

A woman is seen from behind, sitting in a circular observation pod. She is looking out over a city and mountains. The pod is part of a larger structure with a complex, geometric design. The background is a bright blue sky with a sun flare.

Shelton Fleming

RE-IMAGINING CONNECTED EXPERIENCES

TIME TO EMBRACE THE ECOSYSTEM

CREATING EVENTS THAT PLACE
YOUR COMPANY AT THE HEART
OF A BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

09

EDITOR'S NOTE

Digital is reinventing the global economy. In the next decade two thirds of global GDP will be predicated on 12 business ecosystems. The evolution of these vast, inter-connected ecosystems will require companies to rethink events. Hosting your own event with strategic partners will be critical for some companies.



THE ECOSYSTEM IS KING. And hence so is the own event.

Hosting your own event is not a new phenomenon. It can be argued it's straight out of Steve Job's playbook, going back decades. You rarely if ever find Apple at an industry gig. They host their own, near-evangelical events. They control the agenda and curate the brand experience. It's also true that Apple was one of the first businesses to understand the power of an ecosystem. Today, Apple remains devoted to the cause with Google, Facebook and Salesforce, all adopting the same approach with their Camps, Zeitgeists, Dreamforce and Trail Blazer events, respectively.

We believe hosting your own event, and bringing the key players and business partners into your ecosystem, is the way forward for many companies. By hosting your own event, you don't have to navigate the bun fight with competitors. Instead, you get the full attention of customers and prospective customers. You can manage the industry agenda. You can take more time to share knowledge and your business plans, and even co-create strategy with business partners and customers. This paper explores the pros and cons of hosting your own event. Enjoy. Reflect. Challenge.

A stylized, handwritten signature consisting of the letters 'sf' in a cursive font.



TIME TO OWN YOUR OWN EVENT

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT TRADE SHOWS

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF OWN EVENTS?

WHERE TO START WITH OWN EVENTS

DO YOU NEED TO BE A BIG BRAND?

BUILD DESIRE AND CREATE COMMUNITIES

CREATE COMPELLING CONTENT

FINALLY. A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

‘OWN EVENTS’ ENSURE TOTAL CONTROL OF YOUR BRAND.

TOTAL IMMERSION. CLEAR FOCUS. UNDIVIDED ATTENTION.

Own events give you uncompromised interaction with customers and business partners. There's more time to forge real bonds. To share your brand's vision. More creative space to paint an accurate, incisive picture of your industry and its transformations. More mind space to collaborate and invent a collective role for your ecosystem in your industry's future. And more mindful space to blend thought leadership with memorable, useful social interactions.

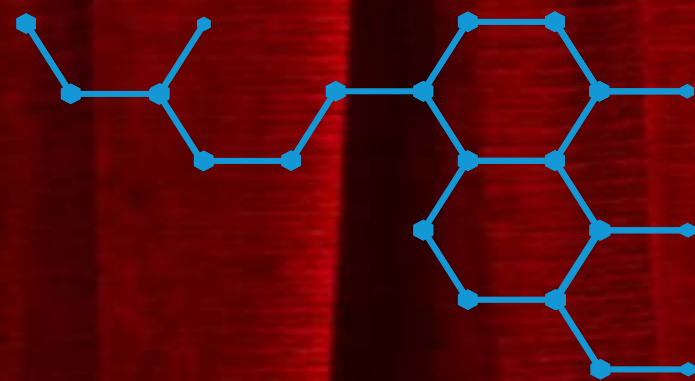


Imagine a couture show where the twenty most desirable designers share a catwalk, but each has just one dash up the runway. Chanel, Versace, Tom Ford. Something for everyone, but no time for anyone. Each dash lasts an average of 90 seconds. Each dash has different aesthetics, different projections, different music.

Doesn't a tailored morning at the Chanel atelier sound a lot more appealing?

CURTAIN CALL AT THE THEATRE OF NOISE?

The point is, trade shows have become theatres of noise. Brands have little option but to slug it out to be heard. Spending big bucks offers no guarantees. Standing out is hard, even when brands throw money at shows.



