



EVENT HORIZONS

a purple paper

from the

ILEA Global Event Summit 2016

SCOTLAND





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Overview from ILEA's president, Jodi Collen, CSEP



As the world changes due to the effects of shifting social attitudes, economic uncertainty, technological advances and political extremism, people, businesses and governments are re-evaluating their attitudes towards business. In the modern world, more than simply to create profit and wealth, businesses and industries are increasingly challenged to prove their worth against a broad spectrum of measures: social and economic impact, waste reduction and carbon footprint are key examples. The events industry is not immune to these new priorities, which it must tackle along with other more localized issues such as the rise of digital and virtual meetings, relevance and quality control.

With the aim of creating the beginnings of a globally-engaging conversation on the future of the events industry, a global event industry first took place in Scotland in April 2016. Event Horizons 2016, the ILEA Global Event Summit, brought together twenty-eight industry leaders from the international events industry for two days of dialogue focused on a series of matters central to the core objective of enabling world leading events through exchanging knowledge, creating insight and developing new perspectives on key challenges and trends.

The summit was a collaboration between International Live Events Association (ILEA), Visit Scotland and IMEX Group, with support from technology provider Cvent and Events are GREAT Britain. It was hosted across multiple venues in Scotland, including Gleneagles and the EICC in Edinburgh and preceded by a visit to IMEX Frankfurt.

The summit's talking points, comments and their implications are outlined in this document. Now there is an opportunity for you to play a part, to continue the conversation and use this 'Purple Paper' as the basis from which to enhance your own selling proposition for the live events industry.

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THE QUESTIONS FOR DELEGATES

What is great about our Industry?

1. What is there to celebrate?
2. What impact does our industry have that as leaders we can be proud of?
3. What have been the most life-affirming moments events have created and what was the inspiration?

What keeps you awake?

4. What are the key challenges we should be worried about?
5. What is wrong with our industry?

Science of Events

6. How can we make face-to-face experiences even more valuable and even more meaningful?
7. What role can science and technology play in creating meaningful life events?
8. How can we use the force of technology in a judo like way and lever the inherent weakness of technology?

