



GEORGE P. JOHNSON
experience marketing

The Modern Event Is Now a Strategic Marketing Initiative

INNOVATE \ MOTIVATE \ ACTIVATE

“The future of marketing will be based on data-driven relationships”

—Chris Meyer, *CEO*,
George P. Johnson
Experience Marketing



Executive Summary

Over the last several years we've seen a renaissance in the marketing industry. This has been propelled by the availability of new insights and capabilities, thanks in large part to modern tools and powerful communication channels like social and mobile, in alignment with big data. Together these transformational technologies are empowering marketing professionals to tailor and personalize their messages and the buyer's journey in ways previously only dreamed about.

While traditional schools of thought have centered on delivering just one experience, one message and one version of your content for all your customers and prospects – the game has changed. Yes, consistency in your message and value proposition is still important; however, advances in technology and communication channels now make it necessary for modern marketers to tailor their product message and customer journey experience to specific buyers and influencers throughout the sales cycle.

The aforementioned trends are no truer than when it comes to how companies create and execute their event experiences. The ability to deliver a custom, personalized experience that maps directly to a target buyer persona throughout an event's lifecycle is critical. The modern event is now an integrated experience. Done properly, events complement your online and digital marketing activities.

George P. Johnson has been helping our clients push the envelope when it comes to producing creative, high-impact events for over 100 years. We combine a deep bench of talent with the most flexible and data-driven tools in the industry to deliver a modern experience that's uniquely powerful each and every time.

Using a proprietary and proven process called Strategic Experience Mapping, we take you through a powerful planning process that will ensure your success in elevating your physical event into the centerpiece of your integrated marketing campaign. The return on your investment is maximized by transforming your event marketing team into experience marketing strategists, and turning that event into the quintessential socializing and relationship-building experience between you and your target buyer.

Evolving from Event Marketing to Experience Marketing

Upon embarking on your own journey to become a modern experience marketer, it's important to first embrace not only the necessary transformation of how you think about events, but also your team's overall mission and role within the marketing organization.

The ingredients that go into making a great experience, the metrics used to measure its success, and the processes and tools used to execute integrated experience marketing have changed. For success, it's necessary to evolve the definition of event marketing into what industry thought-leaders refer to as "Experience Marketing."

What Is Experience Marketing?

Experience marketing is about building a personalized relationship connecting your brand and products with your customers and prospects. It extends the impact of an event beyond simply the transfer of information and lead capture, to strategic and social-based engagement with your attendees. Experience marketing forces you to move your audience through a more personalized journey by taking careful notice of your target audiences' specific interests, likes and dislikes, and remembering overall that you are selling to an emotional, social human being.

Put simply, it creates actionable brand affinity. Modern marketing is as much about tapping into the individuality of the customer as it is delivering a customized message to the target buyer.

The physical event should be the centerpiece of an integrated experience marketing campaign, and the quintessential socializing and relationship-building experience for your target buyer. Modern marketing must be extended to your events. With the established trend towards the increasing importance of tailored, high-quality content and the necessity to engage buyers across social media, web, mobile, and other marketing channels throughout the buyer's journey, it's critical that you also incorporate this into a modern event experience.

After transforming your event marketing team into a group of "experience marketing strategists," it's also key to align your budget with your new experience-driven goals to ensure you are driving towards the right metrics of success. For instance, your marketing budget must evolve from an "awareness" spend into a "relationship-building" spend. Not only will this help you re-architect your event strategy, but it's instrumental when trying to gain necessary executive sponsorship for a modern, experience-based event.

CASE STUDY dreamforce®

The Challenge

To continually improve the industry's most anticipated conference for the company *Forbes* ranked "most innovative," Salesforce. Dreamforce must thrill the cloud computing community and continue the brand conversation regionally and globally.

The Big Idea

Total conference management, from corporate booth design and fabrication and support of hundreds of Cloud Expo sponsors to the highly anticipated gala.

