What Makes Events Like Apple's So Effective?

An effective event resonates with audiences to create a lasting positive impression.

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Powerful events are a critical success factor for any business. In fact, 31 percent of marketers believe events are more significant than digital advertising, email marketing and even content marketing, according to Bizzabo. So it's no surprise that events are getting bigger every year. They're also getting more expensive. Many companies believe that the size of the budget is the key to the gathering's success, but that is a costly misperception.

Even giant organizations such as Apple have created high-impact events by leveraging the power of clear messaging and simple elements, like in its October product showcase. The company has successfully combined small theaters, brief videos and passionate leaders who can't wait to share the news about their innovative products.

The lesson is clear: The message is more important than the money.

That holds true even when the message is challenging. We worked with a substantial firm that was at a critical point. The company had a recent reduction in force, and morale was very low. The challenge was to validate the audience's concerns but also reassure them that the company was committed to moving forward together. A simple, text-driven video and

executive presentations sent a clear message: “Leadership understands your fears, but our focus is forward, and we need you to build our future together.” The room was tense, then surprised, then relieved and inspired.

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If we had used extravagant production and prizes to cover or ignore that firm’s recent changes and resulting anxiety, the event would have been an expensive failure. Instead, the simple event seized a powerful opportunity to send a clear message to all employees and create cohesion where there had been confusion.

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Here are a few corporate event planning tips you should remember to maintain a solid balance between money and messaging at your next event:

1. Surprises are expensive.

While a billion-dollar company like Apple might not be thrown off by a few extra hundred dollars on its event-planning bill, it could make a significant difference to your business. And considering that, according to the Bizzabo study, the average company puts 24 percent of its budget toward live events, that’s no small issue.

Make sure your event company will not surprise you with unexpected changes or charges. Request that the company details any and all changes throughout the planning and

execution phases in order to ensure that you won’t get charged any extra unless you sign off on updates.

2. Look through the audience lens.

You need to listen to your audience starting before the event, not just during it. Think carefully about what you want attendees to learn or know, what you want them to believe and what you want them to do differently. Be sure that your message will resonate; it’s the key to engaging your people and making your event both meaningful and memorable.

Cisco Systems Inc. took this approach when creating its Cisco Live 2017 event, which had more than 28,000 registered attendees. Its team created a New to Cisco Live program that concentrated on a niche audience within its larger event, and it reinforced its message of creating a good first impression and bringing people together throughout each element of the program.

3. Inform, inspire and interact.

Encouraging participation shows your attendees respect and invites them to contribute. For example, asking attendees to share a social post in exchange for a prize is a great way to advertise the event – and 96 percent of event creators agree that such content-based competitions are useful tools, Eventbrite has found. According to one study by researcher Gavin Kilduff, competition increases motivation in people, which leads to energy and enthusiasm.

In addition to introducing an element of competition, consider engaging with your audience by including members as presenters or to offer introductions. These powerful tools aren’t expensive or elaborate, yet they deliver a substantial impact on your event and your people.

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The right messages resonate and motivate your audience. They deliver clarity and enable commitment to your brand – and your business. And they are a far more powerful tool than an inflated budget.

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