

Freeman¹

Six dimensions of LIVE: Evolving event experiences in a novel world

Lessons from today's most creative minds

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There's no escaping the reality of a global pandemic.

We've read the reports, scoured the studies, and sighed all the sighs.

However, lurking in the gloom is a wellspring of opportunity — we just need to jump in and make a splash.

Now is the time to sunset outdated practices and reinvent our industry by designing events that elevate experiences for everyone.

To inspire and motivate us all forward, we collaborated with SISO and mdg to present a roundtable video series hosted by our chief design officer, Bruce Mau, who talked with five visionary thinkers about how LIVE is...



The panelists explored how we are currently persevering, what is and isn't working, the brass rings on the horizon, and ideas to take us all there.

Here are the top takeaways to ponder ideas for designing your own event evolution.

LIVE is now

Visionary

Bruce Mau

Chief Design Officer of Freeman and Co-Founder /
Chief Executive Officer of Massive Change Network

Design the time

Concepts like “being present” and the “power of now” permeate our culture, but we often get caught up in details (and pandemics!) that are behind or ahead of us. Hence, we tend to miss out on relishing the present moment.

Similarly, we can gloss over that same power of events. The value of LIVE is that it’s actually happening. Right now. In front of you.

Whether it’s in person or on a screen, live is a real-time experience. Unlike any other media or marketing channel, live is reality. Take Saturday Night Live. After 44 years, it remains relevant and compelling. Why? Because anything can happen.

The new world of events mixes that same depth and serendipity of face-to-face experiences with the extended reach of digital broadcast — and that combination powers the medium of live.



Top takeaways

Design for the desired outcome

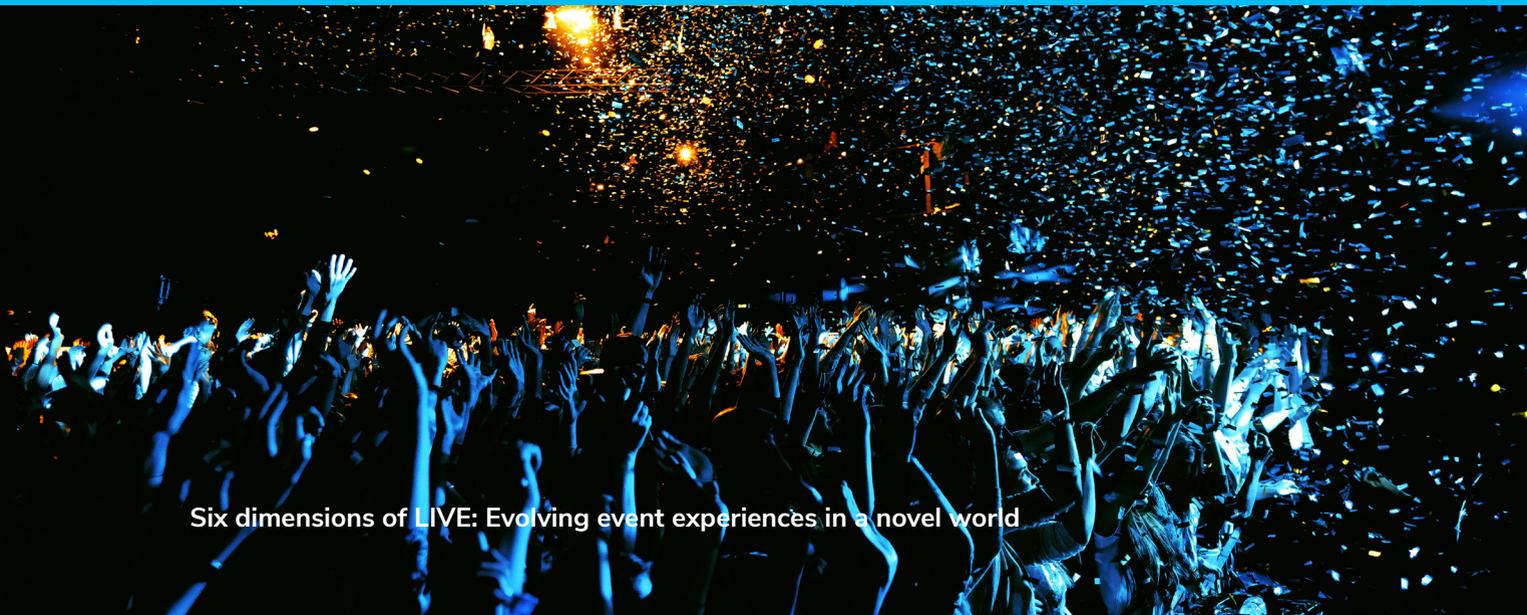
Orchestration is the key to producing the best possible use of time with the highest value. As master orchestrators, we need to design experiences that deliver on our objectives.

