



the wow factor

Five Cost-Effective Ways to Create Buzzworthy Brand Experiences

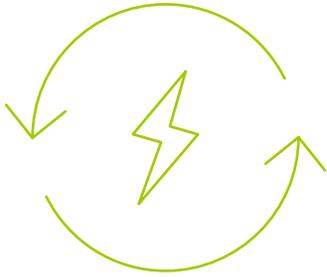


To create a must-attend event, you want your audience to feel empowered, engaged, and excited.

Give them an experience that goes beyond PowerPoint presentations and cookie-cutter exhibit halls. Let them drive session content and participate in meaningful activities that often have a multisensory appeal.

Providing such an experience may seem daunting for meeting planners. Keeping up with trends and being creative within budget constraints can be a challenge for organizers. Fortunately, there are many economical, yet innovative ways organizers can bring the wow factor to their events.

Here are five cost-effective ways meeting planners can create more engaging and memorable experiences for attendees:



1. Build Energy Through Engagement

Give attendees a voice through the use of a crowdsourcing activity. The exercise can involve something as simple as posting sticky notes on a display board or writing on a chalkboard.

Many event organizers are using feedback from these stations to develop session topics. For example, one association asked attendees to drop voting disks into a slot that corresponded with a particular session. The selections helped the host decide which topics were most relevant to the participants and determined the final panel discussion for a truly audience-driven agenda.

Why is engagement critical?



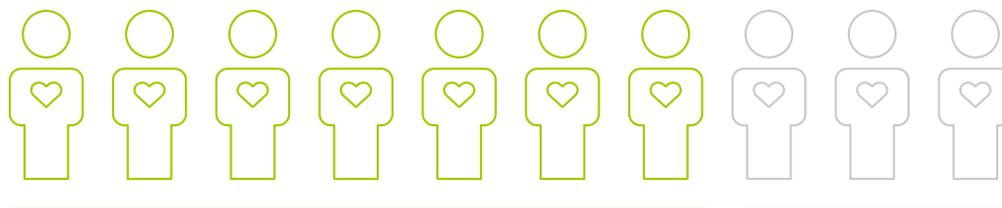
*Fact:
An audience's **attention span** drops after just 10 minutes!*



2. Embrace a Cause

Social responsibility has become increasingly important to audiences, especially to millennials. Working together for a cause is also an effective icebreaker activity and networking opportunity during events.

Event organizers can incorporate cause marketing into their events to provide a more meaningful experience for attendees. For instance, a clothing or cosmetics industry event may offer makeovers or wardrobes to disadvantaged people who are trying to re-enter the workplace. It can also encourage exhibitors to donate product samples at the end of the event to a special cause aligned with the event.



The many benefits of cause marketing:
69% of millennials want businesses to help consumers address social challenges.²

² MSL Group, *The Future of Business Citizenship*, 2014



3. Relax in Style

Create a relaxing, yet memorable experience for attendees to connect with one another in a more relaxed atmosphere. Set up lounge areas with stylish, fun furniture, such as blow-up couches or oversized chairs.

Consider incorporating activities that attendees can do at their leisure. An arts and crafts area, for instance, offers a low-key environment that appeals to people's creative side, while fostering networking opportunities. Other options to consider include arcade or table games, such as foosball or pool.

*Keep
attendees
smiling.*



People who take breaks to play games on their smartphones during the workday are happier at the end of the day. The same should apply to your event!³

³ Kansas State University, "Taking a Short Smartphone Break Improves Employee Well-Being," July 7, 2014



4. Hashtag with Purpose

Leveraging social media as an engagement tool is a no-brainer. But the effectiveness of social media during events can depend on the relevance of hashtags.

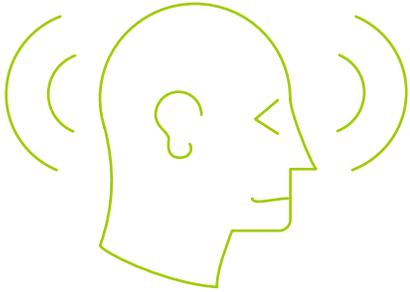
Hashtags can help raise event awareness, especially when tied to promotions or contests, such as scavenger hunts. To ensure success, keep these best practices in mind:

- Make sure hashtags are tied to the name of the event.
- Keep them short, while maintaining brand recognition.
- Make hashtags unique enough that they're easily distinguishable from similar events.
- Use the same name for annual events, but update the year. For example, an event called Health Expo can use #HE17, #HE18, etc. Updating it year to year can help with measurement and tracking.
- Research it before you use it to make sure it's clear and clean!

