

The Meeting Experience

Out-of-Ballroom Experience

“A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

U.S. Chief Justice Supreme Court

People grow through experience if they meet life honestly and courageously. This is how character is built. **Eleanor Roosevelt**

The meeting experience doesn't always have to be confined to the theater or ballroom. Make the entire venue, all the agenda items (breaks and dinners included), an experience. In short, expand the meeting experience and take it outside the ballroom. Turning meetings into experiences, gives you full benefit of the face to face experience for your group. Face to face meetings, are the way to go. Recent research conducted by the IMEX Group in partnership with the Meetology Group found that live, in-person meetings significantly outperform both video and voice-only when it comes to generating creative ideas, and increasing your ROI for a meeting. In fact, results show that, on average, face-to-face, onsite meeting participants generated 30% more ideas than those in virtual meetings whether the meeting vehicle is phone or video with audio.

Taking your meeting the additional step by creating a true meeting experience, versus merely a meeting room in which you can talk at your audience; can add greatly to the ideas and work generated at a meeting. Once you take that step, think about the out-of-ballroom experience as well. This can help get your message out prior to meetings, expand and enrich the meeting while at your venue, and continue the momentum after.

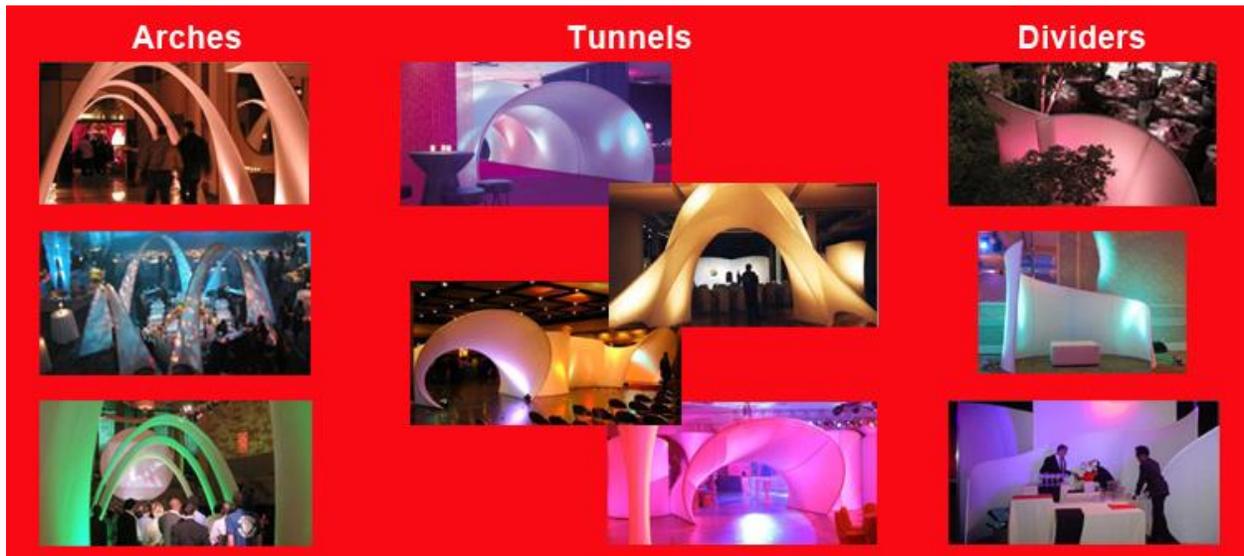
Here are a few bullet points that will help you do that, we have individual white papers for each of these elements available online or via email. Please consider some of the following suggestions to get more return from your meeting dollar.

- Décor Outside the Ballroom
- Social Media
- Floor Talkers
- Photo Booths
- Large Lighted Banners Around the Room and Venue With the Years Successes Posted for all

DÉCOR OUTSIDE THE BALLROOM:

Make the areas outside your ballroom belong to you and your group. Create something dramatic, and still stay within a reasonable budget. This type of décor only knows the limits of your imagination and our budget. It can be as simple as wall lighting, or mixing wall lights with gobos. It can be adding physical set pieces that change the outside lobby into YOUR break area. Having a group dinner or awards in a different venue or room? Utilize the same elements and move them around. The more you can do to bring the audience experience to every aspect of your meeting, the more return you'll get from the meeting, and HAVE FUN!