ECOSYSTEMS ARE THE **FUTURE**

TIME TO OWN
YOUR OWN **EVENT**


Trade shows are easily portrayed as war zones of competing brands in which you'll spend most of your time fighting it out with the enemy.

Meanwhile, own events put you in control, giving you quality time to build innovative, exciting and profitable ecosystems with the clients, business partners, collaborators and innovators you really want to work with.

A CO-CREATION OF UNEXPECTED ALLIANCES

The truth is, growth is no longer achieved in isolation. Ecosystems are driving growth. Co-creating and developing symbiotic ecosystems will enable you to tap into a whole world of surprising, unexpected alliances, maybe with innovative start-ups and scale-ups, as well as with proven world leaders, within and without your sector.

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PUT YOURSELF AT THE CORE OF THE ECOSYSTEM

To demonstrate a brand's value, and even purpose, it needs to show how it fits within a wider ecosystem. Octo is a perfect example. Octo's software platform harnesses driver behaviour data for the insurance market. Their data and systems are at the heart of the new mobility ecosystem. And that requires engaging numerous parties in the value chain. In the case of Octo, car brands, car sharing brands, insurers, public transport, SAP, Salesforce, Cloudera and McKinsey, all play a role in shaping the future of the mobility and insurance ecosystem.

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CASE STUDY

OCTO AND ITS ECOSYSTEM EXPERTISE

TIME TO OWN
YOUR OWN EVENT

Octo is a data analytics and software business. Octo's strategy is to develop the ultimate, digital platform for capturing driver behaviour and location-based data from diverse sources, to reinvent the automotive insurance sector and driving experience.

We are entering an era where drivers, insurers and mobility providers will have a much closer, more direct relationship. What has historically been a low involvement relationship with consumers will become high engagement with added value. Combined with AI, driver analytics software will provide more predictive guidance to drivers, as well as impact how premiums and claims are calculated, charged and processed. It's a disruptive technology, requiring insurers to rethink their business models and become part of a complex, digital ecosystem.

For example, drivers will get real-time feedback on their driving habits and potential road hazards, like volume of cyclists, weather and accident-prone zones. Octo's platform will also support the new age of mobility, where more vehicles will operate on car-sharing schemes or subscriptions.





WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT TRADE SHOWS

There are certainly tried and tested benefits to attending trade shows. A typical national show might have 10,000 attendees and 1,000 exhibitors. You might realistically expect 200 worthwhile visitors a day. International Shows could multiply those numbers by a factor of 10 to 20.

While for most companies, trade shows are generally worth the effort, it's crucial to think about what your goals are and why you're really attending.

Are you trying to extend your relationship with existing customers?

Positioning your company within the market?

Generating qualified leads for new sales?

Countering a competitor's claim?

Introducing a new product?

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WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO AND WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT
TRADE SHOWS

- What is your target audience and what kind of a conversation would you really like to have with them?
- What is the message you want to convey?
- Is it one message fits all?
- Or is it a bespoke message, tailored and targeted to individuals?
- Do you need to co-create the future with your customers?
- What do you want to get out of the show?
- Do you want to bring home leads and sell your products and services, or do you want to create, enhance and build your image?

Once you've answered these questions, you might start to think that the trade show is not always the ideal environment in which to achieve your goals.

Maybe you could think about turning down the volume on your presence at trade shows and turning up the volume on private, more tailored events?



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A DISTRACTION OF IRRESISTIBLE IRRITATIONS

Ambient noise is certainly the big enemy in vast exhibition halls. Delegates can be easily overwhelmed by the endless commercial propositions, competing products, and attention seeking displays. Then there's the internal cabaret that plays in their heads. A playlist of appointments, emails, messages from home, lectures to attend and colleagues to see. Add to that hunger, thirst, tired feet, hotel reservations and flight anxiety and it's clear you have a lot of noise to contend with.

