

inspiring  
people



# NO SHINE WITHOUT FRICTION

TEN TYPES OF FRICTION  
THAT ARE SHAPING EVENTS  
TODAY AND TOMORROW

‘THE GEM CANNOT  
BE POLISHED  
WITHOUT FRICTION,  
NOR MAN PERFECTED  
WITHOUT TRIALS’

*Confucius*



# THE WORLD IS SHIFTING

There is a paradigm shift underway, and it's made up of lots of smaller changes. On the one hand, there is a move towards more decentralised, more local and more individual choices. On the other we see an evolution towards globalisation, international cooperation and communities.

This shift is taking place in an increasingly complex society which contains countless points of view – a networked society that spans the globe.





# THE WORLD IS SHIFTING

Cross-border political and economic interdependencies are growing at the same time as we become increasingly focused on the things happening in our own backyard.

We ask for responsible political leadership while starting our own grassroots movements. We adopt new technologies faster than ever before while nostalgically longing for traditional values. And we are getting used to robots, the internet of things and implant technologies at the same time as we seek the comfort of craftsmanship and authenticity.

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ARE SHAPING EVENTS – TODAY AND TOMORROW

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# TRENDS



## AN ERA OF CONTRADICTIONS

We are moving towards an era in which the choices we make have an impact on more aspects of society than ever before.

This will be an era in which several generations share workspaces at the same time, in which we move from shareholder value to stakeholder value, and where our social footprint puts individuals, organisations and governments on the same level. These are interesting times, to say the least. One person can change the world – for better or worse.

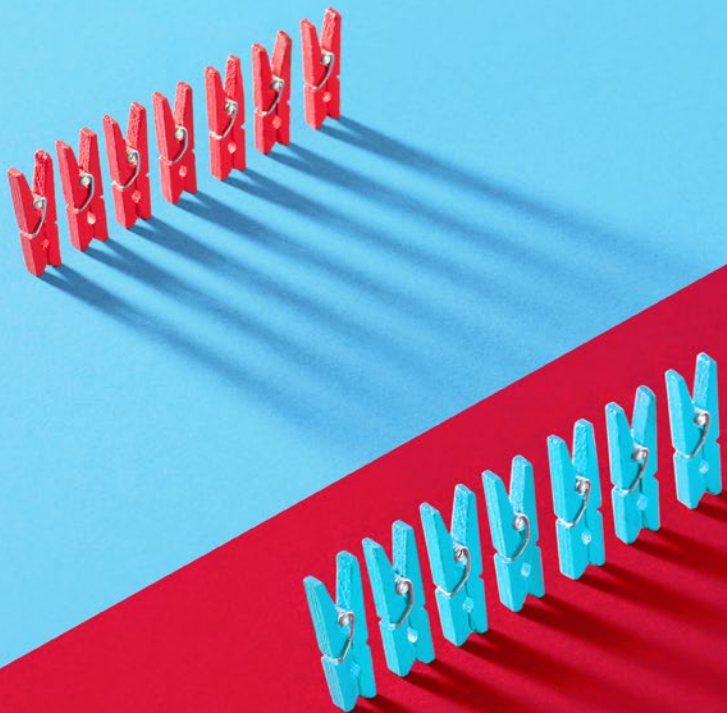




# AN ERA OF CONTRADICTIONS

So how are these global and local changes impacting the meeting and experiential marketing industry?

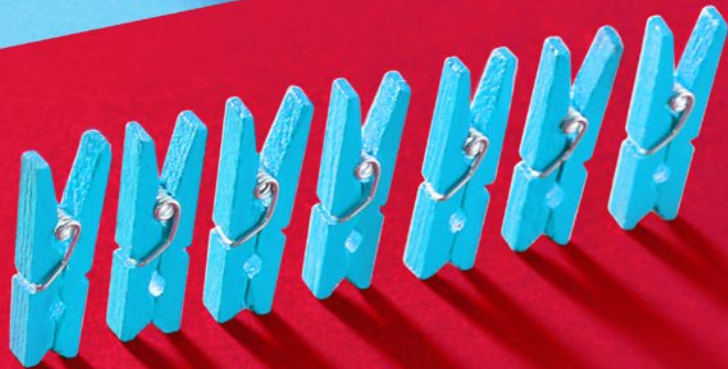
Obviously issues such as security and safety are often a topic of discussion today, but trends such as transparency, mindfulness, simplicity, sustainability and sensory also come to mind. All in a well-designed format where content meets contacts via well-chosen technology and scientific research, with substantial ROI for attendees, organisers, venues and all other stakeholders.



