



UK

# Outdoor Events Industry Leadership Forum

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF OUTDOOR  
EVENTS AND WHAT ROLE DO WE PLAY IN  
PREPARING THE INDUSTRY FOR IT?

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## INTRODUCTION

On the opening day of the Event Production Show 2017, a number of high profile and leadership personalities within the outdoor events world sat down to assess the current state of the industry and predict what challenges lay ahead for it.

The forum was convened through the joint partnership between the National Outdoor Events Association and GL events, the association's first Futures Supporter. Hosted within Olympia London, the forum included event agencies, operations specialists, F&B providers and companies from across the supply chain.

The aim of the discussion was to debate the issues at the forefront of the industry, and identify some common goals and strategies.

### Attendees:

- Adam Hempenstall, Peppermint Events
- Al Turner, EIGHT PR & Marketing
- Adam Goodyer, LiveStyled
- Ben Way, WMP Creative
- Chad Lion-Cachet, Clico Capital
- Claire Kenton, 8 PR
- David Tunnicliffe, GL events
- Emma Hudson, AAA
- Gill Tee, Entertee
- Katherine Eaton, Westminster City Council
- Mark Sorrell, The Pop-Up Hotel
- Nick Morgan, Big Cat Group
- Nicola Foreman, GL events
- Rachel Baker, GL events
- Rob Whalley, Independent Event Technology Expert
- Tim Owen, TfL and the London Mayor's Office
- Tom Clements, NOEA Scotland

## 1. ARE BRANDS THE FUTURE?

Discussions began with an agreement that there needs to be a closer relationship and clearer understanding between brands, operations and suppliers in order for events to be delivered with stronger commercial gains.

*“Brands will never come in and control the marketplace”*

Increasingly it seems that brands understand the potential for events to provide a lasting, positive impression, and it was reported that the lead is often coming from the brands and how they envisage they can connect with their customers.

One of the trends identified within the discussions was the entry of solely branded events, beyond simple sponsorship of existing events. However, it was felt that brands will never control the marketplace entirely, with the future landscape likely to see a continued resistance to brands from new, innovative independently run events.

In summary:

- There are repeated calls to involve all parties, including suppliers, at the embryonic stage of planning to ensure consistency and evoke collaboration
- It is vital we appreciate the differing role of sponsorship and understand that its place in large scale events – which are predominantly funded by ticketing and bar profit – is very different to its position in smaller, free-entry projects that rely on such contributions
- Brands will continue to have an impact on the future of the events industry both as event organisers and event sponsors. The quality of the dialogue and relationships here will dictate how brands will influence the future of the industry

## 2. HOW IS THE MARKET CHANGING?

The forum paid close attention to the growing options for consumers within the events industry, and equally their own growing appetite for the events industry. The Experience Economy will continue to drive people 'outdoors' and in search of special experiences.

In the meantime, consolidation is going to play a large part in the future of outdoor events as the market becomes increasingly fragmented and the consumer becomes ever-more savvy.

There was an undoubted agreement that consumers are no longer looking for just a good event but one that is better each time. It seems customers are continually aiming to improve their experience and get more and more for their money.

It was agreed, however, that while the audience is becoming increasingly discerning, the market is fragmenting with certain events appealing to an older clientele, who are looking for something different.

A generation gap continues to exist and for the younger event-goers their interest is intrinsically linked to social advocacy as they seek to establish themselves as social leaders. This has certainly contributed to the proliferation of smaller, niche events that cater for the 5,000 – 10,000 capacity audience. Often socially-conscious millennials don't want to go to the large scale, talent-led events that are deemed to be mainstream.

*"In some cases you could go to an event in Europe, enjoy better weather and all for half the price. This is a threat but ultimately will drive quality"*

Broadly it seems the general public are going to more events but they are more discerning about what they want. The marketplace has broadened significantly and the season for outdoor events continues to be stretched. Ultimately, it's no longer about attending an event just to see a band on a stage.

In summary:

- There is a proliferation of niche and community-based events bringing a new demographic into the market place
- It is essential that we continue to serve existing clientele as well as accommodating a new audience in order to maintain growth
- The Experience Economy continues to be a 'good thing' for the industry, however these experiences can equally be sought outside of the UK. The industry needs to accept an outside threat on its own well established quality

### 3. HOW IS EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AFFECTING OUR WORLD?

Technology is a constantly changing landscape that offers so much potential to events. There are suppliers that can provide invaluable insight into customers' specific interactions with a brand and delve into the science behind behavioral economics and data.

One key concern raised in discussions was that the constant trend for acquiring data has resulted in a cynicism among consumers. However, specialists in the field suggest that it has become more of a value exchange. Consumers are increasingly savvy now and realise they are exchanging data but they want to know what they will receive in return.

Questions were raised regarding our industry's enthusiasm for technology and we were recognized as 'mid to late' adopters of new concepts. Understandably, it was agreed that technology needs to undergo robust testing before it is unleashed on the event sector as - by the nature of what we do - there is no

margin for error. Often we have one chance to make it right. The overwhelming consensus was that technology must first prove its worth to the industry and not the other way around.

It was agreed post meeting that the field of event technology and its future influence on the industry warrants separate discussions on their own and that this would be a productive use for the future forum.

In summary:

- Data acquisition, while invaluable, will continue to influence the management and evaluation of an event experience
- The industry needs to be wary of its relationships with its visitors and ensure data is handled sensitively
- Technology is having an irrevocable effect on the industry, which needs to be embraced with caution. The industry will continue to act as mid to late adopters within this field

#### 4. TICKETING, WHAT'S NEXT?

Concern about ticketing is not a new phenomenon. It was repeatedly raised that the general public just aren't afforded the chance to purchase tickets. Touting, in its many guises, continues to be a huge problem and there are continued calls for it to be outlawed as it has been in the sporting sector. It was accepted that ultimately this is a legal issue and the industry needs to pull together to create a united voice and lobby the highest echelons with its concerns.

Regardless, secondary ticketing was considered by most as a clear and present threat to the future of the outdoor events industry and one that needs to be addressed as a priority.

Post meeting, NOEA has agreed to look at this issue in more detail and look towards a united industry response.

In summary:

- Secondary ticketing is a clear and present threat to the outdoor events industry and needs to be urgently addressed
- As touting continues to become more advanced the industry needs to raise its game and protect its interests
- The outdoor events sector can learn from the sporting arena's success in addressing the issue

## 5. NEXT STEPS

This document will be shared amongst those who attended the forum to ensure it is a correct and representative summary of the meeting.

Both GL events and NOEA will share a final document within their own communities and also with the industry's media to encourage a wider discussion within the outdoor events industry.

Both NOEA and GL events would encourage those who attended the meeting to do likewise.

There are a number of clear actions from the discussions and we are aware that further action needs to be taken on:

- Event Technology
- Secondary Ticketing

The forum is also well aware of the need to address subjects that were unable to be addressed due to time restrictions, such as:

- Globalisation
- Entrepreneurism in the industry
- The role of cities and countries

It is the intention of the forum to take the findings from across these areas and to share them with the industry in full.

Once the findings of all of the above have been collated, NOEA and GL events will conduct further qualitative research amongst the industry with the intention of gaining credible data on trends that will affect the industry in the years to come.

This will give both NOEA and the industry a blueprint to prepare itself for the future and ensure it remains a positive one for outdoor events.

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