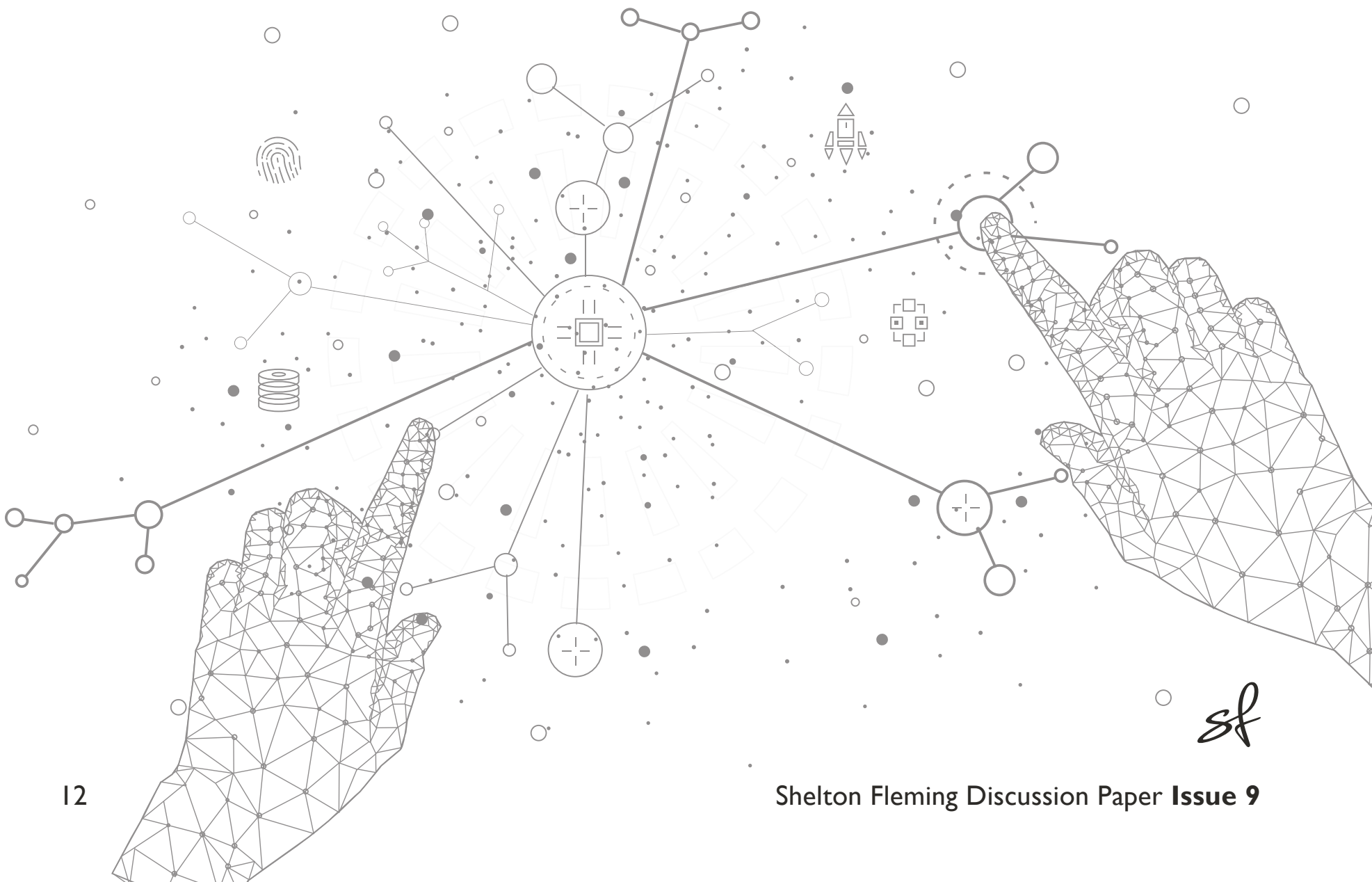
Trade show increasingly have more exhibitors from the wider ecosystem present, it can still be challenging to demonstrate how the different players are connected. The holistic nature of the ecosystem is lost.

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF OWN EVENTS?

Own events give you total control of your brand, and the holistic nature of the ecosystem.

Own events enable you to immerse your audience totally in the business ecosystem and brand. They ensure you get your guests' undivided attention, without the interference of other brands, the distractions they create, the noise they make and the unpredictability of the competitive experience they will deliver.



