



the next big opportunity

Mass Personalization and the Art of Brand Experience

Our attendees experience

personalization in their daily lives.

Whether we're shopping, streaming videos, or attending an event, we are now accustomed to experiences that are expertly tailored to our wants and needs.

It's a marketing paradox: the need to create individualized experiences, delivered en masse to an entire audience of individuals.

Fortunately, cracking the code isn't as difficult as it sounds.

With the right personalization strategy, you can deliver highly relevant, deeply engaging program elements that will transform your event into an experience to remember.

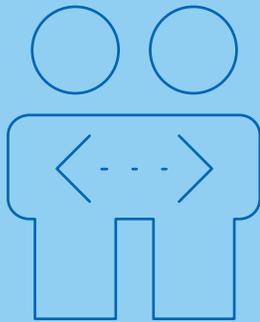
Our attendees experience personalization in their daily lives. Everyone understands Amazon — we all want that experience, everywhere we go. It's extremely important to be able to deliver that at an event.

— **Heather Henderson Thomas** / CISCO

The Human Side of Brand Experiences

When compared to “one-to-many” media such as television and print advertising, personalization can be a breath of fresh air for organizers, planners, exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees alike.

Indeed, by delivering individualized experiences, you have the potential and privilege to make attendees feel special. In doing so, you indelibly intertwine your own brand with those positive, self-affirming memories.



“To whom it may concern” no longer applies. What’s important is that we are talking specifically to our customers and that we can indicate that we know things about them — both for our exhibitors and our attendees. It’s the way of the world today.

— **Nancy Walsh** / REED EXHIBITIONS

As if that weren’t enough, personalization drives value throughout your event ecosystem. The more relevant the event, the more attendees get out of it — which in turn delivers better outcomes for every other stakeholder involved, from organizers to sponsors to exhibitors.

Start with Strategy

The significance of personalization aside, it’s not something that happens by accident. On the contrary, you need a deliberate, carefully thought-out approach. When developing the strategy, consider:

- What do you want to achieve? Determine your organization’s overarching business goals and objectives. Where does personalization fit in this vision?
- What are you already doing? Look at the past years’ programming. Whom were you trying to reach? Which messages resonate best? Pay close attention to any lessons learned.
- What does success look like? Use these insights to translate your business goals and lessons learned into clear and definable outcomes for your next event.



Personalization drives value

*throughout your
event ecosystem.*

Know Your Audience

You might be surprised to know who really attends your events.

Chances are you're trying to reach diverse audience segments. Taking the time to identify these segments and getting to know their subtle distinctions will help you understand how to reach them, how to speak to them, and how to help them participate more deeply.

Personas are a good place to start, as are audience research and profiling. But don't stop there.

Dig in further. What are their deepest desires? How do their cultural and even spiritual needs impact what they're looking for from you? How can you better accommodate these needs?

Design the Experience

Experience design powerfully connects people with brands and organizations. With your audience in mind, experience design can help you use your event to move people — physically, emotionally, and mentally — exactly where you want them to go.

Each touchpoint, whether analog or digital, represents a step along the journey toward the ultimate destination: a deep relationship that helps both you and your audience achieve your goals.

Don't think in just 2-D... good experience design thinks through all the possibilities, from simple interactions to an immersive experience that harnesses all the senses. Your goal is to transcend the moment. Be willing to go big.



Start with “Why?”

Keep your strategic business and marketing objectives firmly in focus.

Define the Impact

Get specific with what you want attendees to feel, think, know, and do.

Craft the Concept

Translate your “why” into compelling, targeted messages.

Create the Content

Bring the message to life across diverse, vibrant touchpoints and experiences.

Map the Journey

Pinpoint when and how attendees experience the content for maximum impact.

Incorporate Digital Smartly

We are living in a personalized world, and we expect that most of an event's experiences will be designed to fulfill our individual needs. I believe that only the events offering personalized experiences will emerge as clear winners in the years ahead.

