

Core Four in Action: Create Brand Community in Today's Changing Landscape

From thousands mingling and sharing ideas on Trailhead & Salesforce Dreamforce, to 1,400 local Harley Davidson chapters reinforcing a love for the open road, to over 25 million Fitbit members sharing exercise goals and workout routines, strong brand communities are the perfect symbiotic relationship between organizations & their customers.

Community is both foundational to a healthy brand & an important, tangible touchpoint for the people in them. People attend events, but they join communities.

The historical approach to experience design has been to place the focus on the event itself and not what happens when people go back to their day-to-day routines. By thinking beyond what happens “in the room” of your event, you can use the experience itself as a powerful opportunity to develop connections that last long after it ends, which turn into post-experience community.

We're here to help you get **THERE!**

#1 Plan for your participants' needs & challenges.

Identify your audiences & set an inclusive foundation.

Designing events & experiences for community requires participant-centric preparation. Use audience research & data—from updated customer personas & empathy profiles to previous event feedback & current third-party research—to paint a clear picture of your attendees & make decisions based on their challenges & goals. Incorporate diverse voices & ideas from the beginning and evaluate your design's inclusivity along the way to ensure all can easily participate & are welcome.

Set purpose & tailor to your participants.

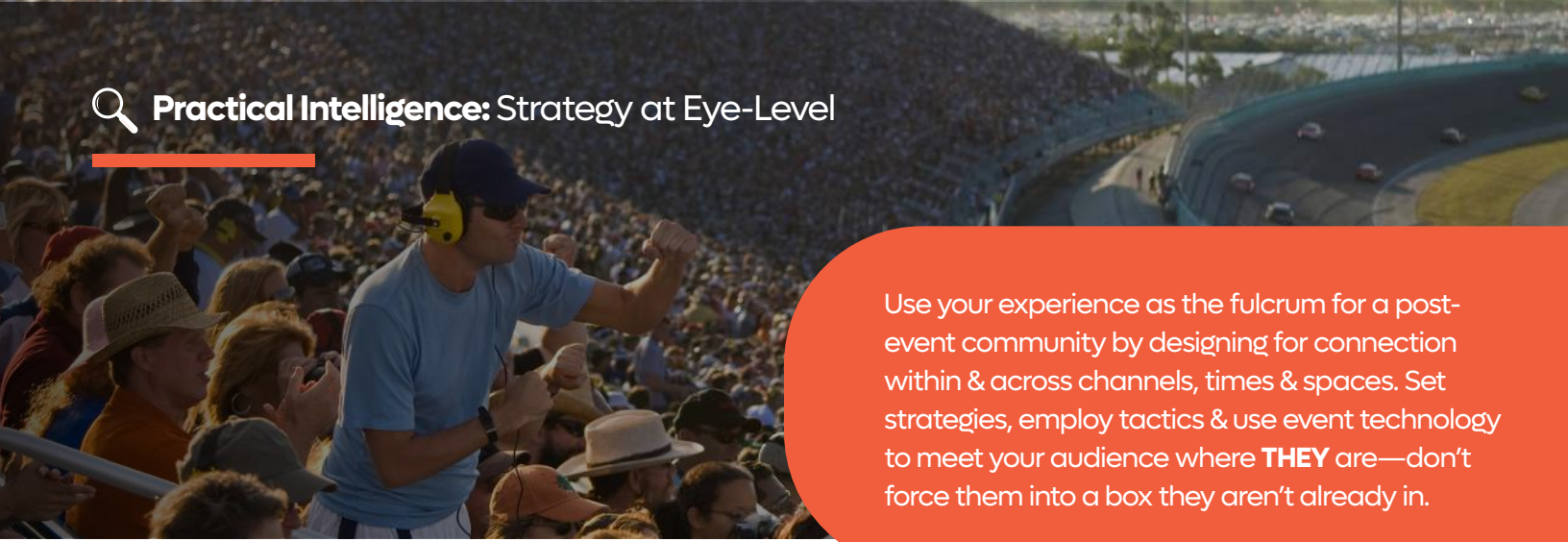
Jumping off from the latest industry & market intelligence, use pre-event surveys to drill into what specific personal & professional challenges they're facing, areas they want to learn more about, or skills they want to build. Setting your event's theme & the topics covered within your program is just the beginning—use attendee insights to adjust the angle, format or focus of your experience to help participants meet their goals & obtain the most value. Tackle challenges & concepts in innovative ways, answering questions your audiences knew they had & those they didn't know to ask.

