

INTERVIEW: PAUL MILLER, CEO OF QUESTEX

A candid interview with Paul Miller, looking back at his career, his biggest learnings and how to navigate a disrupted future in the events and media sector.

THREE AGENCIES ON THE FUTURE OF EVENTS

Three global event agencies reveal how they have adapted to digital disruption and how they see the events industry evolving in the future.

THE FIX

A MONTHLY VEI DIGITAL DIGEST



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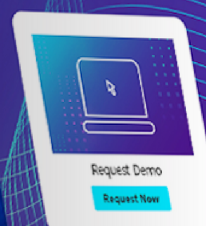
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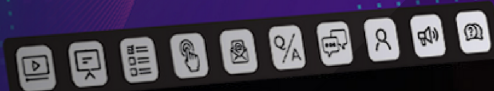
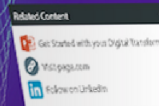
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AUGUST 2021

From the Editor

A tsunami of data is flooding through from virtual and hybrid events – the kind of data organizers have always wanted. It will equip us with the power to understand our audiences better, demonstrate ROI properly and prove our worth as event professionals.

The challenge is to collect data in a standardized and consistent way that actually leads to insights for organizers, exhibitors, and all your event's stakeholders. As we navigate new event formats, data and benchmarking will be the next steep learning curve for our industry.

What I find so interesting in the world of digital events is that the playbook on measurement and metrics has been completely re-written. Have you ever considered emojis as a measurement tool for your events? If defined and measured thoughtfully they can be a way of doing two things: determining the emotions your event elicits and pinpointing those high-value moments for your audience. This topic of data and benchmarking was explored in-depth at VEI's recent Tech Talk – the highlights are on pages 5 and 6.

The event also shone a spotlight on Vsef, a fantastic initiative that VEI is supporting to tackle the inconsistency of metrics between event platforms. Did you know organizers use on average at least four platforms to meet their needs across their event portfolio? Vsef is crucially pioneering change in this area to push the events industry forward.

Another highlight this month was chatting to Paul Miller, CEO of Questex, via a video call from his home in New York. He was extremely candid and inspiring, and offered an interesting take on the industry and its future (page 3), which is something I think we're all obsessed with right now! Hope it serves up some thought-provoking insights for you, as it did for me.

Alison Ledger, VEI Editor



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An Interview With... Paul Miller, CEO, Questex

Paul Miller started his career at Reed in the UK, before moving to New York and Silicon Valley in the 1990s. Here he shares his biggest learnings and tips for getting to the top in the events and media industry, and how to navigate a disrupted future.

WHERE DID YOUR CAREER IN EVENTS BEGIN, AND HOW DID YOU BECOME CEO OF QUESTEX?

It's really been a journey of how a failure turned into an opportunity. After college, I started my career at Reed in the UK, working on the media side. I was recruited by a New York-based tech business that needed someone to expand the business into Europe and Asia. It was a great opportunity, but it closed down after two years. I was offered redundancy, or a role in New York. So, in 1993, my wife and I moved to New York for five years, before moving to Silicon Valley in San Francisco.

The business was later acquired by UBM, where I worked for 14 years. We parted ways very mutually, but I didn't really agree with the company's events-first strategy. I was still really very involved in what I call year-round community building.

I then moved to Penton, which was acquired 18 months later by Informa. After 18 months at Informa, the former Private Equity owners of Penton offered me my current role as CEO at Questex. From the UK to the US, it's been a great ride so far.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS BEEN THE SECRET TO GETTING TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

There are two things that were much more impactful than I realized at the time. The first was Reed's terrific graduate training program, which gave me a solid foundation. It was truly world-class and included how to conduct yourself with a client, how to be customer-focused and to remember that you're solving their problems, not selling your stuff.

The second thing is that I have been tremendously fortunate to work for some of the most creative world-class leaders in our industry – people who would challenge me to push further and push harder to challenge my beliefs and think differently.

THE ADVICE I'D GIVE TO MY YOUNGER SELF WOULD BE...

I came from a deeply working-class background. I was the first kid in my family to go to college and I sometimes felt that I had to act differently, particularly around senior people. My advice to my younger self would be: don't do that – be yourself, be authentic and stand up for what you believe in rather than trying to be somebody else because that's not sustainable. I'd also say surround yourself with good people earlier – spend more time with people that are fountains and fill you up every day and less time with drains.