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CREATE A SAFE HAVEN



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS
OF OWN EVENTS?

Own events enable you to create a safe haven, in an atmosphere of your choosing, to share your brand's vision of a mutually beneficial future. You'll be able to tell an accurate, incisive story of how you see your industry develop and how, together, as a vibrant and creative ecosystem, you can continue to transform it.

LISTEN TO INSPIRING STORIES

Own events give you quality time with clients, business partners, collaborators and innovators. You can get together and plan future collaborations within the ecosystems you create.



RELEASE THE MAGIC

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS
OF OWN EVENTS?

Once you've taken the mind space to blend thought leadership with immersive exposure to your products and services, you can focus on creating memorable, useful networking and social interactions. Because, of course, the real magic will be in the unplanned experiences. In the connections, the ideas, and the inspirations in the in-between spaces of the gathering.

CASE STUDY

APPLE SAW THE FUTURE FIRST

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS
OF OWN EVENTS

The first big player to deliver a game-changing own event was Apple. And famously, ever since, they've continued to create their own, unique events. The original and much celebrated event was '1984'. It was an iconic moment in Apple history. It's often held up as a prime example of experiential marketing.

The marketing initiative was supported by the legendary "1984" commercial, aired during Super Bowl XVIII on January 22, 1984. By then, Apple's Macintosh computer was already the most anticipated personal computer release ever.

As a part of the rollout, Apple commissioned director Ridley Scott to direct a one-minute commercial for the Mac. The commercial was based partly on George Orwell's novel 1984, with the role of Big Brother being filled by a man dictating to the masses from a giant screen, only to have a hammer-wielding woman run up and destroy the screen, freeing the people. The "Big Brother" motif was a veiled reference to IBM, Apple's main competitor at the time. The commercial, shown only once, is considered a major turning point in the marketing of computers.



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WHERE TO START WITH OWN EVENTS

WHAT ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR YOUR EVENT?

Once you've decided to create your own event, how do you start to plan it? How do you begin to organise it? What are the building blocks and who do you plan to collaborate with? You might decide that the best route is to create a forum, combined with a masterclass, to map and plan together how a sector or ecosystem will evolve. Just like Octo did with Mobility and InsurTech. This is about bringing into the mix partners from the wider value chain and perhaps even giving them as much or more airtime than your own brand. That shows real confidence and true leadership.

You'll probably want to focus on thought leadership talks. Participative experiences where your guests feel they can express their ideas and explore their vision in an atmosphere of collaboration, but also in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect amongst equals.



ECOSYSTEM EVENTS BLUEPRINT

PRE-EVENT



TEASER VIDEO

SOCIAL MEDIA
SOUND BITES

E-INVITATIONS
SAVE-TH-DATE
REMINDERS

EVENT

BREAK-OUT

BREAK-OUT

BREAK-OUT

PLENARY

WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOPS

VIP LOUNGE

ALUMNI CAFE

NETWORKING
CAMPUS

START-UP

TECH PARK

CUSTOMER
INCUBATOR
ZONE

POST-EVENT

WHITE PAPERS

**CAMPFIRE TALKS
AT HIP VENUES**

**ONLINE B2B
COMMUNITY**

**PM XYZ ECOSYSTEM
INVITATION ONLY**

**FLASH TALKS
YOUTUBE**

INVITATION-ONLY

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN THE OWN EVENT ECOSYSTEM?

WHAT ARE THE BUILDING
BLOCKS OF YOUR EVENT ?

Possibly your optimum role is to create the ecosystem and then show off the major players in the value chain who will collaboratively shape the ecosystem. These may be unexpected contributors from creative hubs around the world. Maybe from Hackney in East London, the East Village in New York, Speicherstadt in Hamburg, or the M50 Art district in Shanghai. You never know.

Over time, you might be able to ask partners to invest financially in having a seat in the ecosystem and a role in the event. After all, you're creating a unique platform for the marketing of your business partners' brands, as well as your host brand.

Then it's all about being the enabling host, not making a hard sell, and positioning your host brand as the facilitator in the evolving ecosystem.