Collaborate with your existing community.

Invite previous participants & community members to be an active part of your event or experience. Help participants learn from one another by offering opportunities to pitch ideas in interactive roundtables, share insights on panels or via mentorship activities, or spread their expertise by presenting. Incentivize repeat attendees to spread the word & invite others through social content such as hashtags, groups, or pre-made templates for social profiles, reels & stories. Incentivize to supercharge engagement: Prior to its WebexOne event, Webex partnered with McLaren in a contest where one winner got the chance to design the US Grand Prix flag flown by the drivers in Austin, Texas. All registrants were also automatically placed in a giveaway for a virtual meet and greet with McLaren F1 drivers.

Highlight community contributions & use feedback to tailor your experience design.

Offer interaction points before the event with surveys (whose results you then reveal during the event), Instagram stories highlighting previous attendees, the opportunity to pitch ideas in a collaborative roundtable, and access to matchmaking or mentorship.



Use your experience as the fulcrum for a post-event community by designing for connection within & across channels, times & spaces. Set strategies, employ tactics & use event technology to meet your audience where **THEY** are—don't force them into a box they aren't already in.

#2 Maximize connection touchpoints.

Play the role of connection matchmaker.

Help attendees interact & engage with people who share similar affinities, values, roles or challenges. Offer tailored & personalized connections through matchmaking or create opt-in groups that can help people find belonging through interest (such as PC-building or game art groups at an esports event), skills (such as a live activation roundtable or PR response case competition at a MarComm conference) or focus (such as a research or practice specialty for a healthcare event).

Help attendees choose their own adventure.

Attendees who are engaged & invested are set up to organically & authentically connect to other participants, so empower attendees to take control of their experience & choose how they engage & what they accomplish. Offer attendees several ways in which they can engage, such as small group discussions, hands-on exercises, Q&A panels, energetic keynotes, or behind-the-curtain tours & field trips. Gameify engagement by offering exclusive merchandise for completing a series of sessions or a conference-long group trivia challenge.

Make space for serendipity.

Intentionally schedule time & design communal spaces for attendees to interact & more deeply connect. Give attendees room to breathe, process your experience, consider what they've learned & increase their sense of well-being. Rethink your meeting space design by asking: Are there a variety of seating options? Have you included secluded areas to chat away from the main flow of traffic? Does your color palette incite creativity, or is it all dark, drab colors? Is it easy to meet other attendees while charging a laptop or eating a quick snack?

#3 Keep generating value after the experience.

Offer additional touchpoints where attendees gather.

Consider where your audiences regularly connect & collaborate, and use those areas to provide continuing, purposeful moments of connection. This can be analog (chapter meetings; citywide meetups) or digital (Zoom or Teams calls; Facebook, LinkedIn or Discord groups). Leverage existing groups or create new areas across channels, formats & tech that offer knowledge sharing, connection & collaboration.

Empower a culture of participation.

Designate community leaders or moderators to encourage engagement & guide your community to work together on accomplishing the predetermined outcomes from your event & future goals. Provide additional information & options through meetings, webinars & skill-building sessions. Prompt attendees to create shared responsibilities that help ensure community members contribute—and help community members realize that their contributions lead to future action & impactful change.

Create win-win post-event scenarios.

Incentivize community engagement & participation by recognizing active attendees & their contributions throughout the year—such as interviews & case studies featured on your website or blog, tagged social media posts, or webinars & virtual roundtables led by community members. Highlight & boost your community's insights & accomplishments, and in turn, gain increased loyalty, advocacy & brand awareness. Superpower these recognitions at each subsequent event or experience by designing spaces for community members' stories, insights & accomplishments. Everyone wins!

Get more insights to meet your customers THERE.

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