



'Think Differently'

Creative Conferencing

Introduction

In today's fast moving, budget conscious environment, event managers are constantly under pressure to produce more, for less. Both agencies and inhouse teams are being asked to produce creative, effective and tailored communications, to tighter or even reduced budgets, while still maintaining quality.

Combined with this, expectations are higher. We live in a fast-moving, innovative and ever changing environment and are used to our communications being challenging, entertaining and dynamic. With today's technology everything we need for our business and personal communications, data and entertainment is available at the touch of a button, as and when we want it. We can hardly expect this same audience to be enthralled by sitting in a dark room, watching a one-way powerpoint presentation which reiterates bullet points.

A new event strategy

But how can you continue to push the boundaries? To remain competitive and keep ahead of the industry, production companies need to offer their clients new solutions and approaches. Rather than tweaking a tried and tested formula, companies should be encouraged to rethink their event strategy and try new ideas.

One highly effective way that event management and production company, Mirage, has developed is to radically change the event style and agenda. Actually take the meeting outside the conference room to new environments. Enjoy the surroundings and venue you have invested in. Break delegates into smaller, more intimate teams who can work together to discover and learn. Utilise best practice from all components of an event, add innovation and create a bespoke experience.

Recognising the need to differentiate this style of event from more traditional approaches, Mirage has branded it '*think differently* - Creative Conferencing.'

What is a Creative Conference?

Creative Conferencing works well for both internal and external groups of between 30 and 300. It can be applied to product launches, user and focus groups, conferences and meetings, development groups and induction days. Indeed any event where a company needs to build an experience, encourage teamwork, ensure understanding and buy-in in a fun, yet meaningful way.

Creative Conferencing challenges convention and puts the delegate at the centre of the event, facilitating multi-direction communications rather than a one-way, or even two-way flow. It's a new approach to live event communication and creates energy and builds a different mindset.

But how can this actually be applied? How can you convince management that simply repeating past formulae isn't enough and that a new approach would be more effective? Case studies showing different applications and tangible results should be enough to stimulate the imagination and provide reassurance. Below are three Mirage case studies showing how varied audiences, events and locations with entirely different challenges and objectives benefited from the '*think differently*' approach.

Mirage Case Studies

Company conference, teambuild and celebration

A new management team wanted all their employees to '*think differently*.' They needed to be actively involved in building the business plan, moving the focus from the presenters to the delegates. At the same time, the conference in Alicante served as a reward and celebration for a successful year.

Instead of the usual format the company chose a fully interactive conference where mixed groups of employees rotated around different, pleasant and surprising locations. Pertinent teambuild activities set the scene for discussion and agreement on key business strategies. Employees were able to relax and enjoy the venue while still working hard. The event was rounded off with an energising teambuild on the beach and a stunning gypsy style fiesta in the Spanish countryside.

The results were outstanding. The company benefited from full employee input and ownership of corporate goals and established an ongoing business planning tool.

Technical product launch

For another company, the need to differentiate a product launch, stimulate the senses and create a fun, memorable and enjoyable platform for learning was paramount. The content was very technical and there was a lot to assimilate in one day.

The medical sales team arrived at a central London location expecting the usual heavy day of product training. Instead they were given the challenge of finding their presentations, rotating around a series of diverse and interesting venues. It did mean the presenters had to give their presentations more than once, but they knew the delegates appreciated the smaller groups and personal approach. The time spent on the treasure hunt provided a break from the training and served as a good teambuild and energiser. The team loved the bespoke event and later post event measurement showed greater message retention, teamwork and motivation.

Sales conference and teambuild

For a totally different audience, who thought they had seen it all, Creative Conferencing was used to energise, surprise, motivate, reward and involve a young sales force. By integrating the different components, the event could also be shortened by a day allowing budget savings and less time out of the office.

Ten teams, each of 15 delegates, collaborated to find their presenters. Presentations, in unique settings around an Italian lake, were short, punchy, personal, relaxed and encouraged two-way communication. A consistent theme ran through the event, tying together teambuild, business and social activities. The event finished with an exciting Roman feast, featuring real gladiators, situated in an exclusive villa on the lake.

The result was an extremely motivated sales force, with clear objectives and an understanding of corporate targets showing an immediate effect on the bottom line.

Summary

Through these case studies we can see how different approaches can be applied. Even subtle changes to the environment and format can make a huge difference. Take away the presentation crutches, elaborate sets and go back to simple, more personal, targeted and relevant communications.

Continuing to do the same events, and cutting corners to save on costs simply won't work. There are plenty of creative ways to reallocate and stretch a budget and investing in the services of a creative event management and production company is money well spent.

Events need to change and progress, to be dynamic, challenging, pertinent and even surprising. That way you can meet set objectives and justify your budget through an increased ROI.

About Mirage

Mirage is a full-service live event management and production company.

We continue to delight clients, and exceed expectations, for the simple reason that Mirage does not produce events to a formula. We tailor our creativity to meet your brief and create a memorable, vibrant event, which is professional without being predictable. We help define your objectives, refine your messages and then we inject fun, velocity and life into your content, ensuring your key messages are understood, reinforced and embraced.

Mirage has an impressive portfolio of blue-chip clients whose events range from product launches, conferences, roadshows, business forums, AGMs through to themed parties and fun days, award ceremonies, team-building and motivational activities. Our complete range of services includes venue selection, programme content, logistics, staging, print and electronic media, delegate management, guest speakers and celebrities, video conferencing, speaker support and AV.

To learn more about how your events could have greater impact, relevance and creativity call us on +44 (0) 1883 740400, email diane@mirageemail.com or visit our website at www.miragewebsite.com or visit our party planners site: www.mirageparties.co.uk.



32 High Street, Bletchingley, Surrey RH1 4PA. Tel 44 (0)1883 740400

Registered Office: 7 Station Road West Oxted Surrey RH8 9EE. Company registration number: 3373298