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DO YOU NEED A MASSIVE NETWORK TO START WITH?

WHAT ARE THE BUILDING
BLOCKS OF YOUR EVENT

Scale can certainly help here. If you're in network solutions and you're a player the size of Nokia or Cisco, your tentacles stretch far and wide. Already, activities and industries pivot around your narrative.

If you're a new disruptive player, like Octo, you need to be building a platform that serves as the hub and catalyst for business transformation. Whatever your game, your size and your reach, it's all about being bold and asserting thought leadership.

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**DO YOU NEED TO BE
A BIG BRAND?**

**IT PROBABLY HELPS TO BE A
BIG BRAND, BUT IT'S NOT ESSENTIAL.**

A big brand often has a pivotal role in the ecosystem. However, it's also about digital platforms, and this can mean that start-ups can play a determining role.

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BIG BRANDS UNLEASH INVESTMENT AND KUDOS

Most big brands have the kudos and funds to host their own event. Their role in creating the platforms to enable the hyper-connected world and IoT uniquely positions them in many ecosystems.

For example, Google host many multi-million dollar events, like Google Zeitgeist and Google Camp, for their ecosystem and their customers. These events bring diverse people with disparate perspectives together to explore and debate where our world is heading.

Google Zeitgeist is the tech giant's annual thought leadership conference, bringing together over 300 C-level executives and Google partners for two days of speaker sessions, evening events, networking, and sandbox exploration. The aim is very simple. To bring together a disparate group of global thought leaders to explore the spirit of the times through discussions of politics, the economy, technology, and culture.

DO YOU NEED TO BE
A BIG BRAND?

CASE STUDY

SALESFORCE EMPOWERS WITH DREAMFORCE EVENTS & ENABLES WITH TRAILBLAZER EVENTS

DO YOU NEED TO BE
A BIG BRAND?

Dreamforce gathers the entire Salesforce community, consisting of customers, partners, employees, and key stakeholders, for a fun reunion. It brings together thought leaders, industry pioneers, and thousands of our peers for four high-energy days of learning, inspiration, equality, and fun.


With more than 2,700 sessions and thousands of live solutions from the world's largest cloud ecosystem, Dreamforce tailors content specific to every industry, role, and company size. Dreamforce is billed as four days of inspiration, giving back, and having the time of your life with fellow Trailblazers, all at the largest software conference in the world.



**MORE THAN 165,000 ATTENDEES
FROM ACROSS THE WORLD ARE
EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE 2019 EVENT
IN SAN FRANCISCO.**

YOUNG BRANDS AIM HIGH

DO YOU NEED TO BE
A BIG BRAND?

A person wearing a white dress and a backpack is climbing a tall, reddish-brown rock face. The person is seen from behind, reaching up with their arms. A rope is visible, attached to the rock. The background is a clear sky.

Of course, a young ambitious brand, like an Octo, can punch above its weight and lead in a new space, like the future of mobility or InsurTech, by being the catalyst that brings an ecosystem together.

However, if you're a start-up you probably want to be on your third round of funding to make the investment comfortably.

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BUILD DESIRE AND CREATE COMMUNITIES

**OWN EVENTS WILL ONLY BE JUDGED A SUCCESS IF THE RIGHT PEOPLE
TURN UP AND TUNE IN. AND IF THEY STAY TUNED IN, AFTER THE EVENT.**

So how do you target, entice and captivate the best people, pre-event?

How do you make sure they not only sign up, but also actually turn up?

Then, once the event is over, how do you ensure they play an active role as a contributor to your post-event community?

KICKSTART A COMMUNITY

**A CAREFULLY
CONSIDERED AND
CONSTRUCTED
CAMPAIGN WITH
MANAGED, PRE AND
POST EVENT ACTIVITY
IS THE OBVIOUS
ANSWER.**

**BUILD DESIRE AND
CREATE COMMUNITY**



ORCHESTRATE A COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN

At this stage your pre-event communications strategy might include teasers to encourage registration, with early bird advantages, such as restricted entry meetings or VIP talks. You might even consider a VR experience, sent with a VR headset to top level targets. These would be followed by hard copy, quality invitations, pre-registration emails and chaser GIFs.