The event is a city-wide takeover that debuted the largest inflatable hexagonal honeycomb structure ever erected in North America on Dreamforce Plaza. Dreamforce Plaza was a hub of activity, with multiple stages, video screens, lighting towers, Salesforce Foundation activities, Jim Cramer's *Mad Money* broadcast, catering, sponsor lounges, interactive gaming areas and networking lounges.

The Strategy

Create a 24/7 branded experience that grows as rapidly as attendance. Make original content available to both physical and virtual attendees, and work in line with key Salesforce objectives.

Record-breaking Results



143,000

Registered attendees



689%

Increased audience attendance since 2009

\$6 Million 
Raised for local children's hospitals



A New Game: Unleashing Communities & Groups

Is Your Company Comfortable Running Your “Normal” Events as Usual?

Then you might as well save some money and switch to hosting a webinar. It can be a fatal error to take a traditional or legacy approach to engaging with your audience at an event. For instance, communicating solely on a one-to-many level is no longer acceptable. Your customers want an event platform that’s socially enabling, and provides for continuous two-way conversations, not a “sage on a stage” delivering a speech.

Legacy events. It sounds bad, and it is. The way marketers and sales professionals engage with customers throughout the sales funnel is changing. Prospects are often creating short lists and sharing amongst their peers before even speaking to a salesperson. Modern marketers are responding, and technology is playing a big role. The digital age, the internet, social media, smart phones and other technologies are creating a renaissance of marketing professionals whose mission is not just enabling the business growth strategy, but actually defining it. This game-changing approach also applies to your experience marketing strategy, and how it fits within your buyer’s journey during a sales cycle.

It’s also important to deliver a user-centric journey based on the specific and deliberate profile characteristics of your target buyers. Your team will want to focus on community engagement in three continuous cycles: before, onsite, and after the event experience.

Consider social media sites like LinkedIn as an example, where users engage with others who share similar interests and characteristics.

And finally, your event needs to create an emotional connection with your attendees. This can be with your brand, your product – even a keynote speaker. This is probably one of the biggest differences between a digital experience and what you can achieve in person. It’s more difficult and requires careful planning, but the ROI on taking this step can be very powerful.

Many marketers look to the growth of online marketing and social media and mistakenly assume these channels are replacing or minimizing the value of a physical experience. This may be true if you simply maintain the status quo and deliver the same, normal event you’ve always done. But take note of the criteria above that create a modern event, and you will exponentially improve the performance of your integrated marketing campaign.

Don’t Suffocate Your Audience

One of the common traps many event planners fall into is over-programming an experience. This happens when you structure an attendee’s day down to the minute, without any flexibility allowed within their experience. No choice means suffocating your audience via the false assumption that it is better to dictate exactly what, when, where, and how an attendee consumes and shares information and your message. This is not an experience; it’s simply a long and often boring transfer of information.

A better approach is to get your audience members to lean forward and engage with your speakers and fellow attendees. Create journey paths, but let customers choose their own adventures for more powerful, and engaging experiences.

Be Smart. Use Your Data.

There is typically a lot of guesswork when it comes to deciding on things like event structure, content, scheduling flow, and so on. Most of this has to do with marketers either not capturing data about attendees before, on-site and after the event, or simply not having the right tools to analyze the data. Regardless of why, a data-driven experience for your audience will always help guide you towards a modern event and stronger ROI.

This goes well beyond event surveys and session rankings. Rather, it's about looking at multiple data sources that impact the attendee experience while on their journey with you. From promotion and registration through wrap-up, there's a lot of great data you can use to improve and better personalize your attendee's experience. Utilizing data across communication channels, from email marketing to sentiment analysis on social properties like Facebook and Twitter, provides needed visibility into not just what is happening, but why. And better customer insight improves the likelihood of good marketing decisions.

George P. Johnson

A Journey Like No Other— Because It's Theirs

George P. Johnson invented experience marketing.

We put the customer journey at the center of your marketing strategy. Delivered in real time, across multiple platforms. The ways we engage with our customers may have changed. The need to relate never will.