Collaborative Economy

9. What can the events industry do to realize the holy grail of the collaborative economy?

Events Under Threat

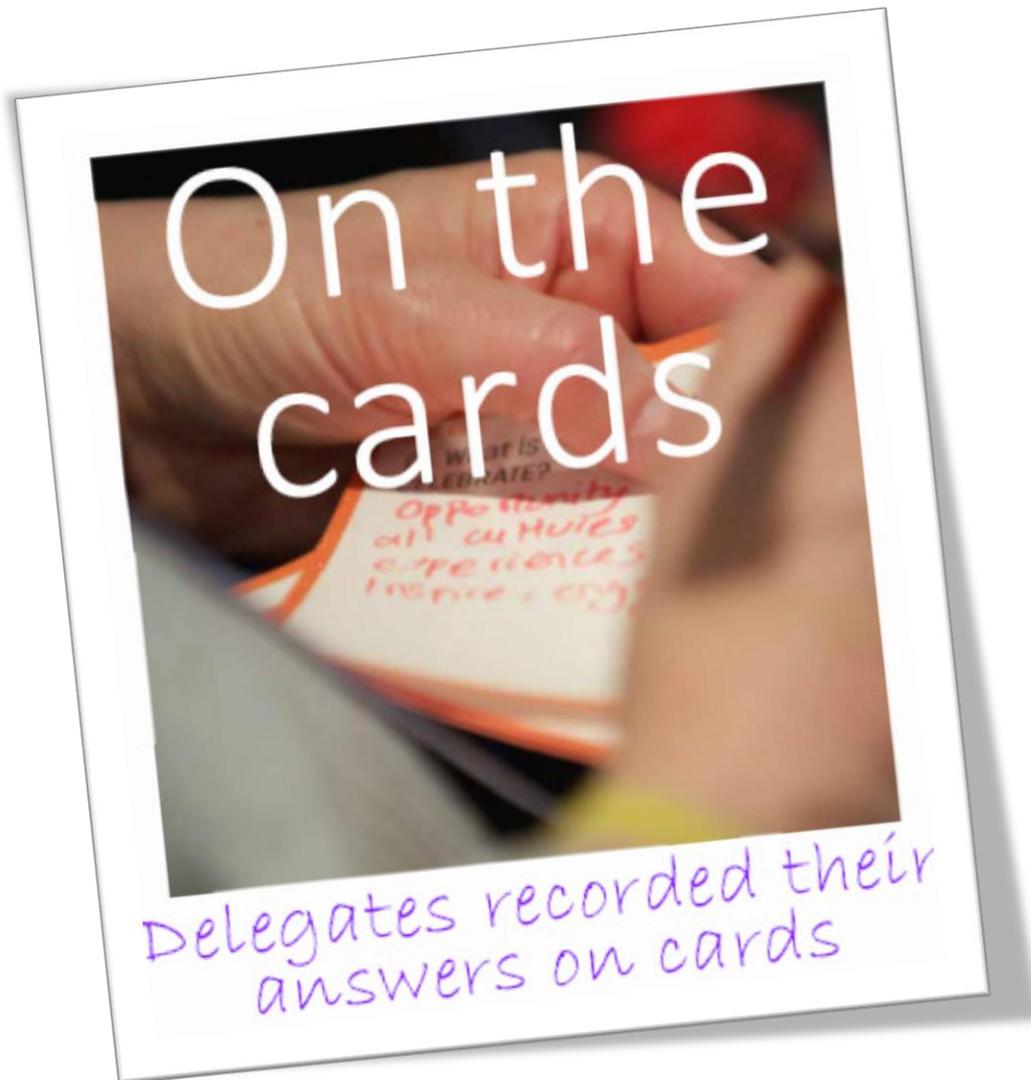
10. What are the key threats that will undermine the events industry?
11. How can these risks be mitigated in a way that adds value and delivers confidence?

Legacy Events

12. Is legacy here to stay and what are the opportunities here?
13. What action strategies could help us create legacy?

The Next Steps

14. What shall we do for our business and industry as a result of this summit?



The cards were collected, analysed and distilled into this detailed **purple paper** covering the findings of the summit.

WHAT IS **GREAT** ABOUT OUR INDUSTRY?

Delegates were asked a series of questions to ascertain an overall position on the broader question, 'What is great about our industry?' The results are an important step in determining its key selling points and ultimate purpose.

PURPLE POINTS

The champions of face-to-face communication

Diversity is embraced – all cultures work together

Knowledge and information is openly shared

We facilitate change

Considerable economic impact

What is there to celebrate?

Opening the summit by asking delegates to celebrate their industry helped garner a collective frame of mind that was enthusiastic and positive. The responses reveal a readiness to look at the wider picture focusing on cultural and economic impacts of the event industry across regions, nations and the entire world.



"Events impact every segment of society and human interaction is central to human existence"

"Our people – we build communities, share knowledge, create memories and special moments."

"Events have a huge economic impact both locally and nationally"

"Promoting face-to-face interaction is even more vital in the digital world"

"A vehicle for people from different cultures and countries to come together"

"We have the ability to create and change perceptions"



What impact does our industry have that as leaders we can be proud of?

A slightly different slant, posing a similar question, but with pride rather than celebration as the focal point, delegates spoke more of the human elements, of working together, bringing growth, opportunity and memories to people.



"The platform we create for great minds to work together"

"We fuel and facilitate growth – economic, personal, professional, spiritual"

"We bring awareness to causes"

"We enable people to connect, from world leaders to wedding guests"

"We produce special moments that leave a lasting memory"

"We create opportunities for youths and students"

What have been the most life-affirming moments events have created and what was the inspiration?

Delegates shared their own memories of inspiration they have drawn from the events industry. Again, the sentiment was overwhelmingly centered on human experience, community and endeavor.