BUILD DESIRE AND
CREATE COMMUNITY

Post-registration, you can build interest and anticipation with emails that act as content teasers and a personalised invitation to join the event community app.

Post-event activities could include personalised, post event, thank you emails, an ongoing app experience and invitations to mini, live satellite events. Of course, you can also share all the collateral from the main event through the event app.

This means that even after the event, once the dialogue has a life of its own, you can feed your growing community with new, thoughtful observations that keep the debate fresh. That way you'll grow and develop an ecosystem whose life continues long after the event has finished.

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A photograph of several microphones on stands, with one in the foreground being in sharp focus. The background is a blurred stage setting.

CREATE **COMPELLING CONTENT**

Focus on the event theme and identity with your own brand acting as a light guide through corporate colourways.

GIVE ROOM AND OXYGEN TO YOUR PARTNERS AND GUESTS. ALLOW THEM SOME OF THE LIMELIGHT. IT WILL ONLY REFLECT WELL ON YOU.

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HOSTING YOUR OWN EVENT WILL ENABLE YOU TO INTEGRATE INTO YOUR CLIENTS' AND PARTNERS' INNOVATION AND SALES CYCLES EARLIER. BEST OF ALL YOU'LL HAVE A CAPTIVE, RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE. AN AUDIENCE THAT IS UNDISTRACTED BY AMBIENT NOISE AND THE ATTENTION OF YOUR COMPETITORS. AND IF YOU'VE SKILLFULLY MANAGED YOUR PRE-EVENT CAMPAIGN. THEN YOUR AUDIENCE WILL BE ENGAGED, ENTHUSIASTIC AND EAGER TO CONTRIBUTE.

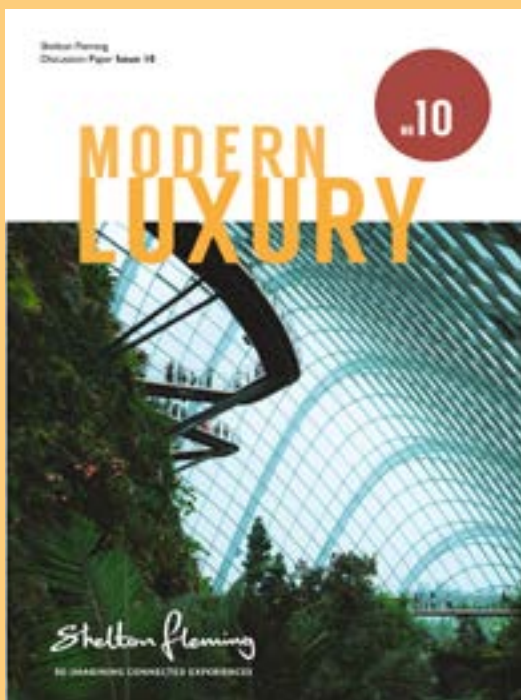
FINALLY. A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

You'll also be able to control the quality of the partners you introduce into the wider ecosystem. And position your brand as the creator of an inclusive, collaborative and empowering experience. And after the event, at the heart of the vibrant community you've enabled, you'll be positioned facilitator within the ecosystem you've created.



WE HELP BRANDS REINVENT THEMSELVES BY MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH PEOPLE. WE DO THIS BY HARNESSING CREATIVITY, TECHNOLOGY AND DATA, TO DELIVER INTELLIGENT AND ENGAGING EXPERIENCES.

Shelton Fleming
RE-IMAGINING CONNECTED EXPERIENCES



Download our other recent publications on live events and collaboration.

#10 Modern Luxury

7# Sustainability: The Main Event

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Our views aim to stimulate discussion rather than provide specific recommendations. We'd encourage you to work with us, or an equally qualified partner, to analyse your activities, agree your desired outcomes and decide on a strategy to achieve them. This will enable you to find the solution that's best for your event and business. Every live or virtual event has unique requirements and, as such, the technologies, methods and concepts deployed should be evaluated against your brief. © Shelton Fleming Associates Limited.