

# 12

## New Multimedia Technology for Events Organisers

### In this chapter you will cover:

- New multimedia events technology
- Digital business maturity model
- Trends in events technology
- Social media usage in events
- Blogging

This chapter aims to provide an overview of new multimedia technology for events organisations and management. The digital business maturity model will be discussed to evaluate the level of technology implementation at different levels in organisations. Various trends in events technology will be highlighted including 5G technology, artificial intelligence, the internet of things, big data, virtual reality and augmented reality. The use of social media in events to create bonding, bridging and linking to promote and share messages will be examined. Blogging as a way of engaging with consumers and stakeholders and amplifying the events message will be reviewed.

### New multimedia events technology

The rapid developments in new multimedia technology are having a great impact on the events industry. With increasing changes in technology, the challenge for the events industry is to keep pace with the consumer's changing behaviour by connecting through technology. Increased smartphone adoption, social media usage and faster internet speeds are creating greater connected experiences for consumers and organisations.

Appreciating digital maturity in the events organisation and how it is implemented is a key aspect for managers. It is no longer acceptable to only measure the success of an event through attendance figures, but engagement data throughout the life of an event needs to be evaluated to give us a true understanding of the success of an event.

Evaluation of engagement is important before the event starts, during the event and after the event to assess the experience of consumers, which has to be memorable and can be created from the beginning to the end and post event. Memorable experiences could include creating regular engagement with attendees, appropriate and relevant consumer-focused event content, supplying activities suitable for the target audience and memorabilia such as T-shirts, event books and/or key rings that can be purchased for remembering the event long after it has finished. Gathering data at each key touchpoint will allow the manager to evaluate the success of the event, as well as the features that consumers respond well to and what could be eliminated in the future. More often, data is provided by the delegates themselves in real time before, during and after the event via their engagement at different touchpoints. (Ryan et al., 2020). Case study 12.1 further analyses the challenges facing events in the industry.

## Case Study 12.1: Evolving event technology – a challenge in the event industry?

The older end of Generation Z (those born from 1995 to 2012 – often referred to as the ‘digital natives’ because they always had the internet in their life) have been able to integrate technology into their lives, experiences and habits for the purpose of knowledge, productivity, entertainment and communication. These are the same reasons why technology is increasingly in use in events.

98 per cent of Generations Z own a smartphone which is seen as an extension of themselves and is used by half of them to engage with online content and communications for over 10 hours a day. Furthermore, Generations Z are different from other generations when it comes to attending events; in that their mindset now impacts their expectations and experiences concerning managing events. For instance, with thousands of students studying events courses every year, generation Z has an important part to play by being naturally inclined towards artificial intelligence, social media, and using digital devices, not only in their everyday life, but also creating, promoting and implementing live experiences. Apart from driving the shift to digital, the capabilities of Generation Z mean that the incoming event professionals have the digital competency to manage upcoming technology.

Today technology isn’t so much a separate entity of events, but is integrated in event management – with digital platforms involved at all phases from pre-production and participation, right the way to evaluation and reporting of data. Integrating digital technology as part of events, and mostly in ways which personalise participation, is the key to driving engagement for attendees. It’s also growing in popularity for enhancing data-rich evaluation for brands and corporations behind the events. As a result, there’s increased demand and expectation for integrated technology across all event sectors.

As technological methods for tasks such as ticketing, data sharing and virtual attendance evolve in response to this demand, becoming completely embedded into event logistics, current event managers are beginning to appreciate technology as part of their roles, whereas Generation Z expect technology to be the role.

However, even though technology in event management may have been identified as less of a challenge in the last few years and the arrival of Generation Z as the newest professionals entering into the industry may help reduce this further, event experts and wider industry respondents believe that the events industry is struggling with skills shortages in several areas.

For established event professionals, it seems that the greater part of the 'lesser' challenge is keeping up with technology, learning the skills to use it, gaining confidence with how it works and embracing what the latest trends in digital production and event logistics can bring to events.

Keeping in line and accepting the changes in technology is an important consideration for event professionals. Specifically relating to technology in events this includes:

- Remote participation in events, including artificial attendance and live streaming.
- Mixed reality technology (Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality): Technology-enhanced personalised experiences – everything from chatbots and selfie-bots, to automated, personalised ticketing, and mobile event apps which directly engage audiences with speakers.