— **Kate Lechowicz** / NETAPP

Digital experiences can and should be integrated into every aspect of your event. Not only can these experiences be immensely empowering to attendees, the resulting data can enable you to deliver even more richly personalized programs in the future.

But be forewarned: Using technology for technology's sake is more interruptive than engaging. It's not about having the most technology at your event — it's about having the right technology to enhance your participants' experience and simultaneously achieve your marketing and business objectives.

In other words, your approach to technology needs to be seamless, predictive, and absolutely grounded in strategy. And that starts with a 365-day perspective.



Is Your Tech Ready for Personalization?

Before you implement any digital integrations, be sure you:

- Start with a select few technologies and focus on flawless execution.
- Use only technology that advances your business strategy and event objectives.
- Test everything before attendees arrive.
- Ask permission to collect data.
- Let attendees know how you'll use their data.
- Ensure all data is secure.
- Centralize your data storage.
- Review your data and use the insights to continually improve your event and personalization strategies.



personalization

should start well before attendees arrive.

Pre-Event Technology

Personalization should start well before the first attendees arrive. By aligning messaging across platforms, marketers can enjoy a bump in pre-show registration while gathering data on attendee needs and expectations.

- **Website.** This is one of your audience's first experiences with your brand, so make it inspiring. You can also use it to capture interests and needs as early as registration.
- **Email Marketing.** Use attendee data to hook your audience members with topics they're most interested in — for example, introducing them to speakers and fellow attendees they might want to rub shoulders with. Give them the guidance they need to be prepared and ready when they arrive on site.
- **Social Media.** Rather than simply blasting out your own event messages, use social media to listen to your audience members, interact with them, and gain real insights into their preferences.
- **SEO, Digital Advertising, and Retargeting:** Get to know and grow your audience with advanced digital marketing strategies that keep your event and brand top of mind. SEO, advertising, and retargeting will help you get your message in front of the right audience at the right time, which will drive year-round engagement.



Remember Sponsors and Exhibitors

Use attendee data to recommend sponsors and booths to attendees. On the flip side, share attendee interests with sponsors and exhibitors as well. This sets the stage for more relevant interactions before, during, and after the event.

On-Site Technology

Don't think that just because attendees have arrived, you don't have to work hard to keep their attention. They're expecting a one-of-a-kind experience they can share with others. Capitalize on this by bringing your programming to life in meaningful ways.

Sometimes all it takes is a small twist to take your current technology to the next level.

For example, if you already offer a mobile app, consider offering customized agendas or letting attendees create their own schedules. You can also use your app to help attendees search for and connect with other attendees, interact with speakers, and post and share their experiences.

Similarly, social media can help bring attendees in on the conversation. By paying close attention to these conversations, you may discover unmet needs you can act on immediately (such as delivering snacks to folks waiting in line) or at the next event (such as adding kiosks to shorten the wait).

Even simple elements such as interactive touch screens can serve up big opportunities for one-on-one interactions. When attendees scan their badges, try giving them customized information on exhibitors, products, and sponsors — even restaurants and local happenings — either on-screen or sent to their mobile devices.

One of the best things that we do is go with a mobile app that allows people to go on their phone and select a personalized schedule, only showing the sessions they want to attend.

— **Shawn Bryant** / AMBULATORY SURGERY CENTER ASSOCIATION

Explore New Ways to Take Your Technology Further

Some uses of technology options may require a bit more budget and skill to execute — but the payoff can be immense.

Gamification of mobile apps, for instance, blends psychology and technology to create fun, competitive experiences that drive engagement, loyalty, and brand/message recall.

Second-screen technology, meanwhile, can offer additional avenues of engagement and interactivity by allowing attendees to consume instant content about the very thing they're experiencing. Real-time feedback into what's working and what isn't offers an added benefit for marketers.