"At CISCO we showed our audience how they had the ability to change the world"

"The chance to give back to local communities and create a legacy"

"Helping a community in Calgary come together to celebrate and raise funds at a post-flood concert"

"When America was given the chance to show its strength and the world its solidarity at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics"

What **YOU** can do

Believe in the power of events to change people and communities. Use your personal experiences to create compelling stories of positive change from live events. Tell your stories with passion.

WHAT KEEPS YOU AWAKE?

As industry leaders, the summit attendees have a profound understanding of the major challenges their industry faces in the global landscape of the 21st Century.

PURPLE POINTS

Safety and security fears

Digital and online communication

Communicating our value

The key challenges we should be worried about?

Safety and security fears

Wars and the perceived threat from terrorist attacks following recent events in Paris, Brussels and California make people nervous about traveling and there is concern that they will increasingly avoid venturing to meetings and events that are not deemed entirely necessary.



"Public safety and security - in light of the global situation, we need to still be able to create enjoyable and memorable events where people can feel safe."

"Fear of attending events."

"Risk of domestic terrorist attack"

Digital and online communication

As technology increases the opportunity for people to have meaningful 'virtual' meetings, there is a concern that the pressures from security fears, the weak global economy and the overall perception that live events are not necessary will lead to more organizations relying on digital formats to achieve their communication objectives.



"Digital and online experiences are dividing and segregating humans rather than enhancing the live experience."



Communicating our value

It was generally felt that the industry has been unable to articulate the value of live events to its stakeholders in business and government. Many felt that events organizers were not taken seriously as professionals and events were often seen as an unnecessary use of time and budgets, especially during the challenging economic



climate. Low barriers to entry enable even the most inexperienced to become event organizers, and this is detrimental to efforts to reinforce the value skilled organizers bring.



"To date, the industry has not been able to articulate our value – the value of live events – to the degree that makes us a mandatory part of business."

"Everyone can do our work – barriers to entry are low – there is a perception that we are not worth our time/costs. Therefore, we are not seen as a necessity as a good majority. Unskilled people entering the market make us all look bad."

"Policy makers do not understand or value our work either."

"We have an image problem, we are viewed as frivolous, unsophisticated and even unnecessary."

"We are seen as creative and not always intelligent and strategic. We haven't taken ourselves seriously either. And we cannot measure the value that we bring."

What **YOU** can do

Terminology matters - rather than referring to yourself as a party planner or event planner, brand yourself as a "strategic event specialist" or "brand engagement professional".

SCIENCE OF EVENTS

Advancing technology is both a threat and an opportunity to most industries. Recognizing the change it continues to effect in the events industry, delegates were asked a series of questions to determine how to improve the experience and effectiveness of events.

PURPLE POINTS

Gain better understanding of how technology can be used

Integrate technology with live events to enhance them, not replace them

Don't forget the importance of personal interaction

How can we make face-to-face experiences even more valuable and even more meaningful?

Views were split between making better use of digital technology to make the experience more engaging and eliminating it from the event entirely in order to force people to focus, concentrate and connect emotionally.



David Chalmers, marketing and events director, Cvent, presents the Science of Events



"Take away technology from events to force human interaction"

"How do we connect with people who have their face in a phone during an event"

"Contrasting how impersonal it is, allows you to show the power of live"

"Figuring out what inspires and hone in on what experience will accomplish that. Become better at creating human connections on an emotional level, so they feel more connected to one another, an idea or a thing"

What role can science and technology play in creating live events?

Those that supported the use of technology expressed pragmatism, believing there was an opportunity to learn more about delegates' wants and needs in order to create more relevant content. Technology was also seen as a vehicle to expand the scope of the event beyond the meeting room, engaging delegates before the event and after.



