AI identifies patterns and makes decisions based on training data. But data isn't free from bias. Depending on its programming, AI can perpetuate (or amplify) problematic issues. Keep an eye out for inadvertently insensitive output.



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#02

NEW

CONSIDERATIONS

FOR CONTENT

Engaging content has always been the hallmark of successful marketing and brand experiences.

Here are a few new technologies and trends impacting how content is created, curated, and distributed.

HIT THEIR INBOX IN REAL-TIME

At events, AI-powered transcriptions can capture what was said on stage, contextualize it, and provide summaries almost instantly. AI-powered design tools can take these summaries and add visualizations in a flash. Combining these solutions lets you offer smart-looking recaps right after presentations wrap. A great way to reinforce key messages when the topics are top of mind.



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Google SGE



SGE IS THE NEW SEO

Creating content to promote your brand or event? Then there's a new algorithm you need to know about. Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE) is a new GenAI search feature offering quick summaries before users go to a webpage—potentially disrupting how people find your content. It prioritizes content with a "human touch," so **infusing your site and marketing with personal perspectives, customer testimonials, and interactive elements** can help you stay ahead in this new era of search.



#04 NEW CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONTENT

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DON'T JUST PUSH PRODUCT. PROVIDE PERSPECTIVE.

Today's audiences want brand interactions that generate value.

Content offering insights and unique points of view are in high demand.

And because short-form video is so popular right now, making bite-sized insights could be a great way to boost brand equity while catering to modern attention spans.

CONTENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR CREATORS...

Repurpose with purpose

Gone are the days where you create content and share it wholesale across mediums. As social algorithms get more sophisticated, smart marketers are retooling their content to better match the individual tone and user expectations of every channel. It's an extra step, but the best way to get your work seen by more people.

Authenticity is the new authority

As AI content proliferates, audiences, search engines, and social algorithms are prioritizing more human experiences. Standing out means having a brand voice that feels human—delivered by real people—in content and experiences that extend beyond a screen.

Sound advice on a new type of search

Alexa and Siri set our alarms, tell us about the weather, and play our favorite songs. They're also impacting how we get content. (27% of searches in the Google App are now done by voice.) The info served up by voice search still comes from websites, so if you're looking to reach audiences via these technologies, make sure your site uses natural language, has a large FAQ section with concise answers, and is rife with meta descriptions, lists, subheadings, and quick page introductions.



"The digital-first, AI-fueled media landscape is deluding a lot of human connection between brands and audiences. **The companies making headway right now are having conversations with customers, often covering multiple topics.** They're creating content and experiences that speak with the audience, instead of talking at them. It's a more personal and evolved strategy than the typical problem/solution format typically seen in B2B marketing."

-TRIPP UNDERWOOD
VP OF CONTENT

#03

MY EVENT
MY WAY

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The normalization of remote work continues to blur “work time” and “my time”

for people across all industries.

In response, many event pros are designing engaging experiences that can compete against audiences' mounting distractions. On the flipside, they're also providing space to let them get some work done.

#02 MY EVENT, MY WAY

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BRING KEY CONTENT TO THEM

Long hallways and semi-empty foyers aren't just aesthetically boring, they're wasted opportunities to engage and entice attendees. **Use underutilized spaces for unexpected learning experiences that demand attention.**

#02 MY EVENT, MY WAY

MAKE WORK EVENTS WORK-FRIENDLY

In an era where people are reluctant to put up an out-of-office alert, **smart event hosts are providing workspaces within the event experience** so attendees can field calls, have meetings, and take care of business without heading to a hotel room.

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TAKE THEM SOMEWHERE UNEXPECTED

Stepping outside normal venue spaces can **incentivize busy attendees to make time for crucial content.**

Hosting an executive forum at a nearby “speakeasy” or private club adds an element of exclusivity. Putting a hands-on demo in a local innovation center makes everything feel more urgent and exciting.

MAKE YOUR EVENT A “MY WAY” EXPERIENCE...

#01

Show don't tell

Modern audiences, especially younger generations, don't want to hear about your brand—they want to experience it. Intimate, mini-theater demos, pop-up gamification activations, immersive and interactive content... these experiences are all gaining traction because they let audiences connect with your brand on their terms.

#02

Be reasonable about attendees' reality

We're all obsessed with audience engagement. But sometimes it pays to give them the room to disengage. Creating physical programming space that lets audiences decompress without FOMO is important.

#03

Get flexy with the agenda

Modern attendees want autonomy over their time. Appease them by building in open slots for free-choice segments. And because different people have different learning styles, offering key content in multiple mediums like workshops, roundtables, daily summaries, etc. helps important messages resonate with more audiences.



