

# MATSO MEETS

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Key Takeaways from 25 October 2023

## Infuse Design Thinking Principles into Your Overall Show Strategy

- **Top Challenges/Issues:**
  - Getting attendance back has not been as challenging as getting exhibitors and exhibit space back to pre-pandemic levels.
  - Attracting diverse audiences, age groups, and industries to your show and keeping them engaged in your show.
  - Activating resources internally (or lack of) to attract new audiences and look how to grow/evolve.
  - Latest ideas and new ways to create traffic flows, showcases in the right locations for space management and how to position activations.
  - Designing an event for a first-time audience with new things vs. experienced loyalists who do not like change.
  - Level of engagement across industry segments as well as labor shortages and costs.
  - Recreating trade shows after the pandemic vs. new experiences - pre, at, and post pandemic including 360 engagement.
  - Incentivize ways for attendees to engage more with exhibitors and sponsors.
  - VISA issues
  - Wanting and finding more sales leads
  - Experiences for attendees and exhibitors that include incorporating the city and activities in the area.
  - Stagnant show and incorporate beacons/technology to track attendees on show floor that is non-invasive.
  - Creating activations without giving up paid space and creating experiences.
  - Marketing sessions and how to get people to attend them.
  - Optimizing ROI on the show floor.
  - Loss of institutional knowledge from attendees, exhibitors, and vendors.
  - Rising costs
  
- **Tips from Dr. Kristin Malek:**
  - Who is ultimately responsible for the engagement? The EVENT ORGANIZER. The organizer sets the rules for the show, with exhibitors, sponsorships, messaging, etc.
  - If someone on an event team is not responsible for engagement, then nobody is responsible for engagement.
  - Questions to ask: what is success? How have measurements changed? How can the show be designed strategically? It may not be about size, but the quality of the attendees.
  - We are experiencing what is called a demographic cliff, and as event organizers fighting for more attendees and exhibitors, which may not happen with fewer people entering business. The demographic cliff refers to the drop-in birth rates, people entering college, people entering the workforce, etc.
  - There is a book on this topic: [HERE](#)
  - Who is your main focus as a show organizer? Who is the primary stakeholder for designing your show? The attendees or the attendee experience. You are selling your attendees to get your exhibitor.

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- Psychographics are your needs, your wants, your values, and what is important to you and giving time and space to that.
- You may have to ask up to three rounds of questions about psychographics to get to the psycho values that are most important to your attendee. No more than two to five questions at a time – ask things like, what do you need to get you through the day? (does this convert to coffee, white space, etc.?)
- Have specific customer experience journeys for attendees, according to their psychographics. Have two to four journeys, from your loyalists to your new attendees.
- Design your experience path and create an immersive experience at your show. Look at ways to address mental health and wellness of your attendees.
- As an example, a title for a group that is all in could be called “high achievers.”
- For engagement, create options and choices in your packages while minimizing your work with exhibitors/sponsors and supply valuable education and content.
- One engagement idea is to ask attendees (or a smaller group) what their favorite songs are and then play them at the event.
- Have an email conversation – acknowledge what is happening and ask three questions that can help. Then, go back and reiterate how you are addressing this. Finally, saying your feedback is so valuable, we want to ask three more questions.
- Provide value and training to exhibitors as your strategic partner.
- Spark AI is an industry AI tool that was launched by PCMA for meeting planning.
- Dr. Malek's [LinkedIn](#)
- **Open Discussion:**
  - CEIR report: [Exhibit and Sponsorship Sales Approaches Driving Revenue Growth Report One: Planning, Offerings, Outcomes, Outlook Moving Forward](#)
  - Public safety surpasses costs as impacting attendance: guns, homelessness, drugs, mental health, riots, background checks, and strikes.
  - Immersive experiences that were discussed.
    - Create a “community zone” that is a lounge format for attendees to hang out.
    - Also, consider a quiet zone for those with sensory issues.
    - One group provided some attendees with “opportunity cards” and provided them with guided tours of the show floor.
    - For introvert attendees – consider a morning meet up, so attendees can find a “conference buddy.”
  - Loss of institutional knowledge: exhibitor and supplier side.
    - Additional educational opportunities
    - Series of webinars for exhibitors – pre- and post-show to talk about their issues, marketing, and their successes.
    - Some are encouraging virtual office hours.
  - Attendee Acquisition.
    - ZoomInfo database to reach new attendees.
    - LinkedIn Professional Tracker
    - Referral services to encourage attendees to refer colleagues for a fee or to refer a friend.
    - IAEE is using HubSpot to aid with attendee acquisition.
    - IAEE is also using Snoball with marketing: Ms. Rachel Stephan, CEO, Snoball [rachel@snoball.events](mailto:rachel@snoball.events)
    - Influencers as speakers to attract attendees.

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- VIP free pass code system where exhibitors can send out an unlimited number if they meet a certain number and a certain quality based on attendee acquisition goals. These are priority points.
- Tying priority points to sustainability or inclusiveness? Housing was one that was tied.
- Include questions on your registration form to drive personas, but make the questions related to the person and not the business. Self-select personas: curated buyers, influencers buyers, and investigator buyers and then, did targeted messages.

A special thanks to TMS for sponsoring this important session that allows large show organizers to learn about key issues affecting shows larger than 200,000 NSF while providing a forum for open dialogue and exchange.