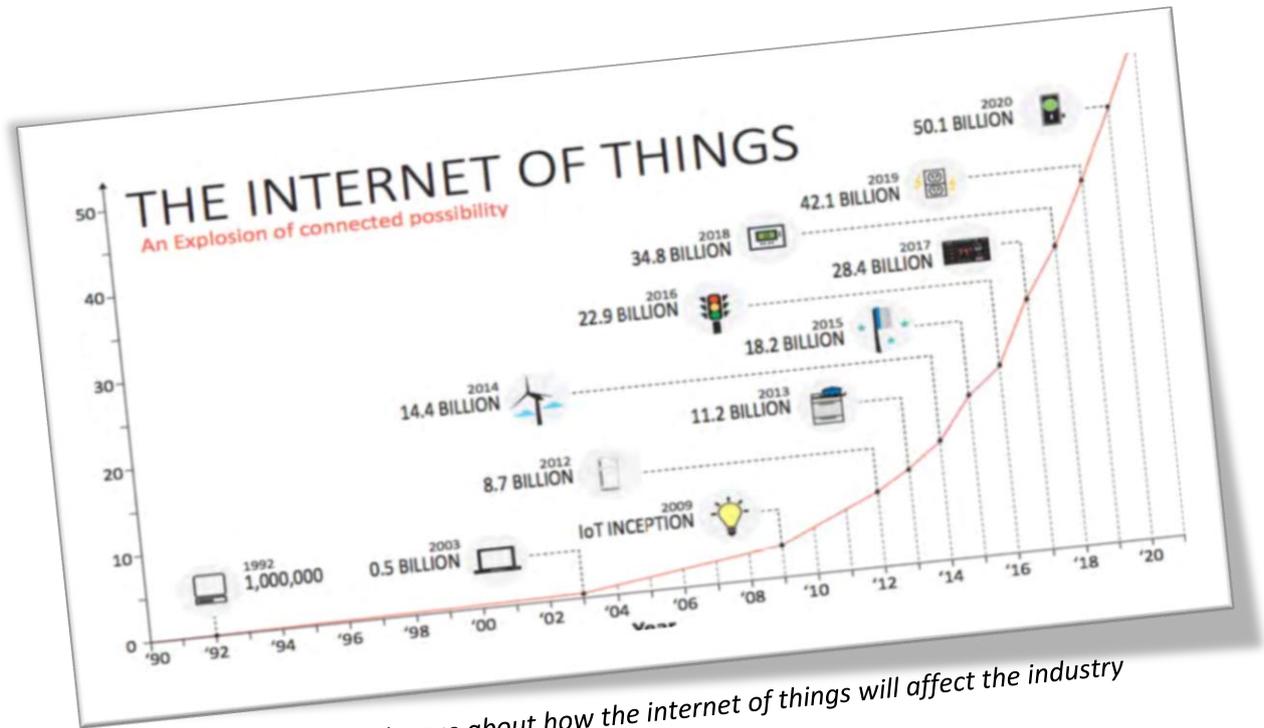
"Accept people are connected by mobile and make that central to the experience!"

"Remove the desire of delegates to 'self-preserve' the moment by doing it for them"

"Find a creative way to incorporate technology into events so it doesn't always feel the same."

"Engage those who attend – expand the boundaries of the event digitally"

Some delegates felt that technology and science could improve the event experience by making events more efficient and helping ready delegates for learning, essentially enhancing the impact of traditional event communication.



Delegates learned more about how the internet of things will affect the industry



“We should use what we know about the body/nutrition and the brain/learning to adapt our events to people and purpose.”

“Only use technology to augment human interactions and enhance experiences, not as a substitute for real experiences.”

“By allowing more time for the personal side”

How can we use the force of technology in a judo-like way... and lever the inherent weakness of technology?

A number of delegates felt that technology had a role to play, but that perhaps understanding of how best to use it was not yet fully understood. A feeling that mobile and social platforms were sometimes being used because organizers felt it should be, given their high cultural impact in such a short amount of time, was apparent and there was room to improve the way it is currently being used.