Sell experience, not square feet

We often design and sell space, not community. We need to adjust our selling models around the value of interaction and what our events can offer our communities.

Go beyond visuals

When designing events, we can get caught up in the eye candy and overlook the element of time. Applying experience design can make the most of the audience journey, which leads to an experience that’s both beautiful and useful.



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LIVE is learning

Visionary

Barb Groth

Founder of the Nomadic School of Wonder
and Creative SVP for Meow Wolf

Educate with purpose and play

As event producers, we're in the learning business. Our communities gather to discover, grow, and share experiences and knowledge. This common denominator and the way we approach it demands to be revisited frequently, particularly right now.

To counter this current state of stress and fear, we must take the opposite approach with more intention and purpose for our audiences — learning experiences should feel safe (of course), but also unexpected and inspiring. Reimagining education to be more fun and experiential can shift perspectives and open up possibilities.

Even though many things have changed and continue to change, this common goal remains: Deliver experiences that enrich the attendee experience and make it memorable.



Top takeaways

Activate wonder and imagination

A playful learning environment can increase critical thinking, creativity, connectivity, and empathy. Bonus: This approach also elevates mood.

Reinvent the how

In life, learning never ends. We must also continue learning how to learn and refreshing our practices, otherwise we quickly become outmoded.

Engage experiential

Shift away from routine and repetition (and mindless data!) to methods that invite doing and joining — when we share experiences, we naturally learn. The same goes with hands-on experiences that allow for failure. Stumbles lead to innovation.



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LIVE is **sensory**

Visionary

Bruce Vaughn

CEO of Dreamscape Immersive; Former Chief
Creative Executive of Walt Disney Imagineering

Design for the senses = sensational experiences

Our industry has a unique opportunity to better design physical live experiences by appealing to all of the senses. It's actually our competitive advantage — we bring our audiences together live, but we rarely take advantage of it. We get too focused on what we see. And yet, our environment includes air, light, sound, smell, and touch. Our mind is not just our brain, but our entire body — our senses (and our emotions) are the interface. The more comprehensive the sensory experiences are, the more impact is received.

Traditionally, when we have talked about our events, we have defaulted to net square feet of exhibit space, how many sessions there are, number of attendees expected, etc. But the new normal is quality over quantity, both for the audience and the experience. We need to put more emphasis on the sensory aspect of the physical experience and what we offer attendees.

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Top takeaways

Offer new dimensions

VR isn't necessarily new, but it does provide a new medium for storytelling that immerses attendees in your brand or product. When it's done well, the user feels transported and part of a new dimension.

Encourage shared experiences

Traditional VR experiences have focused on one user, which can be impersonal and solitary. Sharing the moment with a partner or group provides more connection and satisfaction.

Forget about size

Virtual experiences offer unlimited opportunities that are not restricted by space. Whether you have 100' x 100' space or a 10' x 10' space, you can create a vast virtual world for attendees to explore.

LIVE is community

Visionary

Sherry Huss

Global Strategist, Event Expert, and Co-Founder of Maker Faire

Galvanize your group

We talk a lot about our audiences, but there is a difference between an audience and a community. Community is our identity of purpose, our shared narrative — our raison d'être, if you will.

Communities have always been a priority, of course, but banding together right now is even more important. Finding ways to reinforce that bond and maintain meaningful connections until we meet face to face is the key to longevity.