THE BEST BUSINESS ADVICE I'VE EVER RECEIVED IS...

Business is a team sport. Surround yourself with people that don't always agree with you. Spend a day with your customer and observe what they're dealing with. A good decision on a Monday is better than a perfect decision on a Friday – don't wait for perfect, just move.

WHAT HAVE THE PAST 18 MONTHS BEEN LIKE AT QUESTEX?

I've been at Questex for just over two and a half years. The majority of that time has been in a Covid environment, which is obviously not what I bargained for and it has been quite awful in many respects.

Before Covid, we had looked at our communities in an omnichannel way through what I like to call 362-3, which means we engage with our communities 362 days a year through digital media channels, but bring them together for three days a year at a live event. Great content brings communities to your website, which then creates data that allows you to produce better solutions for your audience, customers, and exhibitors. This was fully in place pre-Covid and had achieved 9% organic growth in the first year.

Revenue-wise, our business was 70% events, so Covid hit us like a brick wall. Yet, the digital business skyrocketed and we will almost double our business in 2021 from a \$20 million base in 2019. We have delivered virtual events worth a total of \$10 million. It's been a real test of leadership, our strategy and our people.

The bottom line is: we survived, and we've moved from surviving to thriving. What I will say is that our original pre-Covid strategy is still intact.

INSTEAD OF AN EVENTS-FIRST STRATEGY, DO YOU THINK A COMMUNITY-FIRST STRATEGY IS A BETTER BUSINESS MODEL?

The question is being discussed very heavily in many media and event companies right now. My personal take is that the number one reason media, digital websites, live and virtual events exist is to connect people. Deep down, we are all connectors. The key is how do you make those connections more efficient and more valuable for the people we are serving.

“

Business is a team sport. Surround yourself with people that don't always agree with you. Spend a day with your customer and observe what they're dealing with. A good decision on a Monday is better than a perfect decision on a Friday – don't wait for perfect, just move.

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LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE, WHAT EXCITES YOU MOST, AND WHAT WORRIES YOU?

I am tremendously excited by the influx of tech into our world. It means more customers being connected and more data to gain more intelligence. What worries me is talent – we are in a talent war. We need to attract and keep talent. We need to upscale training and development, and career pathing is supremely important. You need to accept that you will upskill some people and they will move on.



How to Achieve Successful Benchmarking at Virtual Events

At VEI's recent Tech Talk 'Benchmarking Across the Digital and Virtual Events Spectrum', sponsored by ON24, a panel of super-smart event industry leaders shared their insights and tips for successful benchmarking.

Sophie Holt, Managing Director of Explori, kicked off the discussion with the latest Net Promoter Scores for virtual events. She revealed that there are high advocacy levels for virtual events from attendees with an NPS of +21. This increases to +42 for webinars and content-led events. For comparison, trade shows globally score +11.

From an exhibitor perspective, the NPS score for digital experiences drops to -50, but Holt warned that this isn't as alarming as you may think.

She revealed: "We know virtual events perform really well around content and educational objectives, however, if we look behind the exhibitor score, 39% of them are highly satisfied and loyal to virtual events.

"What we can also see is that the teams who run great live events are also running great virtual events. Their events tend to be experience-led and designed to meet audience objectives.

"They also train their exhibitors on how to get the most out of the platform they're using and their participation in a virtual event. The key to success with virtual events for exhibitors is the actions and attitudes of the organizers."

Benchmarking is set to be one of the next major learning curves for digital event organizers. Cheri Keith, Head of Strategy at ON24, said: "As in-person events return and hybrid events come to fruition, we will see different behavior from our audiences that we'll start to benchmark against. There is so much more we can learn as we start to innovate with these event formats."

The trend will also demand a shift in perspectives. Laura Davidson, Director of Tag Digital, pointed out: "Adjusting the expectation of exhibitors is important. Point out that the qualitative data you can get access to is phenomenal – it will allow exhibitors to plan their marketing and sales activities for the year. Changing expectations takes time and education, and a full events cycle to see how the data can be utilized."



In the past, live event organizers have relied on surveys for data and insight, but that's now changed, added Humphrey Chen, CEO of CLIPr. "When you watch something, when you linger or click away, when you minimize and maximize, when you bookmark or when you react – these are all signals that tell the [platform] owner what someone values and what they don't value. As people engage more, we will get much smarter about what people want to see again.