“Educate ourselves about technology and change and collaborate with people in those industries”

“Collaborate with the right people who understand technology so we are using it responsibly and that it enhances the live event experience”

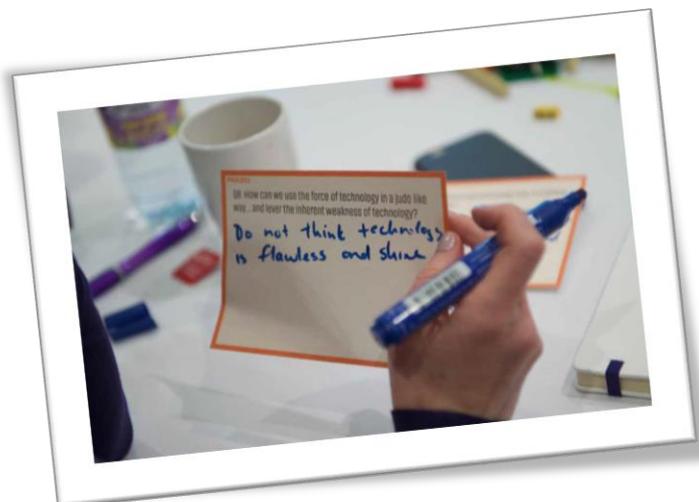
“Technology can help provide connections and authenticate experience when utilised properly. But it has to be leveraged completely and fully integrated”

“Technology must be used for a valid reason, not just because it is there.”

“Use technology to enhance personal experiences but not replace them”

What **YOU** can do

Take time to understand and keep up to date with connected and other types of technology. Be imaginative, use it at events in new ways. Experiment. Share what you learned.



COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

How can we use the collaborative economy?

In recent years, the world has seen businesses that are structured on a new business model of time, asset and resource sharing by multiple individuals, facilitated by connected technology, achieve rapid success, growth and almost instant global expansion. Businesses operating to this model are said to be part of the 'collaborative economy'. The two most notable of such businesses affecting the events industry are Airbnb and Uber.



Airbnb enables people to book almost any type of accommodation anywhere in the world. The online platform people can make use of their spare space, such as a spare bedroom or holiday home, and make it available for other people to hire for a set period. The property availability is promoted and reserved online.



Uber gives anyone with the use of a car the opportunity to earn an income as a taxi driver, simply by offering their availability online.

What can the events industry do to realise the holy grail of the collaborative economy?

The event industry holds many assets that during certain times of the year are not in demand, these include human resource, space and technology. The summit delegates saw pooling these assets as the primary opportunity for collaborative economy style businesses.



“Helping the economy and society simultaneously by unlocking the value of idle assets while also rebuilding social capital.”

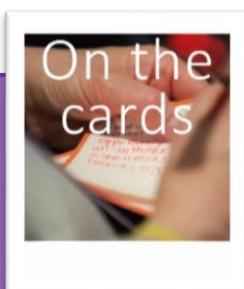
“AV gear share”

“Creating a platform for shared equipment/ staffing that is verified by event professionals like Angela’s list.”

“Event staff are not always busy all season – could there be a system to share them and know which are trusted?”

“UBER for transportation for supplies shared – transportation, as opposed to each supplier bringing own truck”

Others suggested making space more visible and available for a broader base of uses.



“Venueportal – viewing an entire city’s availability in one app. Like Air BNB for venues and real time updates”

“Use parking lots – rent them out – or use them for something that will give back to the community”

What **YOU** can do

Start a discussion locally on the sharing economy with your colleagues and networking groups. Seek to identify the threats and opportunities this kind of enterprise presents. Share your ideas.

EVENTS UNDER **THREAT**

With so much change and uncertainty taking place in the world, a broad scope of answers was given to the question of threats to our industry.

PURPLE POINTS

Guest safety

Industry relevance

Disruption

Quality control

What are the key threats that will undermine the events industry?

1. The threat and fear generated by global terrorism and cyber attacks
2. Event alternatives - virtual reality, video and digital conferencing
3. Climate change
4. Inexperienced and untrained planners
5. Inability to control negative messages spread through social media

How can these risks be mitigated to add value and confidence?

