

STAGEDGE

EVENT PLANNING IN AN EVER- CHANGING WORLD

Stagedge's 4 Tips on Future-
Proofing Your Corporate Events



Anyone who takes a glance at the headlines knows we're living through turbulent times. For corporate event marketers, however, the silver lining is that events continue to hold their worth—through pandemics and other market disruptions. In fact, according to a recent [B2B study](#), 80% of organizers say in-person events are their most impactful marketing channel, and 76% of organizers believe in-person conferences will become increasingly critical to their organization's success in the coming years.

But as markets change and companies and consumers become more careful about expenditures, what are some ways to handle event planning in an ever-changing world? Is there a way to future-proof your next event? In this e-book, we share tips and strategies to help you prepare for whatever comes next.



1 BE PROACTIVE

In times of change, it's understandable why uncertainty might delay you from committing to your next live event. However, that hesitation comes at a cost. Why? When you wait, you risk losing out on essential event components such as prime locations, top-tier production resources, critical tech elements, and talent. This includes musical acts, celebrities, or a keynote speaker who would give your event a "wow factor."

A lack of lead time also jeopardizes your ability to imbue the event with a cohesive theme. If the scenery, signage, and overall branding look rushed, the event will feel thrown together. Simply put, waiting is not a viable strategy for successful event planning.

To mitigate risks, it's crucial to collaborate with an event production partner early. Starting the planning process a year or more in advance ensures access to the best cost options, premier venues, top-tier talent, and cutting-edge technology. Early planning not only reduces stress but also guarantees that your event will have everything it needs to stand out.

SECURE YOUR EVENT PARTNER EARLY

Not ready to sign a contract? Consider giving your event production partner a heads-up or a "soft hold"—a verbal commitment that signals your intent to move forward. This provides you a "right of first refusal," meaning if another party expresses interest in the same dates or resources, you'll have first dibs. It's a simple step that keeps your options open while safeguarding your plans.

SAVE EVEN MORE WITH MULTI-YEAR CONTRACTS

It's worth exploring the possibility of multi-year contracts for production and venues. Committing to a multi-year agreement often comes with significant cost savings and guarantees consistency for your company. In turbulent times, such agreements provide stability and predictability for your event planning needs.

2 BE PREPARED TO PIVOT

Anticipating potential emergencies is vital to protecting your event. What allows for a quick pivot? Consider these key strategies:

EVERY EVENT SHOULD HAVE A LIVESTREAM

If an unexpected crisis occurs, be it a natural disaster, pandemic, political strife, or another emergency, having a livestream in place allows you to switch gears and host the event virtually. Even within a multi-day event, a livestream can save the day. A parade, a worker strike, construction, or an accident could easily prevent attendees from making it to the event. In this scenario, you could host one session virtually while conducting the rest of the conference in-person, as planned.

Even beyond emergencies, streaming the event allows for maximum flexibility. If some attendees are suddenly unable to make it, the livestream will enable them to access all the content. It also broadens the reach of your conference as you can now share your event with a global audience.

LIVESTREAMING SAVES AN EVENT FROM HURRICANE MILTON

A Stagedge client was just a few days from their event in Orlando, Florida, when a hurricane threat suddenly emerged. Had they not already had a livestream plan in place, there would have been no way for them to implement one and the event would have been a loss. Fortunately, with a hybrid element already in place, they pivoted quickly and hosted the event virtually.



ASSIGN BACKUPS FOR KEYNOTES AND PANEL MEMBERS

Speakers get sick. Flights get delayed or canceled. For these reasons and more, it's essential for each executive speaker to identify a member of their team who can replace them if necessary—and communicate this responsibility to them well in advance. This proactive approach minimizes potential disruptions to the event's schedule.

There should also be a contingency plan for incorporating remote presenters at the last minute. If unforeseen circumstances prevent a speaker from attending, you won't have to scramble to find someone to fill their slot.

HAVE A TRUSTED PARTNER IN PLACE

Finally, if hiccups do arise, be sure you're working with an experienced event production partner who knows how to shuffle a run-of-show last minute. Having the right event producer by your side maximizes your ability to respond to unexpected variables. Technical snafus are sometimes unavoidable, but a skilled team has the experience to remain calm under pressure and solve problems so quickly and effectively that attendees may never know there was an issue at all.

3

MAXIMIZE BUDGETS

MAKE YOUR VENUE PERFORM DOUBLE DUTY

One of the simplest, most efficient, and often neglected ways to get the most value out of your event is to make it pull double duty. Instead of hosting one conference for your sales team and a separate event for your tech team, combine them. Either plan the two events consecutively, or intermingle the schedules. This allows you to use the same production team, staging, branding, and signage—and the company leadership only needs to travel once.

