



The Power of Event Storytelling

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You've set the theme, planned the décor, and selected the perfect name. Now that your event is ready to impress, what stories will it tell?

Truly, in the age of digital distractions and information overload, the conventions and meetings that make the biggest impressions are those which support and encourage storytelling among both presenters and delegates.

"As we all know, stories create, educate, persuade, and inspire," says Jeff Dixon, Vice President of Sales at the Scotiabank Convention Centre, adding, "Storytelling can be – and mean – so many different things. The most important outcome of utilizing them should be that they benefit their audience both personally and professionally."

In short: good stories forge better connections. They elevate otherwise straightforward presentations into engaging experiences; turn passive audiences into active contributors; and communicate important lessons, learnings, and messages with far greater resonance.

On the flip side, helping delegates share their own stories with peers can enhance an event's networking value. Whether it's through team-based sessions, interactive panels, and informal group events, facilitating storytelling lets guests go back home with new ideas, fresh perspectives, and stronger relationships that live well beyond the final session.

Adds Carrie Paolone, Director of Events with Scotiabank Convention Centre: “Whenever a large group of people meets in one space, what often happens is the telling of stories. As a venue, these stories matter to us because their content can touch on anything from food and beverage to service staff performance. When we are able to influence attendees to tell meaningful stories, and their take-away is a positive experience, then we’ve accomplished our goal.”

It’s true that an event’s venue has a crucial role to play in setting the stage for storytelling – especially when it comes to making a speaker’s presentation shine.

“Like any supporting character, part of the venue’s job is to assist the main players,” says Dixon.

“When the main character is the client and the audience is their attendees, the venue must help deliver a great story that can be told again and again.”

A venue’s technology, for example, can add extra impact to a speaker’s story through background music, recorded narrations, backup visuals, and videos. As well, using conference apps can give delegates the ability to share their own conference journeys with colleagues by uploading pictures, posting thoughts, and participating in online forums.



As technology advances, look for cutting-edge tools like virtual reality and augmented reality to play an even stronger role in “inserting delegates” into the story, be it at an exhibitor’s booth or during a keynote presentation.

Yet just as venues and technology can play a part in conference storytelling, so too can meeting planners. Says Paolone: “As meeting planners look for ways to make the most of the meeting experience, they should try to play up the importance of their attendees’ feelings or emotions. You might not realize, but when stories are told well, they can have a really palpable effect. A story is the perfect vehicle through which to tap into the emotional aspects of a meeting experience and, when all’s said and done, it might leave attendees feeling they’ve made connections with themselves and others on a deeper level.”

In the whirlwind of texts, emails, and social media messaging, making time for live storytelling during a conference can go a long way towards creating a genuine shared experience in an otherwise disconnected world. By encouraging speakers to incorporate stories and supporting delegates’ ability to tell their own, your event won’t just make an impact, it will create memories.

Jeff Dixon and Carrie Paolone are with Scotiabank Convention Centre. For more, visit www.fallsconventions.com.

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