Delegates agreed that strategic planning, the creation of industry standards and education are key to ensuring the industry remains sustainable in the future, despite tangible threats.

Interactive presentations and lively discussions



“Plan a strategy to control perception”

“Create industry standards for measuring events impact and sustainability, as well as security”

“Education of risk to raise awareness of the main risks”

“Train the planners and people in venues”

What **YOU** can do

Be aware and take every opportunity to learn more. Identify the immediate threats to your events and your business and create individual strategies to overcome each.

LEGACY EVENTS

Legacy events bring long-lasting physical, socio-economic or cultural changes to a city or region, as a direct result from hosting the event. A principal example is the regeneration of large parts of east London, with new buildings, parklands and infrastructure, to accommodate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Legacy is seen as an important element of event organization, as it is an opportunity for the event to create lasting value and benefit for the communities that make it possible, thereby expanding the positive impact of the event to a wider segment of society.

PURPLE POINTS

Give back to communities

Millennials tend to place high importance on legacy activations

‘Is Legacy here to stay? If yes, what are the opportunities here?’

Almost all expressed the opinion that legacy events were going to be an enduring feature in event organization, citing the concept of ‘giving back’ as crucially important to the millennial generation.



“Giving back is more important than ever to nextgens. They believe in social responsibility at higher levels than any gen before them”

“Younger generations/Millennials are socially aware”

Changing perceptions

Giving back to communities through legacy events is considered an effective way to prevent the industry being considered 'unnecessary' and 'frivolous' and to promote its value. However, there is a realization that the reception of such events could be negative if the intention is not perceived to be genuine and if the legacy event is not a fully incorporated element of the main event.



"There is an opportunity to change the perception of our industry from temporary and frivolous to having a lasting effect – just look at Glasgow"

"Helping even more in the community, showing how we are valuable is good for our overall perception as an industry."

"We have to figure out how to make it true and real – authentic. They won't participate if they feel it is disingenuous"

"It can't be 'add on' it needs to be fully integrated."

"We need PR for the industry to leverage community impact and show the value of the industry as a whole."



Legacies: So what should we do?

To build on the current successes and to ensure the event industry gleans the most potential from legacy events in the future, delegates made several suggestions. Primarily they identified that lasting commitment, understanding and cooperation were the main characteristics the organizers of legacy events must adopt.



"Involve next gens in the process. Listen to what is important to your attendees."

"Polarise the legacy pre/post to reinforce the lasting value of the event"

"Work with destinations to identify and fulfil a need"

"Make the legacy something relatable to the event"

"Discuss with the client or venue to find out what we can do to give back to the community."

"Every event we do must have a legacy objective"



What **YOU** can do

Embrace legacy. Identify the legacy your events have or will leave and communicate it to the market. Build legacy discussions into the planning process for every new event, to determine what you can do to increase and communicate the legacy of the events you organize.

THE NEXT STEPS

The take away from all events is perhaps the most important aspect - what have the attendees learned? What will they do differently as a result of attending? What are the next steps?

PURPLE POINTS

Define our industry's value

Share knowledge and listen more

Keep talking

It is apparent from the delegate's comments that the summit has engaged them. They felt positive about the future of their industry and were keen to share what they had learned with their own teams and colleagues. It is clear that the largest issue the delegates felt must be addressed relates to how 'value' is defined in events.



"Our value is in our relationships and skills. If we behave like a commodity we will be treated like one."

"We need to be more confident about our values and importance"

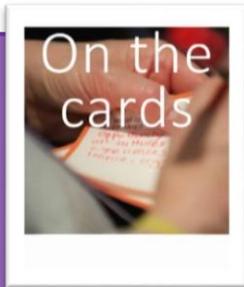
"We create a positive impact – social, economic, environmental. Every day. We do not articulate our success very well."

"We should talk up our role."