Another possibility is to use social listening or other interactive tools to adapt the lighting and projection displays based on attendee preferences.

Or it might even be as simple as having translators present to offer simultaneous interpretation so that foreign language audiences can jump into the conversation in real time.

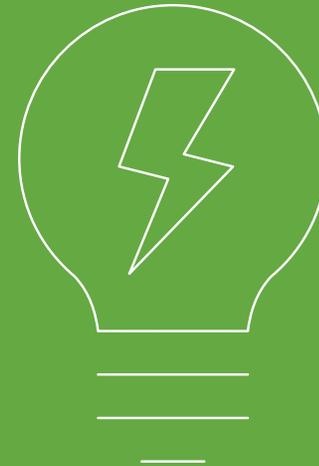
Use Advanced-Level Technology to Take Your Personalization Over the Top:

If you're looking to create truly mind-blowingly awesome experiences, the right technology can empower you to do amazing things.

Even better, it doesn't have to be expensive. Location mapping and micromarketing, for instance, make it easy to adapt your messaging based on attendee location. All it takes is relatively low-cost Bluetooth technology, like Apple's iBeacon and a great event app.

Integrating virtual or hybrid elements into your event offers yet another level of personalization by allowing attendees to select the specific experiences and delivery methods that work best for them.

Virtual reality is a game changer when it comes to creating an unforgettable experience. Take attendees to faraway museum exhibits, deliver training on a new product, or showcase real-life applications without ever leaving the exhibit floor.



All consumers are searching for the next big thing — their own unique event or branded experience to share and brag about on social media.

— **Daniel Underwood** / VODAFONE UK

The right technology can

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awesome things.*

Post-Event Technology

Don't treat your event as a single moment in time. Instead, tap into technologies to keep your audience thinking — and talking — about your event all year.

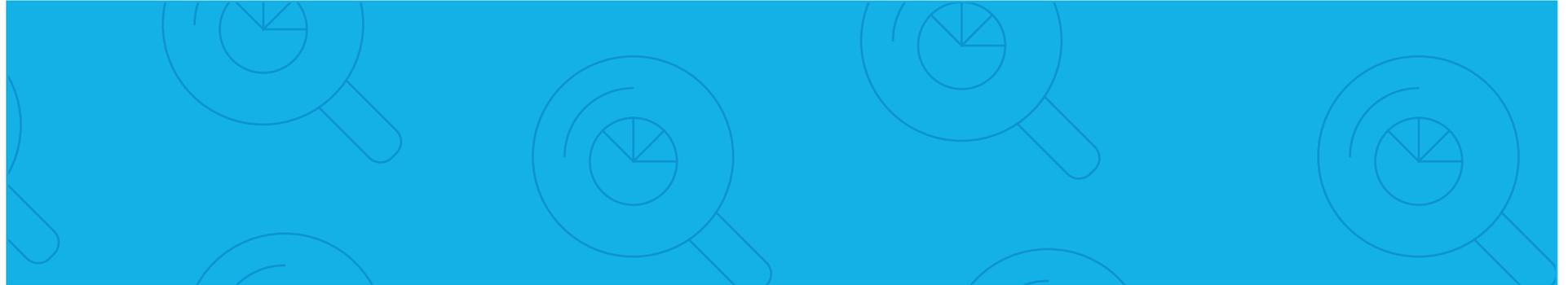
- **Email and Content Marketing.** Routinely publish curated program content. Robust tagging can help visitors find what they need, while personalized insights delivered directly to their inboxes can keep memories fresh.
- **Social Media.** Let attendees relive the experience with short video recaps, articles, and other social media activities. Check the temperature of your attendee base and start curating ideas for future programs as well.
- **Mobile App.** No need to close your mobile app after the event is over. Keep the community alive by giving attendees a reason to visit with a robust content-sharing program that offers customized insights.