- Break areas
- Entrances to the ballroom
- Breakout rooms
- Dinners/Awards



Social Media:

Get social. . . it's time. We have a template for a social meeting application that is especially configured for the meeting experience. Since it's a template that is changed for your look, company, and logos, it's very affordable. If you have your own, use it or use ours. If your meeting is too small to warrant a budget for social media, then open a meeting facebook page or some other social application and get onboard. The most important thing is that you take the opportunity to get your meeting experience started well before the meeting, build the momentum during the meeting dates, and keep it all going after the meeting is over. Let everyone enjoy the full benefits of social media within the meeting experience, and gain even longer lasting effects. Some elements to consider:

- Picture Posting
- Agenda Posting
- Alerts for Changes in Rooms or Agenda
- Chat (be sure to monitor)
- Discussion Topics (get everyone working on the issues that are important and keep the ideas flowing well after the meeting.

Meeting Professionals International recently reported on a major research effort that includes insights on coming demographic shifts and other drivers of change. Some highlights:

- **Gen Y resents being asked to disconnect.** From teachers using mobile phones in classrooms to speakers having to adjust to audiences looking down at tweets, social media already has changed how people interact. The key is to set rules that meet the expectations of multiple generations.
- **Attendee expectations will continue to grow.** As people become more tech-savvy, the paper notes, they will expect more from events. They look for methods that will make the in-person event experience richer. The baseline is moving, and two technologies are up and comers in the near future.
 - Near-field communications and
 - Radio-frequency identification
- **Apps are a given.** According to statistics cited by MPI, smartphone users will represent 58% of cellphone users in 2015. Event apps will become as expected as Wi-Fi – the desired way to deliver content and navigation and record attendance at meetings.
- **Ambient intelligence will know what you want.** Ambient intelligence emphasizes people and user experience and ensuring ultimately that the technology disappears into our surroundings until only the user interface remains visible to users. Imagine a meeting where the actual “computers” have disappeared but the technology is integrated into the environment, sensing and adjusting to attendees’ needs. These will become hot topics for venue managers and meeting professionals.

Floor Talkers:

The use of floor talkers is an overlooked and incredibly in-expensive method of extending the reach of your meeting and message. Simply put these are floor decals, that can now with current technology be placed on carpet (with no harm to the carpet), hard surface flooring, and even on exterior ground surfaces (concrete, cement, tile etc.). You should get the OK from your venue first, even send samples so they can see there will be no harm done to the carpeted surfaces. Make sure your vendor uses the proper adhesives that will not harm soft surface flooring.

Floor talkers can take all sorts of forms. Footprints from the elevators to your meeting room, your daily agenda placed on the floor in a large format will become a central gathering point throughout your event. Use logos and footprints walking into all your breakout rooms. At your coffee break area, place your messages, and even put them on coffee themed graphics. Brand the venue not as a Hyatt, Hilton, Marriott, but as YOUR venue, this is the site of YOUR meeting. With the newer adhesives you can even put some on the walkway directing people to your poolside awards luncheon. The newest materials won't scuff, and won't curl up but you must get separate versions made for each of the three surfaces (carpet, hard, and exterior). There are plenty of online companies that offer floor decals but please be careful, they are cheap and . . . well, they're cheap and you get what you pay for. If you get Floor Talkers from a reputable company you'll not spend a great deal of money, you can make a statement, and create a presence for as little as \$ 100.00. Typically for a large meeting, for say 400 people I recommend a budget of between \$ 400.00 and \$ 2,000.00. Use your theme logo, company logo, stock imagery, and make it fun. Create an inexpensive out-of-ballroom experience with Floor Talkers.