"Sometimes you will want to be in gathering mode and so popularity ends up being a really important signal. Now the popularity signals can actually be much more accurate because there's a lot less effort to give this feedback. As a result, the delegate experience of the future will be more personalized, more adaptable, deliver higher value and ROI, and be more binge-able. Netflix is a high bar, but we've got to aim high."

The discussion moved on to items that could be benchmarked at virtual events, which often fall into three categories: the baseline of activities, counts of actions, and the impact of those activities.

Examples include the number of meetings and interactions, sessions watched and dwell time, likes and comments, response to polls, survey responses, plus business impact and the pipeline generated. Keith added: "The buying journey for most people includes 27 interactions, so we know that a lot goes into closing one opportunity."

But will this all be possible if delegates are experiencing digital fatigue? Keith replies: "Digital fatigue is a real thing. However, what we're seeing is greater and longer engagement from delegates in digital experiences. This is because event organizers have evolved to put on better digital experiences over the past year. We're going to see ebbs and flows in participation, but it's probably not because the audience is tired of that type of delivery mechanism. It's likely that the way you're putting on an experience may need to be rethought."

For benchmarks to be powerful, consistency and standardization are key. The majority of organizers typically use four or more platforms across a portfolio of events, which can make standardization hard to achieve, particularly when each platform differs on data collection and the definition of various aspects of that data.

Holt explained: "If you want to create a 365 journey, you've got to be able to standardize the data from different platforms.

"Lots of different event organizers and platforms were tackling this challenge individually. This is why we now have an industry-wide initiative called Vsef, which is a universal data format for hybrid and virtual events.

"Vsef helps data move more freely between platforms, business intelligence tools, CRM and marketing systems. It sets out detailed standards for a range of event metrics and engagement KPIs and how those data points should be formatted for easy transfer between systems."

Hilditch next took a question from someone in the audience who asked, what should my expectations be for digital campaigns and how has it changed for virtual?

Davidson answered: "The expectation for virtual event campaigns has changed. If you would usually do a 12-week campaign for a live event, we're now looking at a six-week campaign curve to virtual.

"Organizers are moving to a more 365 approach, too, which means putting more budget behind digital products – whether that's a virtual event, a platform, lead generation through content, and essentially what that's doing is building their first-party data. We all know that cookies are coming to an end, reinforcing the importance of data. With all this data behind them, organizers are increasing the value of the work they're doing."

A new innovative way of benchmarking is through emojis, said Chen. "Think about measuring success based on the type of emotion you're able to elicit from the audience. We've been coming up with new emojis, like an insightful brain emoji, so then you can measure the number of times the brain, or light bulb emojis, are hit.

"Measure and define your emoji reactions thoughtfully and keep track of how many times your delegates bookmark and share select video moments within your events. These are the high value, high impact moments, and they are the newest type of leads in our new model."

[THIS EDITION OF VEI'S TECH TALK CAN BE WATCHED ON-DEMAND HERE.](#)



AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Three Agencies on the Future of Events

VEI editor Alison Ledger spoke to three global event agencies to find out how their businesses and the wider events industry are evolving, plus their predictions for the future.



**Jonathan McCallum, CSO UK, Vice President,
George P. Johnson Experience Marketing**

"There will be a permanent shift in the ratio between in-person events and virtual, and hybrid is here to stay"

HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS EVOLVED OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS?

What took us all by surprise was the speed and required pace of change. We adapted quickly, moved to 100% virtual events, and delivered more than 700 of them. The core principles of events remained true and our clients' business priorities remained the same, even though one of their main channels to achieving objectives was paralyzed. It meant we had to evolve how we planned, created, and activated those experiences to ensure they compelled audiences to engage with our clients and still influenced behaviors and decision-making.

It led us to develop our own platform solution, OSPRE, which provides a bespoke approach, filling the gaps left by others. A platform that we could adapt and tailor based on need, and not constrained by existing functionality.

A focus on digital remote engagement played a large part in protecting people and businesses in the face of unprecedented circumstances.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE EVENT AGENCY LANDSCAPE CHANGING?

There will be a permanent shift in the ratio between in-person events and virtual, and hybrid is here to stay.

Many events have always been 'hybrid', however, online audiences haven't been prioritized and have been underserved. Now, both digital remote audiences and in-person audiences will be treated with the same relentless attention to effectiveness.