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Top takeaways

Appoint a dedicated community builder

To truly serve our communities and be effective, we must take an active role within those groups. That means designating someone who focuses solely on the community and its needs.

Create an online haven

Cultivating these relationships means maintaining an online home for individuals to come together in and outside gatherings (virtual or live), so design a 24/7 space tailored specifically for your tribe.

Welcome the wild west (experiment!)

Downturns and times of upheaval (hey, that's right now!) offer a chance to take a step back and develop a new playbook for moving forward. This is the time to try new angles and approaches — we're all learning as we go.

LIVE is evergreen

Visionary

Marc Mathieu

Salesforce Strategic Customer Transformation and Innovation; previous leadership roles at Samsung, Coca-Cola, and Unilever

Mingle today and tomorrow

This crisis has offered a wake-up call to humanity. It's forcing us to change behavior, alter approaches, and revive outdated business practices.

But it's also given us time to appreciate what we miss.

We all know events will be different; our businesses already look different. Now is the time to embrace possibility. We should explore how to recreate what we loved most about live events and revitalize it for today and tomorrow. It's important to reinforce the familiar while also providing inspiration for the future: *To pay proper respect to the future, you must pay proper disrespect to the past.**

As leaders, we need to take the uncertainty and discomfort associated with disruption and replace them with the excitement and new possibilities associated with transformation. Together, these revelations can help us create something revolutionary.

*SOURCE: Manifesto to Revive an Icon, Coca-Cola.

Top takeaways

Reassure your people

In times of change, reinforcing stability for our communities and honoring what they value is essential. It isn't so much that people are afraid of change; it's that they're afraid to be changed, afraid to adapt. Overcome this by leading with encouragement.

Provide something meaningful

We must commit to making events worthwhile by providing experiences that truly enrich people's lives. This goal should supersede the selling of products and services.

Emphasize the power of LIVE

Digital connection has increased efficiency, but it limits the spontaneity of being together in a live setting: impromptu conversations, chance meetings, unexpected exchanges. We are moving forward with digital, but it cannot replace what happens live.



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● LIVE is here to stay

Visionary

Itamar Kubovy

Executive Producer, Pilobolus



Reinvent with relevance

Together, live and digital form the future of engagement: connecting dynamic screens with live bodies. We must challenge our core business models to stay relevant and reinvent ourselves for this new world and the next.

Like many of the sentiments explored in other sessions, the importance of our communities cannot be overstated. Our industry relies on maintaining and bolstering our communities, as they provide the value. Let our communities be the beacon as we move toward more revelations and reinventions.



Top takeaways

Outside

Outdoor gatherings aren't new, but we have an opportunity to introduce a more templated approach for open-air events. Take cues from flea markets, weddings, sporting events, and garden parties.

