

# The Event Age

Planning shows for multi-gen audiences







# Generations of Events

Show managers are used to industry changes. But today's generational shifts are adding more considerations, bigger strategies, and complex planning. All of this while juggling economic uncertainty, challenging participation, and rising costs.

With so much to handle, planners must dig deep for revenue-generating ideas while also creating a meaningful in-person experience that gives attendees justifiable value to book that flight.

**Read on — we've got you.**





# Start with the Big Picture and Here's Why

To create a successful, memorable event, it's essential to align your organization's goals with attendee expectations — knowing they can differ by generation and persona.

Begin with some key essentials: event building blocks with a multi-gen focus that will help you plan your strategy and prioritize growth.

Goals	What are your organization's mission, purpose, and key objectives, and how are they adapting to demographic and industry shifts? How can your event achieve these goals while delivering personalized experiences?
Audiences	Each attendee, exhibitor, and sponsor has individual wants. Do you know what those are? How can you create an omnichannel marketing ecosystem that reaches various audiences before, during, and after the event?
Approaches	How can you deliver varied yet tailored experiences that educate and entertain? What value opportunities will your show provide that ensure ROI for attendees, exhibitors, sponsors, and YOU?
Measurement	How will you track changing demographics and wants across the journey to meet your brand goals? How are you collecting this data to fine-tune and add value to the in-person event experience?



This guide will outline three strategic reset opportunities — **audience acquisition, show floor engagement, and measurement** — with insights and ideas to help you deliver a can't-miss event that all audiences (from all generations) want.





# Why Show Up?

One of the first steps in personalizing attendee experiences is looking at what motivates your attendees. **After years of research, we've confirmed that there are four basic reasons attendees come to conferences and trade shows:**

## 1. To experience (have fun)

These attendees are looking for a memorable event that will transport them into an exciting, immersive experience.

## 2. To learn

Whether they're attending multiple product demos or dashing from session to session, these attendees want to learn as much as possible.

## 3. To network

These attendees want to make connections, meet key industry players, raise their profile, and/or close deals.

## 4. To do business (commerce)

For these attendees, business goals and sales numbers come first, but they still want to have fun (and network) along the way.



# Audience Acquisition

## The next generation is here, now

As part of a rapid and ongoing generation shift, Gen Z has overtaken baby boomers and is expected to become the No. 2 workforce generation by 2030.

What does that mean for you?

The current landscape is primed for smart planners to refresh their events and meet the shifting needs of attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors.

Today's event planners are targeting audiences from multiple generations who are motivated by different values and expectations. And designing experiences that reach younger generations is essential to boost audience acquisition.

Therefore, it's important to understand why attendees go to events, how to reach current and future customers, and what it takes to personalize experiences.

### 4 ways to find out what your audiences want from events

#### 1. Event surveys

Collecting information based on expectations and experiences

#### 2. Behavior mapping

Measuring attendee sentiment using event tech such as Zenus AI

#### 3. Marketing personas

Creating characters based on your audiences' characteristics and behaviors

#### 4. Brand engagement

Track what motivates audiences to interact with your brand before, during, and after the event

**Pro Tip:** Knowing what your audiences value will help you define and reach potential attendees who exist outside of your internal contact databases (aka cold audiences).

[Learn more about using AI to gain audience insights →](#)



# Build Excitement for Generations to Come

## Keep the engagement going

### Before the show:

Using omnichannel marketing, tell your target audience how you're helping solve challenges.

### During the show:

Through personalized content, align show floor experiences with multi-gen audience expectations.

More on that in the upcoming section

*Take It to the Floor.*

### After the show:

Develop a website, app, newsletter, forum, etc., to stay in touch with exhibitors, attendees, and sponsors.

## FOMO your pre-show

To keep registration fresh in attendees' minds (and get them across the finish line), plan marketing touch points, like targeted digital ads, leading up to the show. Use them to promote:

- **Speakers**
- **Sessions**
- **Entertainment and networking**
- **Unique, on-site-only activities**

These targeted reminders also build excitement as the event gets closer. Round out ads with helpful content that makes planning and personalizing their trip super easy.

## 6 tactics to create a post-event strategy

1. **Post highlight reels** across social media.
2. **Use influencers** to recap the experience and highlight key takeaways. Take advantage of their audiences and thought leadership.
3. **Summarize event content.** And make it accessible! This creates easy sharing and memorable lessons.
4. **Deliver the content** over time for those who couldn't make it and as reminders for those who did.
5. **Get feedback.** Use polls and surveys (before, during, and after) to learn what went well and what you can do better next time.
6. **Promote what's next.** Great experiences create the desire for more. Let attendees know what to look forward to!

Take a deeper dive into conference crowdsourcing →





# Trade Show Engagement

## Take it to the floor

To truly maximize the impact of a live, in-person experience, take advantage of your prime real estate — the show floor.

Think of this space as a place to create curated “experience zones” for personalized engagement — for learning, hands-on experiences, networking, and entertainment.

By creating different experiences throughout your event, you can empower attendees to engage with what is most meaningful to them.

Which leads to memorable experiences and lasting connections with your brand.