"We need PR to spread the word"

Just the beginning

Rudimentary actions that can be implemented immediately, such as ‘share and collaborate’, ‘listen more and be open’, were identified. However, rather than defining actions to overcome the industry’s largest challenges, the summit was seen as the beginning of a conversation that should be continued and expanded. Many ideas were taken forward ready for discussion amongst the larger industry.



“Keep the conversation going”

“Keep learning – keep moving forward”

“Share how you work and best practice”

“Reach out to people we can learn from”

“The economic climate makes it challenging to stay within our own values, as clients continuously look for discounts and bargains. We shall seek out new clients that allow our team to push their boundaries. We will not take a step back for short term gain”

“We need to work with clients at strategy level rather than implementation level. Like marketing and advertising agencies do.”

“We need to create a stronger identity for the industry and promote it through an industry wide campaign”

“Include people from different associations to gain their perspective”

“Share our quantifying impact with clients, community, charitable organisations”

“Challenge the ‘this is how we always do’”

“We have shrinking budgets, timelines and attention spans, but our clients have higher ROI expectations, increasing safety and security fears, increasing the pressure and concern on message integration, of shelf life of event themes.”

What **YOU** can do

Join the conversation. Every person in the industry should contribute. Share your thoughts, take on board those of others. Together we will develop a consistent message for us all to propagate.

The role of ILEA

Naturally, delegates felt ILEA had a lead role to play in moving the industry forward. The views expressed revealed they would like to see ILEA become more active and involved.

PURPLE POINTS

Be active and involved

Be a driving force for the industry



“Get ILEA involved more in the industry community”

“Revolutionize ILEA’s role so it can drive the industry”

“Be examples to local ILEA chapters”

INDUSTRY MISSION

In an attempt to define the industry’s purpose by using minimum words to capture the essence of why the event industry exists – what it does – delegates leaned heavily toward the human connectivity elements of events, making the following comments.



“Create powerful and meaningful human experiences through events”

“We are strategists who use events as a vehicle”

“Create meaningful experiences that change people’s lives”

“Meaningful interactions across all aspects of life”

“Connect people in a way that no other mediums can do”

“We enable connectivity, care and clarity”

“We change - experience – from a noun, to a verb”

What **YOU** can do

Remain or become a proactive member of your local ILEA chapter. Work with your chapter colleagues and support each other in implementing ILEA strategies and initiatives.



CONCLUSION

Our delegates came together with open minds. They came ready to engage in two days of intense discussions and activities, aiming to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by today's events industry, so that they could help lead it to a more sustainable future. They left with their minds exhausted by lively interactions, yet filled with ideas and inspiration.

Unanimously they affirmed that the industry is the most effective medium of communicating to people's emotions. People who are emotionally engaged are more susceptible to feel positive about a brand and more likely to remember a core message favorably. Events are the most effective means to facilitate this feeling. This was determined as the underlying value of events. Legacy Events provide a tangible and qualitative means by which to demonstrate the industry's value and its ability to give back. Delegates felt these values must be clearly defined and communicated to a global audience if the industry is to gain the recognition it needs if it is to build a strong future.

Networked digital communication devices, unskilled practitioners, the fear of terrorism and poor economic conditions, stand as threats to the industry; promoting its value can overcome them all.

When the value of live events - the possibilities in engaging emotionally connected people - is universally understood, who would cut corners by using a digital alternative? Who would run the risk of employing the services of anyone other than the skilled and experienced professionals in our industry? Security and economic factors can also be mitigated by the benefits of hosting live events.

Our inaugural GES was the beginning of the conversation, where we defined what we need to do as an industry to ensure a prosperous future. We plan to meet again soon, to delve into the specifics of how, as individuals and collectively, we can truly realize our value and achieve our global potential.

Thanks to our Partners

The ILEA Global Events Summit 2016 would not have been possible without our generous partners. We very much appreciate and value their involvement. Each demonstrated a belief in our vision and commitment to helping us achieve our goals, with unwavering support and attentive service.



Thank you

Contact ILEA

ILEA is the principal association representing the world's largest community of creative event professionals, globally.

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