# THE VALUE OF FACE-TO-FACE

Even though we cannot predict economic upturns or slumps as well as we used to, one thing is certain: the value of face-to-face meetings is maintaining its value. This is increasingly recognised by marketers, companies, associations and other stakeholders.

Even in a technology-enabled, networked society, the best way by far to meet and start a real relationship is through a handshake and a shared experience.



# THE VALUE OF FACE-TO-FACE

All in all, it is clear we need to know where things are going and innovate accordingly on a continuous basis order in order to keep events valuable for all stakeholders.

But beware: the events industry can sometimes get ahead of itself. Remember all the blogs about Google Glass and how we could use it in our venues and events? That was too soon, even though we love tech!





## WHY CHANGE NOW?

Of course, being aware of developments and actually incorporating them in a business model are two different matters.

Change and innovation are hard. When your event takes place biennially, your attendees know what to expect, your budget stays the same, the venue has enough breakouts, and you need dates for 2022... why change now?

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ARE SHAPING EVENTS – TODAY AND TOMORROW

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# WHY?

## WHY CHANGE NOW?

Well, we need to. Because there is a shift underway and things will be different by 2022. The desire and enthusiasm to embrace change has never been greater.

We take events seriously and so does our audience: today they expect flawless experiences which deliver value, content, contacts and fun with tech, ROI and cutting edge experiences. Tomorrow they will demand even more.

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ARE SHAPING EVENTS – TODAY AND TOMORROW

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# HOW CAN YOU BE PREPARED?

Ten types of friction that are shaping events – today and tomorrow.

Where's the friction? In this trend report you'll find ten general questions that can help you identify some important issues – and some tips to ensure that your events shine in the light of today's and tomorrow's trends. This includes learning from the experience of international event professionals that cuts to the pith of the matter: best practice and fast forward.

**Sanne Jolles**  
Market research manager  
RAI Amsterdam





# TEN TYPES OF FRICTION THAT ARE SHAPING EVENTS TODAY AND TOMORROW

*[click here to go directly to each friction](#)*

**FRICTION #1**  
OFFLINE VS ONLINE

**FRICTION #6**  
SHARP FOCUS VS BLURRED LINES

**FRICTION #2**  
LARGE VS SMALL

**FRICTION #7**  
INSIDE VS OUTSIDE

**FRICTION #3**  
TOGETHER VS ALONE

**FRICTION #8**  
PROFESSIONAL VS AMATEUR

**FRICTION #4**  
LIVE VS RECORDED

**FRICTION #9**  
BUSINESS VS PLEASURE

**FRICTION #5**  
LETTING GO VS KEEPING CONTROL

**FRICTION #10**  
OLD VS NEW



**QUOTES**  
THIS IS WHAT EVENT PROFESSIONALS SAY



## FRICION #01 OFFLINE VS ONLINE

▶ How can we make sure that those participating online have an ROI comparable to attendees?

Should we make sure they all feel part of the bigger picture or do we want to cater for a variety of clients with both online and offline events?



**Celebrate all types of attendees** make sure that your event has an online alternative. There are various revenue models and segmentations you can apply to create new ideas.

**Let offline and online attendees meet** you have the technology, right?  
Hybrid matchmaking!

**Use touch, smell, taste, vision and sound** during live events to enhance the experience. For online events, engage via ease of use, convenient timeframes, personalised settings and lots of conversations. There is no need to bring exactly the same benefits to both – unless you want to. Know how to use both online and offline to your advantage.



## FRICION #02 LARGE VS SMALL



How can we cater for both niche and general knowledge attendees?

Should we incorporate all in one event or make several smaller ones?

Where can we add the most value for our stakeholders?