"Event planners love a plan. It's in the job title. But as real-time audience feedback gets faster and easier to capture, we need to get more comfortable with going off script if we want to stay relevant. Audiences want to know you're listening, so that means tweaking things on the fly and addressing feedback in the moment."

Flexibility isn't something you build into an agenda, it's a mindset, and everyone needs to be on board from the beginning if it's going to work."

-MACEY LEY
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

#04

CIRCULAR SUSTAINABILITY



For years, environmentalism at events meant limiting plastic bottle usage and reducing on-site food waste. Important efforts, but these acts alone **may no longer cut it.**

In 2024, many of the more eco-conscious events are leaning into **circular sustainability**—an environmental philosophy heavily focused on reducing waste AND reusing materials.

Other sustainability trends to consider...

#01 CIRCULAR SUSTAINABILITY

FROM DATA TO ACTION: TECH-POWERED MEASUREMENT

AI-powered sustainability intelligence platforms can track and measure a conference's carbon footprint. It can give you actionable metrics to work with or help find areas where reuse could reduce impact.

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SMARTER SWAG

Old-school, single-use swag, like stress balls and plastic tchotchkes, always end up in the trash. Bad for the environment and a bad investment. **But digital or experiential swag, directly tied to attendees' interest, produces long-term value and less waste.**



Instead of hosting your event in a "destination" city, pick a location based on how central it is to the target audience. Then use the **Cornell Hotel Sustainability Benchmarking Index** to identify the greenest venues in the area.

LOCATION CONSIDERATION

STEP-BY-STEP SUSTAINABILITY

A quick guide to hosting greener events.

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Take an environmental inventory

Improvements can't happen without benchmarks.

Tech-powered sustainability platforms measure your current impact and provide insights for growth.

Stay realistic

Events will always have a carbon footprint, even virtual ones. Sustainability goals must be rooted in obtainable wins like reduction and reuse efforts, instead of chasing a net zero score.

Commit to a single, achievable goal

Multiple sustainability goals can be complex. Avoid being overwhelmed by good intentions. A single, well-defined plan—like commitment to circular sustainability—can provide a clear path forward.



"It's unrealistic to think a decent-sized gathering can have zero carbon impact. Events are inherently going to produce waste. But **we're seeing companies make a real difference with strategic repurposing efforts** and designing for reuse."

—DANIELLE MALVESTI
VP OF STRATEGY AND CLIENT EXPERIENCE

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#05 RECONNECT WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS





Today's event demographics are varied. Different ages, different work styles, different distractions vying for everyone's attention, etc. **The one thing that brings them all together? A good time.**

It's human nature to want to enjoy yourself at a large group gathering. **A little strategically planned fun can go a long way if you want to increase engagement with key audiences.**

#05 RECONNECT WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS

In our social media culture, a good picture from an event's floor is the **best possible swag**. Step outside the expected with creative backgrounds, 3D logos, and pic-worthy tech.

GIVE 'EM SOMETHING TO #SHOWOFF

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#05 RECONNECT WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW (AGAIN)

Nostalgia is one of marketing's favorite emotions because it engages people quickly, with little set-up required. **From full-on throwback vibes to small standalone moments**, we're seeing a lot of retro décor and old-school activations bring smiles to attendees' faces by bringing them back to simpler times.

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GAMIFY KEY CONTENT

Key messages aren't just for keynotes. **Games can give important topics vital energy, increasing audience engagement** and boosting their retention. Of course, gamification won't work for some topics, but using them exclusively as "fluff" content could waste an opportunity to make a critical theme stick in people's minds.

"I'm working with a client right now who's having a ton of success using a game show format to get key messages across. We have lights, music, a great set and host, while the audience is clapping, cheering, and shouting out answers at the top of their lungs. **The whole place gets so amped, you'd never suspect that it's a room full of employees yelling along to their CEO's talking points**—but that's exactly what's happening. Fun for the audience and impactful for the business. What more could you want?"

-JOE CASE
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

F-U-N IS GOOD R-O-I. IF YOU PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Know what makes them tick

Competitions and gamification can resonate with competitive sales teams, while subtler, more easygoing approaches might work better for an executive crowd.

Know your audience and plan fun accordingly.

Fun can be chill

Immersive, multisensory experiences aren't everyone's cup of tea. And big, loud experiences may be too much for some brands. Still, you can find ways to inject personality and entertainment more subtly into your event through signage, food and bev options, or passive programming.

Start strategically

Forcing attendees to think too hard about an activity takes them out of the moment. Instead of dreaming up fun ideas out of the blue, start with event objectives and work backward 'til you find the fun. It may take time, but ultimately offers more tangible experiences.

Looking to incorporate some new thinking or creativity into your next brand experience?

We can help.

Drop us a line at: theteam@cramer.com, and together we can make big things happen for your brand.