There are several components to our business that together maximize the integrated power of live and digital interactions. The results speak for themselves, enabling a whole new strength of efficiency and effectiveness in building deep and lasting relationships with your audience and target buyers previously only dreamt of.

Our clients benefit from having the broadest and richest set of experience marketing talent in the industry, that has in turn been fully enabled with proven, flexible tools and processes to re-invent the audience experience with each and every event we do.



Strategic Experience Mapping

The strategy and planning that goes into your integrated experience is just as important as the flawless execution and out-of-the-box creative processes that completely wows your audience. It's what ensures that the experience will produce not only an exciting and unique journey, but also the right journey to accomplish the specific objectives of the event. The secret sauce that goes into this strategy is what we term "Strategic Experience Mapping."

GPJ's proprietary Strategic Experience Mapping (SEM) is unique in the industry, taking a pragmatic and persona-based approach to planning your modern experience strategy, acting as a true compass for everything that guides your attendees' experience. SEM is part of each of the planning steps, providing a consistent beacon to keep the experience's concept consistently mapped to your target audience profiles. This helps maximize the relevancy of the experience and create a clearly defined journey that's special for each target profile.

After working with you to come to consensus on the answers to these four questions for each target persona within your audience, we can map out the customized journey that will deliver a high-impact and strategically aligned experience.

Building the right strategy also includes ensuring the appropriate balance of structured attendee networking to facilitate group and community knowledge-sharing during the experience. This includes taking an approach similar to what you find online within popular social media platforms to create a group and community experience for attendees unlike anything before. This engagement is integral to the experience, and is another key element to creating a modern event.

SEM incorporates several core ingredients and best practices to create a modern experience that breaks through the challenges of traditional events. The mapping process is centered on putting ourselves in your audiences' shoes. To do this, we ask four key questions about your target buyer personas:



FEEL

What emotions do we want them to experience?

THINK

What are the key facts or big ideas we want them to remember?

KNOW

What opinions do they need to form?

DO

What actions do they need to take?



Once an event's experience is defined and effectively mapped to your target buyer profiles, we take you through an exciting creative process that harnesses the power of the deepest and broadest set of talent in the industry. We combine these resources with proven methodologies and tools that have been perfected over 100 years of customer interaction. It's one of the reasons we keep clients for decades, not quarters.

What also makes us different is how nimble and agile we are. Part of the creative process involves assembling a customized mix of talent made up of designers and strategists across our 15 design studios worldwide – to construct a one-of-a-kind event just for you. The GPJ team also takes advantage of our 10 decades of customer experiences spanning almost every vertical market – applying aggregated historical data of past events within and outside of your industry to build upon the latest trends and best practices.

While each experience is different, the journey we take your audience through has some consistent key milestones. This is a best practice our team has perfected, and it's very similar to the way good stories follow a common structural flow.

Through this creative process, we bring to life a customized attendee journey based on a proven storytelling engagement model. Each experience is designed to resonate with your target buyers, uniquely combining the flexibility to choose how they learn and experience your messaging and content, with a clear guided journey to achieve your event objectives.

From start to finish, every engagement is designed to take your audience through four stages:



ATTRACT

Identify and target a specific group of audience profiles to promote communities



ENGAGE

Provide a platform for two-way conversations & personalized connections



IMMERSE

Appeal to multiple senses and continuously integrate offline with online



REWARD

Your audience's time is valuable; make each experience deeply motivating



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About George P. Johnson

George P. Johnson is the world's leading experience marketing agency. We create innovative live, mobile and online experiences that motivate audiences and activate brands. We're part of Project: WorldWide, an independent, global network of complementary, wholly-owned agencies. Project: WorldWide agencies include: George P. Johnson, Partners + Napier, ARGONAUT, Motive, JUXT, Spinifex Group, G7 Entertainment Marketing, School, Raumtechnik, Shoptology and Pitch.

To learn more, visit project.com.