► **Add niches to your general exhibition**

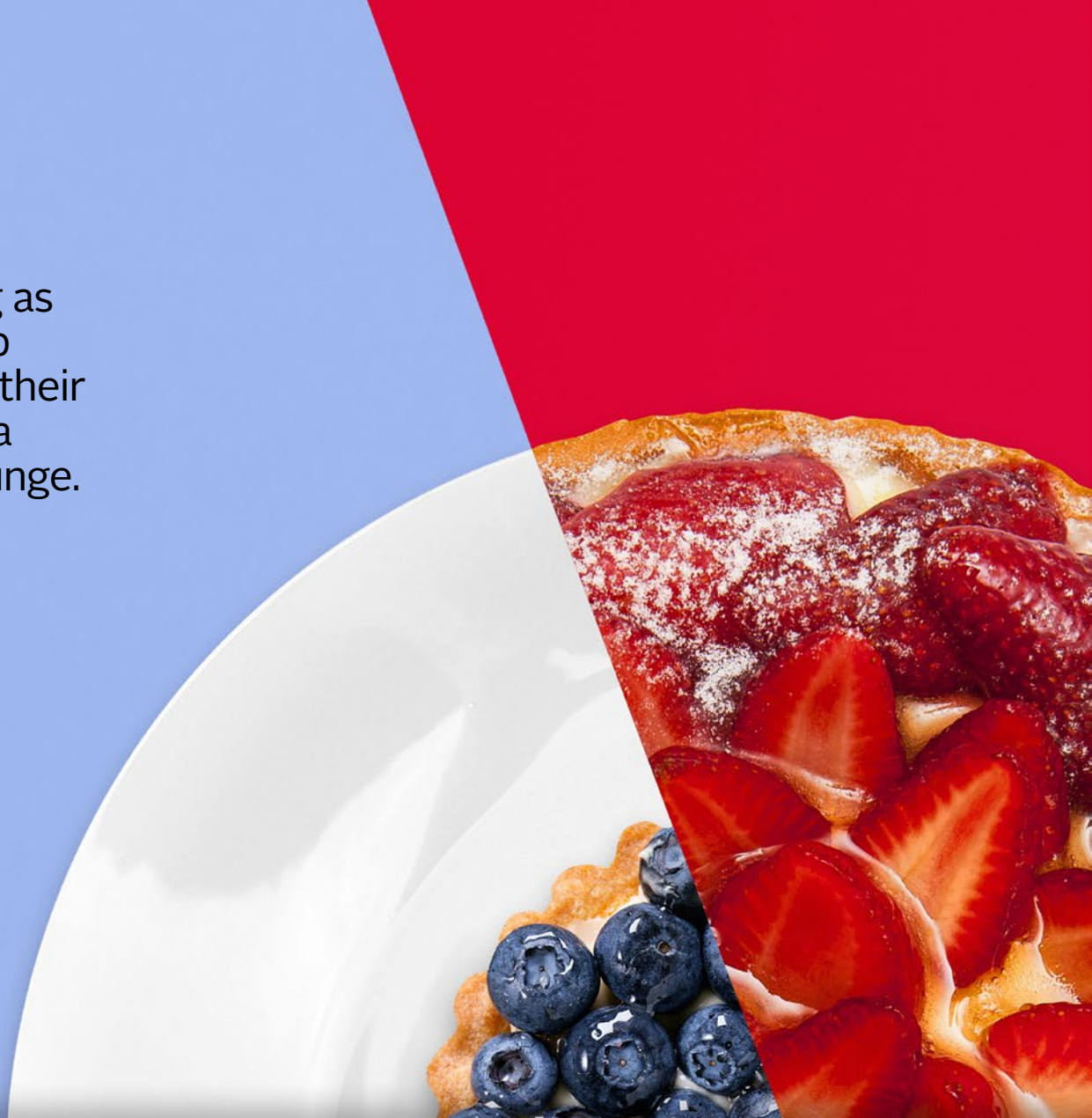
it doesn't have to be a problem as long as your delegates have a customised map leading them to points of interest and their fellow visitors. This holds true even in a dedicated matchmaking session or lounge.