Additionally, the large “general session” space, typically a ballroom, is often only used once or twice during a major event. Utilizing that area for a second business unit’s conference—and all the tech equipment, lights, and staging within it—is an ideal way to maximize your investment.

CONSIDER SMALLER EVENTS

Another strategy for increasing ROI is trading one mega-event for smaller, more frequent regional meetings. Large events are costly: besides the thousands of dollars spent on hotel rooms and airfare, there’s the giant venue itself and the large teams of onsite staff they require. By breaking these into more regional affairs, you can reduce cost. How? Think less expensive venues, smaller catering fees, and fewer days. And with your attendees coming from local areas, you eliminate the need for accommodations and airfare, which means you can allocate more of your budget to the event itself.

REPURPOSE THE EVENT'S MATERIAL

Adapting your event content for other uses is another highly effective way to stretch your budget. Videos of your speaker presentations, professional photos, attendee interviews, and clips from the live broadcast can all be reused throughout the year. Whether they're incorporated into blogs, email blasts, podcasts, or social media clips, footage from your event makes for stellar marketing materials. And this is another area where you'll be glad you planned ahead. Deciding at the last minute that you want professional video and photos will increase costs and require additional post-production time.

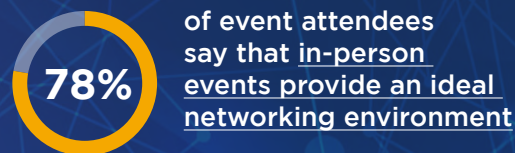
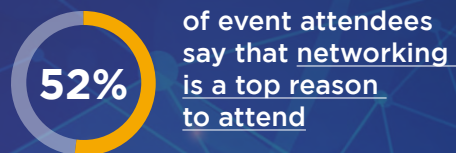
4 ENSURE VALUE FOR ATTENDEES

As we approach the latter half of the decade, it's the perfect time to reassess the status quo and consider the most effective strategies for the future. Creating real value for attendees begins with building an agenda that puts their experience front and center. Just because you've done things a certain way in previous years doesn't mean it's the right choice going forward.

A good place to start is ensuring your event is attendee-centric. Is your audience hearing the same information from the same people they did last year? Consider cutting back on the number of top-level executive speakers. New voices, including those of middle managers, might provide more engaging material. Or perhaps this is an opportunity to spotlight a customer's experience.

NETWORKING MATTERS

Are you giving attendees enough time to network?





CREATIVE IDEAS FOR ATTENDEE ENGAGEMENT

Want to get your attendees interacting? Here are a few ideas to incorporate in your experiential zone:

- Cornhole
- Mini golf
- Arcade games
- VR stations
- Branded photo booths
- A puppy petting zoo

Another key question to ask is: are the attendees in “receive mode” for too much of the conference? In the digital age, if people sit for too long—you’ve lost them. There are powerful statistics showing that attendees crave interaction. Even beyond the audiences’ shortening attention spans, the main reason to get attendees out of their chairs is that [52% say](#) networking is a top reason they’ll make the effort to show up. And with [78% of attendees](#) saying that in-person events provide an ideal networking environment, embracing an itinerary that leaves more opportunities to connect with peers is the smart strategy.

At Stagedge, we recommend allotting 50% of the conference for networking and collaboration. Read: smaller sessions, more breaks. Consider activities where attendees work in small pods or teams.

An experiential zone is an ideal way to foster meaningful connections. What is an experiential zone? Think of it as where the fun happens. It can be a lounge or any designated space where attendees are encouraged to socialize. In the remote-worker era, where people don’t get together as often, these spaces—where communal activities are encouraged—provide incredible value for attendees. While an experiential zone might feel like an “extra,” don’t cut corners on your event’s networking and socializing aspects. After all, it’s the real reason many attendees come back year after year.

SUCCESS IN FAST-CHANGING TIMES

The interconnectedness of our world has made multiple aspects of doing business easier. But the technology that brings the world together also has the consequence of keeping people apart. Remote and hybrid work models may increase productivity, but they can also create a void of human connection. This is why in-person events are such a vital part of a company's success. And while you can't predict the future, the tips above will ensure that your next event will be ready for whatever comes.



STAGEDGE®

Stagedge is a leading event production provider with decades of experience helping customers from a variety of industries plan and host unforgettable events. To learn more about our offerings, visit www.stagedge.com.