Revolutionizing MICE Tourism: The Power of Design Thinking

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SUMMARY

Hi everyone, Today, I want to talk about how innovative event design is changing the way we think about conferences and events. It's not just about making things look pretty, but about creating a whole structure of experiences that aligns with a common mission.
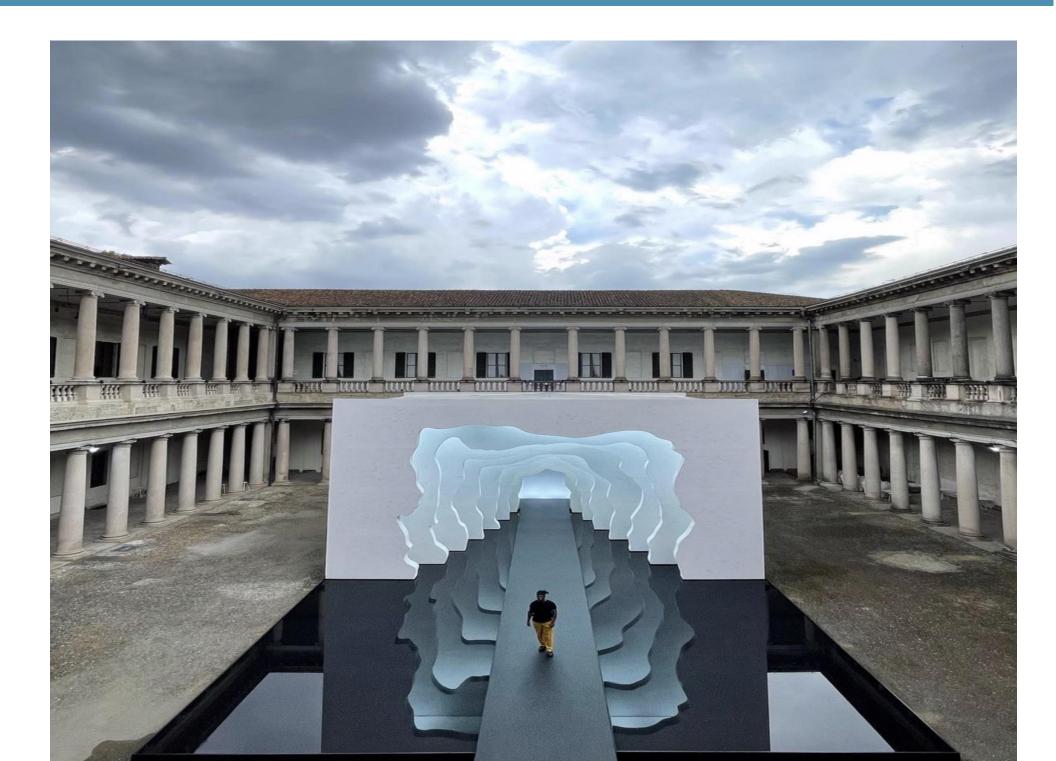
Design thinking is a structured process that helps event planners prioritize the needs of attendees, collaborate with different people, and test and improve their ideas. It's important because it helps event planners keep attendees engaged with relevant content and connect with each other using digital platforms.

By using design thinking in event planning, event organizers can create more engaging and impactful experiences for attendees. This approach puts attendees at the center of the event design process, creates more engaging and impactful experiences, and iterates and tests solutions to continuously improve events.

Thank you for listening.

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INTRODUCTION

Event design is a complex process that requires a holistic framework to achieve specific business outcomes. With the rise of digital platforms, events can now reach a broader audience and offer more opportunities for engaging experiences and sponsor activations.

However, this also means that event design has become more sophisticated than it was a few years ago. Unfortunately, many planners still associate event design with simple things like table centerpieces and drapery.

In reality, event design is a conversation about how to structure events at every step to achieve stakeholders' objectives.

MICE:

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) are four different types of events that fall under the umbrella of MICE tourism. Here's a simple breakdown of each type:

- Meetings: A meeting is a gathering of people for a specific purpose, such as discussing business matters, sharing ideas, or making decisions.

- Incentives: An incentive is an event that rewards employees or clients for achieving specific goals or targets. It's a way to motivate and recognize individuals or teams for their hard work.

- Conferences: A conference is a large-scale event where experts, researchers, and industry professionals gather to exchange ideas, present research findings, and discuss trends and developments in a particular field.

- Exhibitions: An exhibition is a public display of products, services, or art. It's a way for businesses or artists to showcase their offerings to potential customers or clients.

The key difference between Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) is **their purpose and the type of audience they target**

IDEO: THE BIRTH OF DESIGN THINKING

IDEO is a company that created a framework to help designers think creatively. The framework has five stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test.