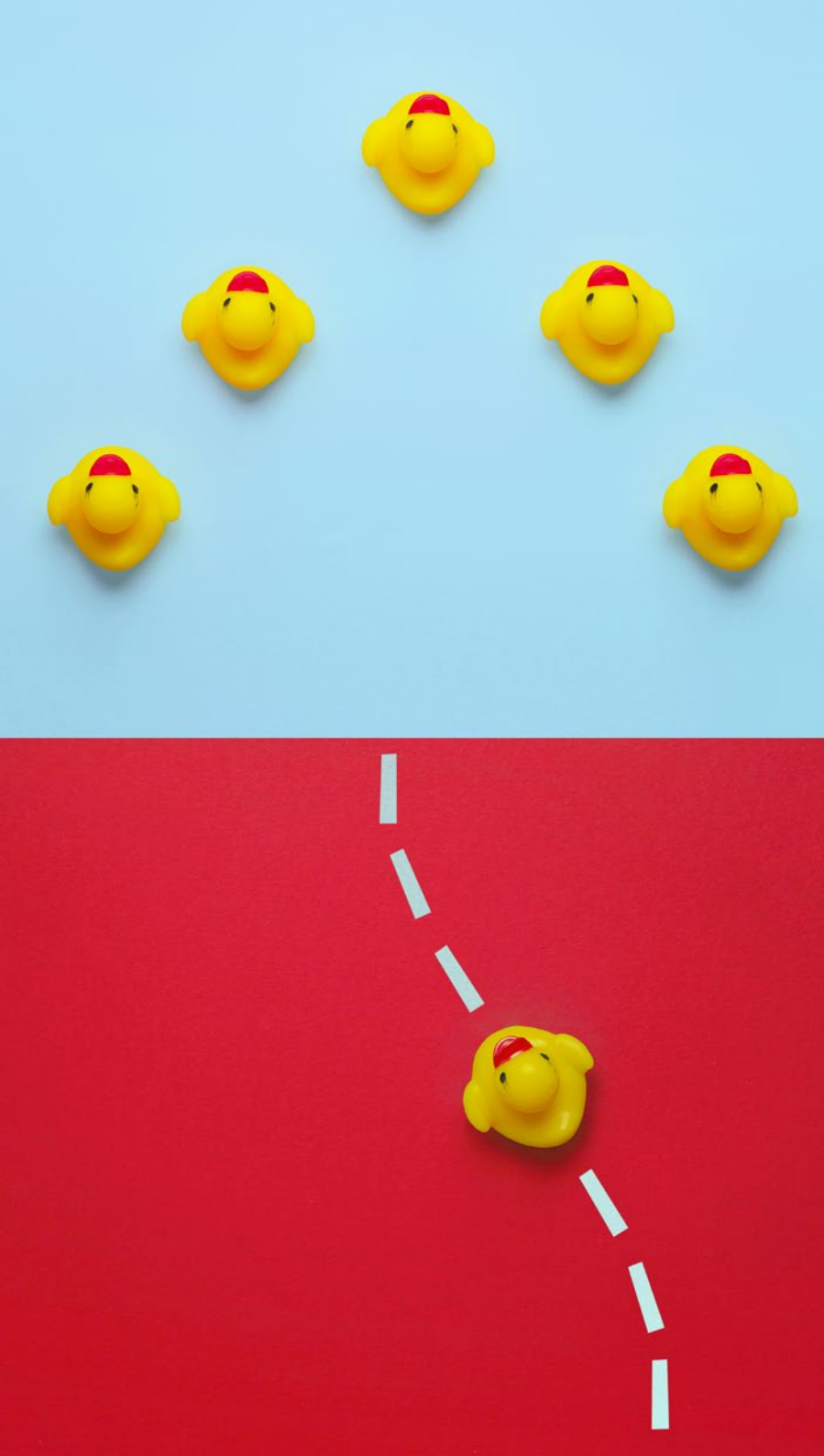
**Design days for specialists**

see if your event can have a different focus each day, attracting new groups that will ask exhibitors new questions. Your exhibitors can even anticipate and shape the theme.

**Hybridise a niche event with another**

for example by sharing speakers online that can bring value to both. Smaller events can share big ideas more efficiently.