There is a need to address how we create connected experiences, not an online and in-venue event that happens simultaneously.

A hybrid event must be a unified experience, with a unified message, audience, and outcome. All audiences must be served effectively.

The intrinsic nature of human behavior to be social, to interact, and to be connected will shape the landscape – it's what makes events such a powerful tool. We will just have additional capabilities in our approach that afford us even more opportunities to engage more people, more effectively.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AS AN AGENCY?

The biggest challenge is uncertainty. The ability to plan and forecast activity with any sense of confidence is an ongoing challenge.

What the last 12 months have proven is that we can be agile and adaptable, and now that is embedded into the planning process. An agile approach and the ability to shape solutions will lessen uncertainty and create confidence.

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOUR CLIENTS FACING?

The challenges of the format have decreased as all parties are more familiar with the options, the restrictions, and the opportunities. We have moved to a better place away from trying to replicate in-person events online quickly and are using virtual in a way that is fit for purpose. We can also better recognize the limitations of platforms and where they excel.

The hardest challenge is the route-to-market aspect. Events often contribute infrastructurally to how organizations do business – they are not just a marketing or communication platform. The overnight digital disruption of events clearly had a negative impact on sales.

However, as we adjust effectively to a more unified approach in hybrid, clients can benefit from an even more enhanced outcome than before. For example, the positive benefits of both reach and direct engagement.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE RAPID DIGITALIZATION OF EVENTS?

In simple terms: embrace agility; understand the limitations and opportunities of platforms simultaneously; never forget it's an experience, not just a broadcast.

Also, do not lose sight of the fact we are in the business of business and must continually focus on why and whom we are trying to influence.

FUTURE EVENT TRENDS?

In the immediate future, we expect to see more 'global' events with a hub and spoke type activation model – a central flagship with smaller concurrent regional activations.

Further ahead, we will see events that run live around the world, passing the event 'baton' on region-by-region across time zones.

There will also be the end of in-person, or virtual events, as separate entities. We will have events that are more connected and unify virtual and in-person experiences. It is not a choice of one or the other – we can benefit from the best of both, not in competition, but in harmony.



Kim Kopetz, President, Opus Agency

"In events, measurement and data have been hot topics for many years. With the push into digital, the walls have fallen, and data is now flowing."

IN WHAT WAYS HAS YOUR BUSINESS EVOLVED OVER THE PAST YEAR?

When our industry became, in essence, illegal, our clients were fast to move into the forefront of virtual events and in-home experiences to continue to deliver on critical business outcomes.

We were fortunate to have team members with previous lives in digital marketing and media broadcasting and were able to quickly match them with our existing team focused solely on registration platform experiences. Altogether, they became invaluable in counseling our clients and partners.

While, like all businesses in the events industry, we had a rough 2020, we had one of our best Q1s ever and are now fully back and growing.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE EVENT AGENCY LANDSCAPE CHANGING?

With any disruption, there comes a new wave of startups and business innovations. For example, there are now more than 800 event technology companies. Before the pandemic, the event tech space was hot, and the focus on connected data and integrations was prevalent. Through the pandemic, the growth has been exceptional.

Organizations are starting to better understand the 360-degree view of the attendee, from the data they provide to the data you can capture based on their behavior and more. We are also seeing an acceleration of personalized, individualized experiences, as the pandemic has forced us to prioritize differently.

As we return to in-person gatherings, we are poised for the industry — for the ecosystem of providers and professionals — to continue to expand in intriguing ways.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AS AN AGENCY?

We had to quickly retool for a new reality. This shift meant we had to embrace new languages, develop new processes, and establish new partnerships, and keep our team engaged and motivated. The most significant challenges were in how we aligned our agency's retooling with our clients' internal retooling.

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOUR CLIENTS FACING?

Resourcing is one. Delivering virtual events requires a different skillset and desire to understand digital marketing and best practices. This type of work also involves clarity on roles and responsibilities in the digital space. Does the digital marketing team own digital events? Or does the events team? Or, if it is a mix, what is the right mix for the program?

The second is that the digitalization of events requires an entirely new approach for 'Experience Architecture'. Before the pandemic, event professionals had standard playbooks for different types of events, and those well-known and well-practiced building blocks were based on captivated attendees taking a mostly linear journey with us.