Nearly 9 out of 10 event marketers **feel their attendees share their event experiences or content, signaling more opportunities to leverage social media.**⁴



⁴ Event Marketing Institute, *The Viral Impact of Events*, 2015



5. Appeal to the Senses

Everyone has smelled, tasted, or touched something that reminds them of a particular experience. Multisensory environments can leave lasting impressions with attendees. Consider using props, lighting, and scents that tie in to a particular event theme or product name.

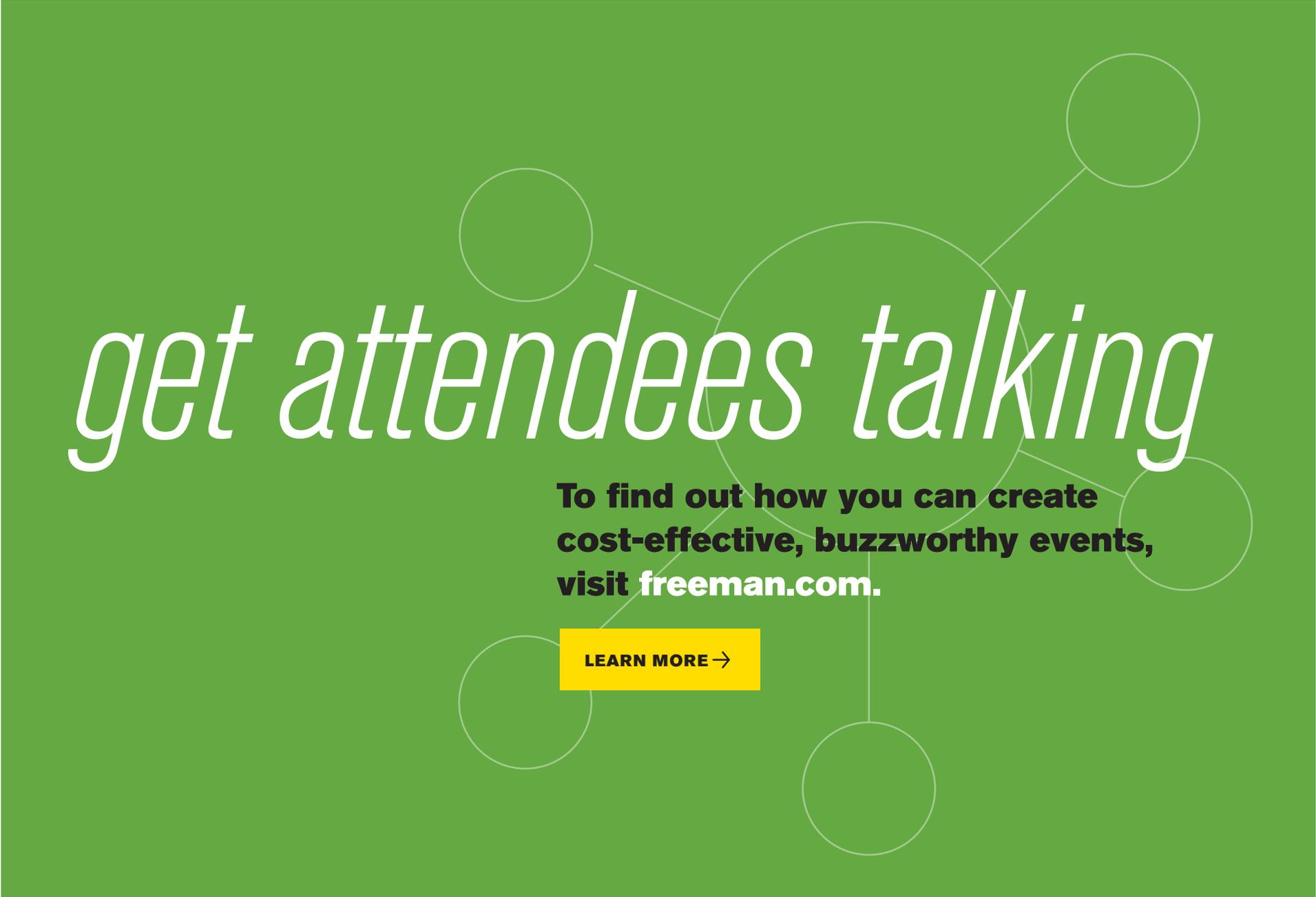
For example, one company created a camping environment with trails leading to demo areas designed like log cabins and infused with a campfire smell. The goal was to link back to a product with a trail-themed brand name and transport participants to a childhood memory to associate with the experience. Clever food options and arrangements based on regional, cultural, or party themes can resonate with attendees as well.

Why is it important to create a multisensory experience?



72% of millennials
crave experiences that stimulate their senses.⁵

⁵ J. Walter Johnson Intelligence, "Study: Constantly Connected Millennials Crave Sensory Experiences," January 2013



get attendees talking

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cost-effective, buzzworthy events,
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