Avoid the “Big Brother” Stereotype

**Personalization is great, until it's too personal.
Remember the guidelines for digital integration and
stay on good terms by following these guidelines:**

- Be transparent.
- Address privacy concerns up-front.
- Make the opt-in (and opt-out!) process clear at registration.
- Don't make assumptions — do your research.
- Avoid spamming attendees with irrelevant information.
- Improve your event and personalization strategies.



Collect Data. Measure. Debrief. Repeat.

Personalizing your event should lead to an abundance of data.

So what do you do with it?

First, you'll store it, ensure its consistency, and analyze it — and then, finally, you can use it.

Gathering and Storing Your Data

Data that's scattered across multiple databases (email marketing, registration, leads, Google Analytics, mobile apps, etc.) can be a nightmare to gather into any semblance of usable form. It's important to collect that data from the different sources and store it so it can be easily retrieved in the future.

You'll also need to develop standards to ensure consistency. Use a schema to tie together data across all of your sources.

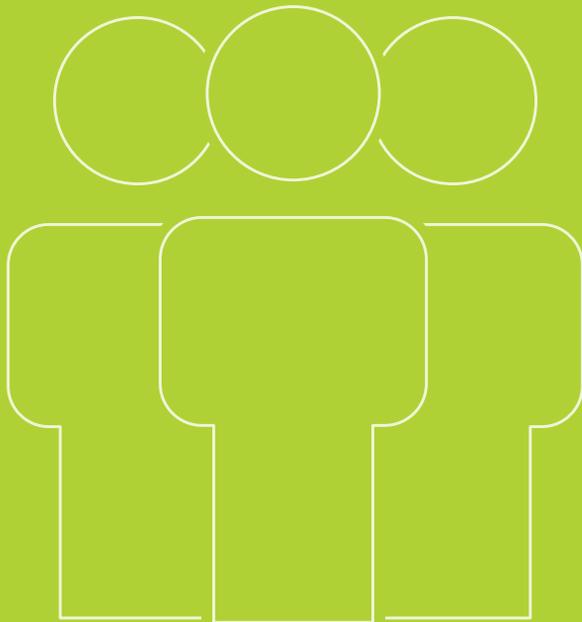
And finally, you'll want to think about the tools you'll use to analyze and visualize your data. Even Microsoft Excel can fit the bill if the data has been centralized and normalized properly.

Leveraging Your Data

With your data packaged and ready for analysis, you can use it to:

- Evaluate how well you achieved your initial objectives.
- Respond rapidly to evolving directives.
- Draw evidence-based conclusions, prove or disprove beliefs, and make comparisons to historic performance.
- Proactively plan — and further personalize — future events and marketing campaigns.

Keep your data accessible and usable, so you can return to it for multiple purposes both today and in the future.



Wrapping It Up: Solving the Personalization Puzzle

The simple truth is that people derive more value from experiences that are personally relevant. They feel special when they receive exactly what they need.

And the benefits don't stop there. Through strategically personalized events:

- Brands and organizers develop a better connection with attendees, building loyalty and relationships.
- Future events and products are improved, thanks to better information and insights.
- Sponsors and exhibitors engage with more targeted audiences, which leads to a maximized return on investment.

Of course, you also need to contextualize your personalization by doing the research, evaluating the data, and implementing the right changes. This “next-level,” personalized engagement ensures you more fully address attendees’ needs and provides an all-around better experience. By putting people at the center of the proposition, you’ll be on your way to creating and enhancing focused, meaningful, and measurable experiences.

want more?

**Request a consultation to learn more
about event personalization.**

CHRIS CAVANAUGH, EVP & CMO
CONTACTFREEMAN@FREEMAN.COM
+1.214.445.1000

About Freeman

As the world's largest brand experience company, Freeman helps organizations connect with their customers by delivering seamless, innovative, and immersive brand experiences. Through comprehensive solutions including strategy, creative, logistics, digital solutions, and event technology, we help clients increase engagement and drive results.

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