It appears that the growth in new multimedia event technology is becoming less of a challenge. The difficulty is how to integrate in every part of the event lifecycle.

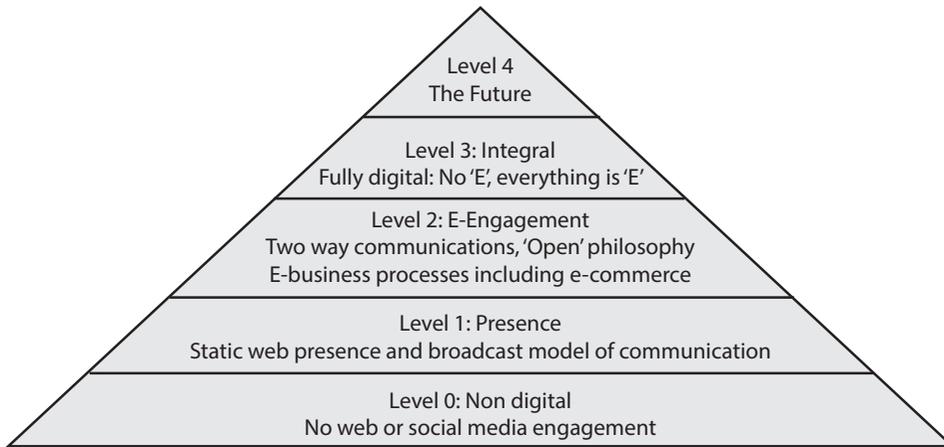
*Source:* Adapted from <https://www.cvent.com/uk/blog/events/evolving-event-technology-challenge-event-industry>

## Digital maturity model

Setting your events organisation within the digital business maturity model acknowledges its present digital activities as well as its future potential. Identifying an organisation's current digital business maturity in relation to its current strategic position also offers a clear understanding of the progression route required to achieve even greater levels of digital maturity (Heinze et al., 2020). Digital maturity should itself be considered a desirable, if not essential, development course for any organisation. The relationship that the digital business maturity model introduces between strategic perspectives and the combined threats and opportunities of digital technologies for an organisation is significant. Holding and maintaining a strategic understanding of your current situation is as much a challenge for many organisations as keeping pace with technological change. However, in a world that is increasingly digital, a strategic perspective will serve the combined beneficial purposes of avoiding short-term decision making and preventing fire-fighting approaches to the day-to-day management of your organisation. Being strategic also lifts your perspective above a desire to just 'use' the current, favourite social media channel or newest technological

devices towards a recognition of the need to continuously engage your buyer persona through digital channels (Ryan et al., 2020).

The digital business maturity model presents the need for greater integrated use of technology within your organisation as part of wider, more systemic change to processes and management. In the long term, this approach will give you new efficiencies, redefine your employees' roles and present your entire organisation as an engaged component of the global digital economy. Organisations that are lagging behind the experience, knowledge and expectations of their current buyer persona risk losing to more dynamic, newer and potentially more aggressive competitors (Heinze et al., 2020).



**Figure 12.1:** Digital business maturity model (Heinze et al., 2020)

There are five stages of the digital business maturity model. At level 0 there is no digital activity or engagement. The organisation has no presence on the Web, doesn't engage on social media and doesn't carry out any of its work via digital media. Instead, these event organisations are present in online directories similar to the old-fashioned Yellow Pages and don't have their own website, a blog or social media page. Many event SMEs can unfortunately be found at this level. However, they are beginning to transition to the next level by going online.

At level 1 the event organisation may have a static or brochure website purely for information. There is a 'broadcast' understanding of the relationship between the organisation and its consumers. Messages are sent out but with little understanding of targeting or differentiating them according to specific audience needs, behaviours and interests, even if there is some knowledge and understanding of different types of customers.

Level 2 of the model takes into consideration two-way interactions between the organisation and its audience. The event organisation engages with stakeholders, such as suppliers, competitors and regulatory authorities, but is mainly restricted to emails. Interaction between the company and its consumers at level 2 is recognised in terms of e-commerce and e-business. Web 2.0 is the transition phase at this level where there are two or three communications between the organisation and consumers/customers through a variety of social digital channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.