Exclusivity

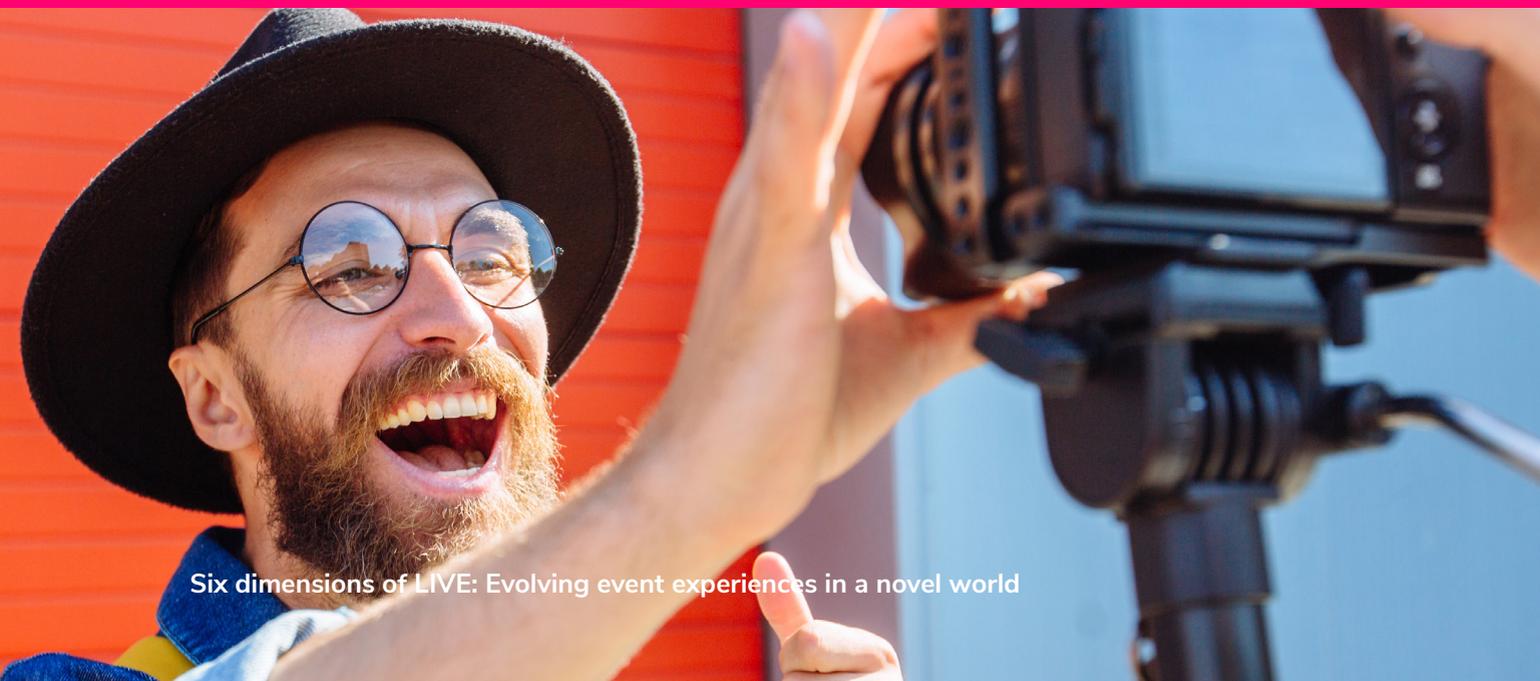
Radically reduce the number of in-person attendees while still maintaining wide (and often greater) digital reach. Blend these dimensions together to create specialized experiences.

Archipelago

Take the TEDx route by hosting simultaneous events in multiple cities or regions, and tailor them to those areas.

Media

Consider a broadcast model such as the Oscars — create something so special and exclusive that it ultimately could inspire audiences to generate their own parties to celebrate the occasion.



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Life may be a bit topsy-turvy right now, but the good news is twofold: We are making the most of this abnormal time and we're preparing for a bright future of possibility.

The medium of live affords us a new model that is deep and wide — the depth of face-to-face connections blended with the wide reach of digital. Merging these essential elements will enrich our communities, elevate our experiences, and make our industry stronger and more important than ever.



About

mdg

mdg, A Freeman Company, is a marketing-driven agency with a 43-year track record of creating powerful campaigns that deliver results. Unlike traditional agencies in our space, mdg brings together marketing researchers and strategists, digital and interactive media experts, event and association management specialists, and data analysts with a robust creative team to offer complete marketing solutions.

Freeman

Freeman is a global leader in events. Whether virtual, in-person, or hybrid, we are on a mission to redefine live for a new era. With a data-driven approach and the industry's largest network of experts, our insights shape exhibitions, exhibits, and events that drive audiences to action. Our integrated full-service solutions leverage a 100-year legacy in event management as well as new technologies to deliver moments that matter.

SISO

SISO members include companies, corporations, and other for-profit entities that own, produce, or provide full-service management of face-to-face trade shows, consumer shows, expositions, conferences, and events. SISO membership is a combination of large corporations and small entrepreneurial enterprises that do business around the world.

SISO's almost 200 member companies produce thousands of events around the world. SISO's mission is to meet the common needs of our members by providing peer networking opportunities, education, industry information, streamlined business processes, and best practices in the industry.

Freeman¹

**Our savvy strategists
can help customize
a plan to guide your
journey forward.**

Let's do this

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