# Design Around Personalized Engagement

## The zone must go on

Today's multi-gen audiences are looking for personalized experiences that cater to their specific interests and needs.

The answer? Experience zones (e-zones) — designed with specific show dynamics, audience locations, and key topics in mind.

There are three components to a successful e-zone approach:

### 1. Curated spaces

Use destinations on the floor to offer learning and discovery, prime interest in exhibits, and deliver varied content and unique experiences to drive return visits.

### 2. Feature areas

Highlight new innovations, offer space for spirited discussions, networking, and hands-on learning, as well as curated content.

### 3. Partner opportunities

Extend exhibitor presence and partner opportunities — there are unlimited ways to monetize and participation can be incentivized.

## Everyone benefits

While planning a personalized show floor that works for your attendees, let's get exhibitors and sponsors into the mix (and make sure it works for you, too).

### For your exhibitors

Aligning relevant exhibitor products, content, and learnings with individual experience zones elevates the experience for everyone.

### For your sponsors

Sponsorships offer a win-win with recognition, affinity, and content — all of which help with marketing and sales.

**Pro Tip:** Partner with sponsors to thoughtfully integrate their content into experiential elements versus traditional signage.

### For you and your organization

Attracting and retaining sponsors and exhibitors can add new dimensions to your events. They can increase audience engagement and provide more meaningful impact, which elevates the event's overall success.

Because you need to make the experience a success and feel good about the process, here are some final takeaways to make your event stand out today and tomorrow:

- Zones that can grow or shrink as needed
- Spaces that can transform on the fly
- Experiential activations that increase your traffic
- Create greater ROI for your exhibitors

**Find more zone planning tips →**





# Event Measurement

## From quantity to quality

Once you're able to connect data (the numbers) to the bigger picture (the why), everything else (revenue, sponsorships, brand awareness, and attendance) will fall into place.



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# Aligning metrics

To build your data collection strategy, establish your event goals (lead generation, brand awareness, education, networking, etc.) These objectives will help you measure success and gain insights based on audience wants.

Attendance	Find out who showed up <b>VALUE:</b> refine targets and personalized experiences
Satisfaction	Determine quantity of event experience <b>VALUE:</b> identify specific areas for programming improvements
Financial	Calculate ROI <b>VALUE:</b> determine which content resonates with attendees
Conversion	Measure show impact <b>VALUE:</b> connect event activities to tangible business results (quantify your event's impact)
Exhibitor	Track exhibitor success <b>VALUE:</b> demonstrate a clear ROI by connecting event activities and tangible business results







**Translate your data into action →**

## Establishing the data cycle

The key is capturing data consistently and completely across the attendee journey. Based on where you are in the show process, here's how you can approach collecting data:

### Pre-show

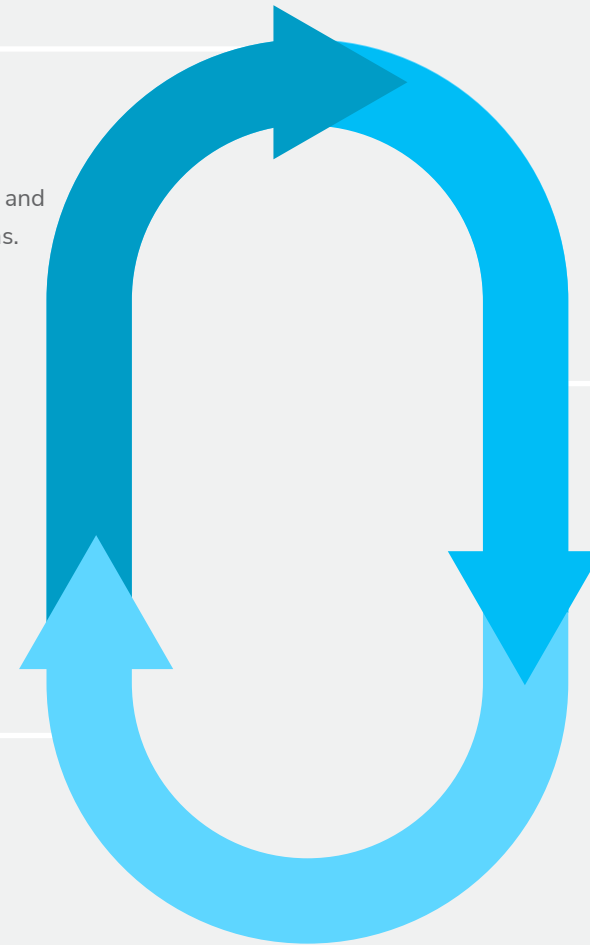
Conducting surveys to establish benchmarks, targeted questions on registration websites, designation markers on badges for networking, and implementing goal-tracking systems.

### Post-show

Mobile app analytics, session attendance tracking, logic-based survey branching, non-attendee research through focus groups, and sales conversion tracking timelines.

### During the show

Social media sentiment analysis platforms, real-time polling applications, tablet surveys for immediate feedback, and behavior mapping.





As an event planner, you've got a lot to manage — but these new strategies to build audiences, refresh the in-person experience, and then measure attendee behavior will help you elevate and grow your event in a whole new way.

Ready to create an event for the ages?

**Let's chat →**