In digital, the attendee engagement patterns are nearly a 180-degree shift from in-person design patterns. Attendees are task-oriented. They fit sessions into their calendars when they have time to pop in, and they are much more selective about content because there is just so much more available.

So our clients have had to learn to re-architect their experiences to meet these realities and establish (and iterate) new playbooks continuously because the marketplace became increasingly sophisticated over the year.

BIGGEST LESSONS LEARNED?

In events, measurement and data have been hot topics for many years. With the push into digital, the walls have fallen, and data is now flowing.

Event professionals have now been able to experience the full power of analytics. They now have a more robust understanding of the stories, insights, and impact that have come from their investments.

They also have a clearer perspective on how we will enable new methods for offline and online event data as we return to in-person events, like our partners at Explori and the launch of Vsef, and the growing momentum of the new Experiential Marketing Measurement Coalition.

FUTURE TRENDS?

Within virtual events, our industry is getting more thoughtful about content design. We're obsessing about how to pay off live engagement and combatting a year of content that too often is just pre-recorded infomercials that could have been a blog post instead of an event.

As we continue to settle into a world of digital events being part of all portfolios, our agency — our industry — will continue to assess the value of live content and live participation.

Additionally, our teams are exploring the future of gathering online. We're breaking beyond the standard platforms and templated events as we see how the rising chit-chat economy, new status currencies, and asynchronous listening parties give us a glimpse of what's to come.

Finally, across the spectrum of a brand's events, we are reimaging portfolios and redesigning legacy programs for a new world of online, offline, and always-on live engagements.



Josh McCall, Chairman & CEO, Jack Morton

"We are seeing the intersection of technology, content, and data becoming more critical to the success of experiences. Technology pushes brands into new dimensions and allows them to reach new audiences"

HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS FARED AND ADAPTED OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS?

When 2020 put live experiences on hold, we reimaged our brand and business.

We shifted our expertise from live to virtual and leaned into some significant areas of expertise that clients could really benefit from, like our Emmy-winning broadcast design team.

By the close of 2020, we had designed and delivered almost 100 virtual experiences. To help our clients adapt to the shift, we launched our own branded experience technology platform, Jack ethos, which helped our clients create virtual and hybrid events.

Our business remained strong due to our diversified offerings in integrated marketing, digital, and sponsorship consulting. Our work in healthcare grew to levels that encouraged us to launch a separate specialized practice area, Jack Health.

Thanks to solid relationships and deep trust that we've built over many years, most of our clients from 2020 stayed with us into 2021, and we managed to add 52 new ones last year, including Riot Games and Booking.com.

Working virtually as a global agency has allowed our team members to support one another across geographies in a new way, bringing clients the best of what we have to offer regardless of the location, it's what we call 1Jack.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE EVENT AGENCY LANDSCAPE CHANGING?

We are seeing the intersection of technology, content, and data becoming more critical to the success of experiences. Technology pushes brands into new dimensions and allows them to reach new audiences.

It's also a new era for content – virtual experiences (and spending all day on Zooms) taught us that high production levels are critical if you want to keep an audience engaged, especially when they have so many distractions.

Also, data informs experience design and is the key to demonstrating ROI.

WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOUR CLIENTS FACING?

The biggest challenge for clients is deciding when to return to live events and how to do it successfully and safely.

We're working with clients to determine the best scenarios for their brands and what engagements should be virtual or hybrid.

Brands are also asking about how to retain the broader digital audiences that they tapped into during the pandemic. Some really extended their reach and they want to keep it there. While some people are itching to get back to live events, we're also bound to see audiences that want options, so clients will need to figure out the balance.

LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT IS THE BUSINESS OUTLOOK FOR YOUR AGENCY? AND WHAT KEY TRENDS DO YOU SEE EMERGING?

We're seeing a heavy focus on employee engagement especially as offices start to re-open and businesses want to make sure they are engaging with their employees – who have had a heck of a year – with the right cadence and demonstrating recognition.

Because of our global footprint, we've been able to leverage insights and key learnings from other parts of the world, such as from China that is already back to holding experiences in real life, so that helps us inform and guide clients.

VEI

Certification:

Developing Strategic Content Design – An Overview of Module 4

At the heart of VEI's offering to the global virtual and hybrid events community is the VEI Certification Program. The ever-growing online training program comprises 11-plus on-demand modules, providing a step-by-step guide for all event disciplines, across sales, marketing, content, and operations.

