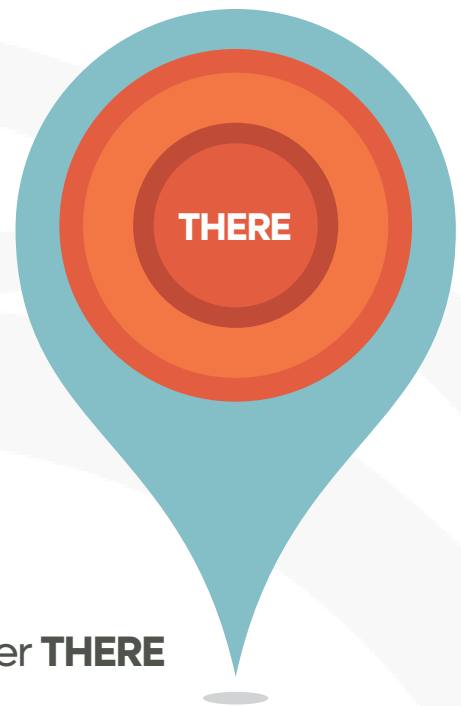


# Use Technology to Engage & Connect With Your Audience Like AT&T

Insights from “Beyond the Room:  
The Four Phases of Community”

Meet your customer **THERE**



## AT&T Goes Beyond Connecting Phones, TV & Internet

Like other brands challenged to connect with consumers amid lockdowns, AT&T pivoted to virtual. They held virtual college job fairs with AR-powered “endless runner” games that featured attendees’ faces during challenges & launched AT&T Station, its VR space, offering opportunities to hang in immersive environments, watch Max trailers, play games with friends, or buy avatar outfits from partner 100 Thieves. These activations didn’t just put attendees in the same space. Instead, they put consumers front & center, facilitating connections between fellow virtual attendees and the AT&T brand. They integrated technology while earning audiences’ participation via gamification, immersion & customization.

Today, as in-person events continue to rise, AT&T has integrated digitalization & experience tech into their sponsored sports activations. For the 2023 NBA All-Star Weekend, the brand’s activation invited consumers to take 3D body scans, which they customized to create personalized avatars for interacting with fans across AR environments. For the NBA playoffs, AT&T unveiled a 20-foot merchandise dispenser activated via QR code, rewarding attendees with prizes ranging from autographed basketballs to game tickets.

AT&T’s experiences are undoubtedly flashy, but there’s purpose behind the dazzle. Across their activations, the brand encourages engagement & moves from awe to fostering active participation. By connecting audiences to its brand & to each other, the experiences built brand loyalty & set up additional touchpoints, such as follow-up emails, webinars & online groups to keep their biggest advocates engaged post-event. They also impacted the bottom line: Following their sports sponsorships, AT&T’s cash from operating activities increased from \$6.7 billion in Q1 2023 to \$9.9 billion in Q2 2023.



## The key is intentionally designing experiences that connect & build brand community.

Increasing in-person & virtual engagement is a critical focus for today's brand events & experiences, and that can be achieved more effectively when tech is used to connect your brand to your customer. This becomes even more important for younger audiences: 50% of Gen Z & millennials view online experiences as "meaningful replacements" for offline experiences & 48% say they interact with others on social media more than in real life. Your consumers expect event & experience tech to connect them to your brand & other stakeholders, in large part because that's how they already use the internet & technology.

Ensure your event & experience tech resonates by understanding your key audience & their preferences, boosting engagement by using familiar tech formats. This makes your experience more approachable & can more effectively pull prospects into your sales funnel, locking in long-term interest that develops into brand advocacy. Using tech to connect, immerse & engage audiences in the way they want to participate makes the experience itself more memorable & resonant. It also increases the long-term bonds & relationships your brand must build with its stakeholders, leading to a thriving brand community. Used in this way, your event & experience tech can help support your entire sales funnel, not just its start.

Though technology doesn't *have* to be familiar to make an impact, it *should* help you achieve your brand marketing goals. Instead of adopting digital or choosing tech tools because of their newness or novelty, consider how they can reach & engage audiences where they are. Use technology to ultimately pull stakeholders into your brand's orbit, strengthening long-term customer relationships & boosting brand loyalty.

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*The pandemic has pushed brands from all sectors to reimagine experiential marketing. The future is anchored in the blurred lines of physical and virtual.*

— Jeannie Weaver, VP of Retail & Special Experiences Marketing, AT&T



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