1. **Empathize:** is about understanding the problem and the users.
2. **Define:** is about defining the core needs.
3. **Ideate:** is about thinking outside the box and exploring alternative solutions.
4. **Prototype:** is about creating a scaled-down version of the solution.
5. **Test:** is about getting feedback to improve the solution.

In the events industry, many planners are still learning about modern event design which uses design thinking. Only 20% of planners use event design software, making it hard to get attendee behavior data. Most planners still use spreadsheets. There are gaps in how the industry approaches event design, such as creating a strong event narrative and providing sponsor exposure. These are issues that not many people in the industry care about.

CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY BUILDING AT CES

CES, the massive technology conference held annually in Las Vegas, uses design thinking to build communities of attendees with aligned industry interests and to help people navigate their way through the thousands of sessions and activations taking place across the city. The conference is designed with empathy for attendee motivations, and the organizers seek to understand the needs and challenges of different attendee groups, such as those in the advertising and marketing space.

One example of how CES uses design thinking is through the creation of the C Space Storytellers stage and exhibit area, which was designed to cater to people in the advertising and marketing industry who may find the main show floor intimidating or overwhelming. By creating a more accessible and targeted space for this specific community, CES was able to better engage and connect with these attendees.

Another example is the CES Sports Zone Marketplace, which was sponsored by Turner Network and focused on digital media trends and Turner's push into esports. By customizing the content to a specific community within the larger show, CES was able to attract and engage a wider range of attendees, including those outside of the sports world.

How CES use design thinking:

CES uses design thinking to create a more personalized and targeted experience for attendees, building communities around shared interests and needs, and engaging them on a broader level. By understanding and addressing the needs and challenges of different attendee groups, CES is able to create a more inclusive and effective conference experience.

C2 & IMEX: THE FESTIVALIZATION OF MEETINGS

C2 Montreal and C2 Melbourne are two conferences that are known for being very creative and unique. They have events like SkyLab, where people sit in chairs that are lifted up into the ceiling for a special networking experience.

C2 International was created by the Cirque du Soleil and a marketing agency called Sid Lee, and the name represents combining creativity and commerce. This inspired the idea of creating conferences that are like festivals, with different industries and experiences coming together to create something new and exciting.

At the IMEX trade shows, C2 partnered with organizers to create new and unique networking opportunities beyond just appointments. They created a Live Zone with experiences like SkyLab and sensory deprivation rooms and used design thinking to prototype new user experiences.

The organizers always keep in mind the balance between creating a great experience and achieving the business goals of the show. They work together to come up with new and exciting ideas that will challenge them like never before.

How C2 & IMEX use design thinking:

C2 and IMEX use design thinking as a problem-solving approach to prototype new user experiences. Design thinking involves a creative and iterative process of identifying a problem, exploring ideas, testing and refining solutions, and then implementing them.

Both C2 and IMEX use design workshops to bring together people from different industries and backgrounds to brainstorm and create new ideas for their conferences. For example, C2 brings together scholars, performers, musicians, and creative agency professionals to create brainstorming groups that challenge each other to come up with innovative ideas.

IMEX also uses design thinking to prototype new experiential networking environments, such as the IMEX Live Zone, where they experiment with new ideas and test solutions to create a balance between business objectives and a great experience for attendees.

By using design thinking, C2 and IMEX are able to develop new and creative ways to engage attendees and create unique and memorable experiences that stand out in the competitive conference industry.

DESIGN THINKING TO ENGAGE GEN Z

The way events and meetings are designed is becoming more important to attract and keep the attention of Gen Z, who are born in the late 1990s and now entering young adulthood. Gen Z are digital natives and are looking for unique, genuine, and shareable experiences. They don't want to hear information they can find on their own, and they want to be entertained. Authentic experiences are vital for this age group. Gen Z likes events that are interactive, engaging, and that trigger emotions and memories. Creating the experiential element can be low-tech and simple, such as arranging seating in a spot for startup companies to evoke the feeling of a cafe. Design thinking is necessary for creating authentic event experiences. Data and feedback from attendees are essential to understanding what they want. Gen Z is interested in sustainable and environmentally friendly options, and they like intimate events that provide a chill space to meet people.

DESIGN THINKING TO ENGAGE GENERATION X AND Y

When applied to engage Generation X and Y, it can help bridge the gap between traditional practices and modern-day challenges. By understanding the unique perspectives and preferences of these generations, design thinking can provide valuable insights and opportunities to create meaningful and relevant experiences. This approach can enable businesses and organizations to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, while also engaging and empowering the next generation of leaders and innovators.