Each month in The Fix, we will provide an overview of one or two modules, plus some top tips for planning virtual and hybrid events. This month, we provide an outline of Module 4.

MODULE 4: DEVELOPING STRATEGIC CONTENT DESIGN

- How to identify core content for a virtual environment
- How to select formats to maintain engagement: increasing attention span with interactive content
- How to pinpoint key "must-haves" to attract both quality and quantity in your audience
- How to attract and convince speakers in the virtual environment
- How to prepare and plan for speakers to ensure the best results on the day
- How to monetize content effectively
- How to effectively re-use content after the event to maintain market momentum

The VEI Training Modules also include the following topics:

Introduction to Virtual Events, Attracting Your Audience, Developing Strategic Content Design, Monetizing Your Virtual Event, Mastering Sales Skills For Virtual Events, Choosing the Right Technology, Executing Your Virtual Event on the Day, Measuring Success Post-Event, Building Your Online Event Community, An Introduction to Hybrid Events. More modules will be added soon.

TOP TIPS

"Be creative with formats, make it personable and ensure content is compelling to keep audiences engaged. Know your virtual platform in-depth. Also, find out what is important to speakers and create speaker guides to inform and prepare them for the virtual experience so they have confidence in what you are doing."

Michaela Jeffery-Morrison, CEO of Ascend Global Media and founder of the Women in Technology World Series

"Explore ideas and develop a strategy on how to make your audience stop, stay, watch and pay. Learning to understand that the overall experience is much bigger than the event itself opens up opportunities to create stronger connections before and nurture them after. Every event comes with anticipation and memories, which must be engineered."

Robert Dunsmore, Independent Creative Director of Live Events

TESTIMONIALS

"It's fast-paced, concise, easy to put into practice, good resource materials."

Heidi Legein, Chief Executive Guru, The MICE Guru

"Even though some things are 'obvious' to apply at events, this module helped to have a clear idea of how to actually make them happen and why they are so important to keep in mind."

Alejandra Escalante, Show Manager, Tarsus Mexico

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VEI is the Global Community for virtual & hybrid events. Through certification, events, awards and content VEI is advancing the next generation of event professionals



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VEI Alumni Stories: Celeste Whitaker, Fizz Marketing

In this month's Alumni Stories, we speak to Celeste Whitaker, founder of Fizz Marketing Events Management, about pivoting to virtual events for her corporate clients and why she chose VEI's Certification Program.

WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

Like so many who have gone before me, I found my career by chance when working as a temp! I had no idea just how lucky I was and that this would become my absolute passion. I began with a junior position in an exhibition company working my way through various roles over nine years – in admin, exhibition services, and marketing. I finally became a manager of the largest IT exhibition in Africa, the Computer Faire. At that point, I felt I had the experience to start my own event agency and, in the year 2000, Fizz Marketing was born. We now serve some of the top corporates in South Africa, as well as a number of international companies. Though we work predominantly in the tech space, our clients and their audiences are diverse, which makes for a unique skill set for my team. I completed my VEIP (Virtual Events Institute Professional) in 2021.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE VEI COURSE?

In late March 2020, with just two weeks' notice, we suddenly had to scale up with one of our big events, DevConf. The conference is for software developers and IT experts, so it was a touch daunting. Our team did an excellent job, with hardly a blip. From there we were fortunate to plan and execute more than 30 virtual events – each one a new learning experience and an opportunity to keep improving our service offering.

What we realized quickly, however, was that we needed to professionalize our experience. The VEI course was an opportunity to take our practical experience and apply it to a theoretical framework that had been tried and tested.

It meant we could not only test our learning, but we could also spot any gaps or opportunities that we had missed. This would ensure a better service offering for our customers; it would give my staff the certification for their careers that I knew they had earned, and it would give us credibility with clients.

WHAT WERE YOUR FAVORITE MODULES, AND WHY?

Developing strategic content design was a favorite module of mine. I found it so valuable as it not only outlined different ways to share content in a virtual event but also gave us concrete examples of how to make the content 'live' beyond the event itself.

The ideas on how to monetize content for our clients were something we hadn't implemented yet, and going forward it will add value to our customers.

