



Future Meetings & Events A Millennial's Perspective

by Mary Grace Thomas

Within the next few years, the millennial generation will be a large part of the US workforce. It is vital to adjust the traditional practices of meetings and conferences in order to fully engage this blossoming generation. The structure of many conferences as they are now does not always satisfy the expectations of millennials. First and foremost, today's meeting planner and event producer have to answer the question about their new audience: "What's in it for me?" This generation has had experience with all of the technological advances that have come about and they anticipate these to be incorporated in all of their meetings. These technological advances tie in nicely with digitally sending out key information ahead of the conference so that at the meeting itself they are more active and part of brainstorming and other idea generating activities. These are the tools that they know how to use best.

Something that most companies need to consider in future meetings is the use of augmented reality, using computer-generated sensory input to enhance a speaker's presentation. Millennials want to be *entertrained*. Mobile apps should be used to incorporate the varying aspects of the conference because millennials expect to be able to use their devices to fully engage in the presentation by taking notes and saving important documents. Also, millennials will continue to be more "sustainability-minded" and look for this quality in a company in which they are working for. Integrated social media and mobile sharing will allow millennials to tap into the career networking that they enjoy. Another suggestion by them is to include the use of technology in team-building activities. Planners should attempt to extend their conference experience past the designated meeting times.

Meetings – Events – Communications

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Millennials imagine being amongst a community of individuals with mutual interest and passion and for those qualities to be expressed throughout the conference. Also, millennials strive for responsibility and for the ability to stretch themselves. Companies should include time for analysis and idea generation. This would also fulfill their desire to be heard and recognized for their hard work. When millennials were surveyed, it was found almost all of them were visual learners and they like engaging in education with entertainment. Also, having a purpose and opportunity to help others through a group service project will provide them with a sense of accomplishment.

Customizing and personalizing key components of the conference is essential because millennials like to feel like they are all equal individuals amongst a larger group. They will be able to take away as much as possible with something individualized.

Retailers have found that millennials are not always about the product they want to buy but the experience it can bring them. A millennial must feel a connection with a product or in this case an event and recognize the experience, lessons learned and new people they have met.

About Mary Grace – Our colleague, Mary Grace Thomas, is a junior at Wake Forest University who co-chaired Springfest, their week-long student event last year. She also interned with us last summer, and continues to contribute her ideas and millennial viewpoint through our newsletters and blogs.

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