Another excellent module was 'Increasing audience engagement'. One of the most challenging aspects of virtual events is keeping the audience engaged, and this module provided some very powerful ways in which to achieve this aim.

The last module on hybrid events was also extremely useful. This has been a new service offering for Fizz Marketing, and as such, we feel this is the space where we have the most to learn.

— “ —

Passing a course of this nature – that is well researched and backed by professionals in our industry – has given me and my team the ability to speak with confidence about our knowledge in this area

— ” —

IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE PROGRAM HELPED YOU?

The VEI course has provided a structure around which we can apply our practical knowledge. Passing a course of this nature – that is well researched and backed by professionals in our industry – has given me and my team the ability to speak with confidence about our knowledge in this area.

The certification has also given our clients confidence that we know and understand the virtual event sector, not only because of the events that we have run but because we are certified professionals. It allows a level of trust and security in our recommendations during the consultation process.

One of the other benefits is that since we have achieved our certifications as an organization, we have participated in a number of Requests for Proposals, some of which we have been awarded. We believe that the official certification is what gave us the edge in winning this business.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TAKEAWAYS FROM THE COURSE?

I have quite a few! For the module on increasing your virtual audience engagement, my key takeaway was that it's enough of a challenge to gain and keep people's attention at a traditional exhibition stand at a physical event but, with a virtual event, this can be exponentially harder. The need to successfully engage a virtual audience has never been greater so this module was valuable as it gave a different take on ways to keep an audience engaged for the duration of your event.

I felt the section on developing engagement techniques to extend human communication and extend customer relationships was particularly relevant.

At Fizz Marketing this is the very heart of what we do, so this was a great part of the program for our team.

What I loved most about the 'Attracting your Audience' module was learning about the concept of MOVE (Marketing Optimisation for Virtual Events) and how to apply it in four key stages, position, target, convert and tune. It's a great, practical way to help our clients ensure that they're targeting the right audience during all stages of the event marketing plan.

The 'Introduction to Hybrid Events' module was interesting for me because at Fizz Marketing we've run a number of virtual events over the last 18 months but only a few hybrid events. This module was a reminder of how important it is to go back and revisit the basics. And, of course, to understand the journey from physical events to virtual events and then onto hybrid events and to identify the similarities and differences between them.

WHO WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE VEI PROGRAM TO, AND WHY?

Four members of my team at Fizz Marketing have completed the course, and obviously, they have some experience working with virtual events to give them a contextual understanding of the course material, which is really useful.

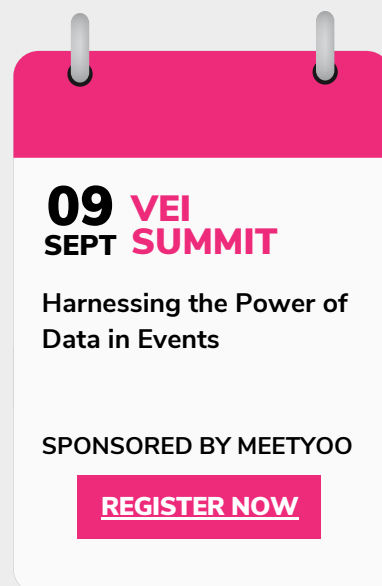
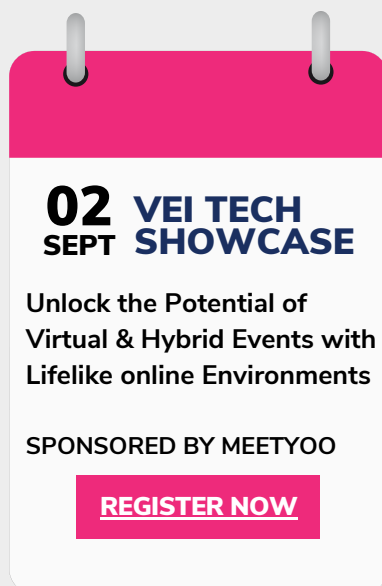
I would, however, recommend this course to anyone wanting to run virtual events, whether they are new to the industry or not. If you have no experience it gives you a theoretical framework within which you can work.

And, if you do have experience, it gives you the theory to compare against and you can take or leave what will work for your clients – a win/win in anyone's book!

[See more VEI Alumni Stories here](#)

VEI Events Calendar

These upcoming VEI events are packed full of market-leading speakers, discussing the latest trends and technologies impacting the market.



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