## FRICION #03 TOGETHER VS ALONE

▶ How can we align a personal journey with a larger group?

Can we make our visitors and attendees feel welcome as a group and at the same time as individuals? Should we?



▶ **Create a personal event journey from door to door**  
remember that an event starts when a delegate makes the decision to come and is remembered long after the last session is over.

### **Bio-hack your delegates**

pamper your visitors and make sure that they have ways to re-energise: use food, powernaps, nature, art, conversation pieces, side events... Personal time is important, even during events.

### **Deploy matchmaking tools for introverts**

with an increasing focus on contacts and networking, helping all attendees gain maximum ROI is valuable. Use elements of gaming, social, pre-event meet-ups, etc. to engage all.





## FRICION #04 LIVE VS RECORDED

▶ How can we use the footage from our events all year round, and is all content in a live event supposed to be live?

Should we be capturing content to begin with?

▶ **Use content the whole year round**  
this helps marketing and sales: filmed content from your events will let you tell your story to different target groups. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

**Stage a virtual comeback**  
share a summary of your event with delegates a few weeks after the event to reignite the event-spirit.

**Incorporate *offline only* sessions**  
attendees might be looking for a reason to come because it offers an exclusive chance to meet speakers and fellow delegates in real time, in a live event, while knowing that all content and discussions are for delegates' eyes and ears only.








## FRICION #05 LETTING GO VS KEEPING CONTROL

▶ How can we use data to make the most of each individual attendee's experience and the most of our event, while still allowing space for the unexpected?

Are we brave enough to let go if we can capture all?



## **Use various measurement tools to provide insights**

and combine IoT, heat maps, registration tools, social media, beacons, real time feedback – during and after your event. You will be amazed. Always learn from the data generated! We can make better, more data-driven decisions that help us grow our events without burdening delegates with tonnes of questions.

## **Organise unconference sessions**

these are peer-to-peer sessions where topics, speaker and format are not known in advance. You could use them instead of a breakout programme or as an integral part of your regular sessions. You will share content that is relevant to most attendees and also gain knowledge about your delegates' preferences in format and scope.

## **Ask and listen: what can we change?**

an easy and fun way to generate data while keeping things loose is to suggest that attendees just pin a post-it on a wall with suggestions for the next event. No pressure, no names, just genuine feedback from your peers.



## FRICION #06 SHARP FOCUS VS BLURRED LINES

▶ Are we missing content or do we cover too much?

When is it time to look for partners and co-creators for new content of experiences?

Where do we draw the line?





### ► **Benchmark with newbies and oldies**

events are again in the focus of marketers and at the heart of marketing revenues, and there are a lot of new ones out there. Is yours still on track? Making an annual inventory of the new kids on the block and old dogs with new tricks is not a bad idea. Which other events or communities are your delegates visiting?

### **Co-create to reinvent yourself**

growth hacking, imagineering – there are various ways to reinvent yourself if needed. Use disciplines and insights from other branches to find a new blue ocean in your event.

### **Incorporate niches, start-ups, conferences**

in trade shows or exhibitions in conferences – finding partnerships in cities, universities and innovation centres can help you grow, even though it might be in a direction that you did not anticipate.

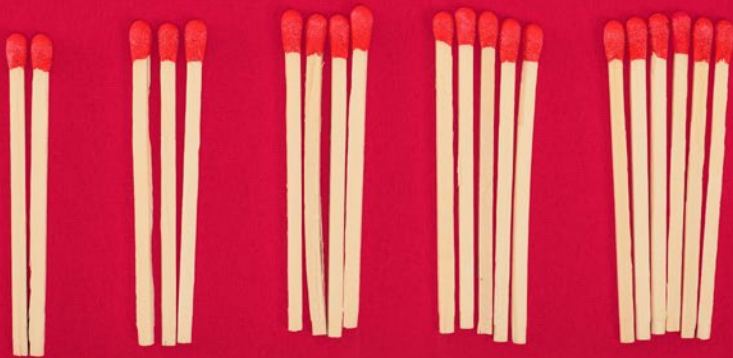


## FRICION #07 INSIDE VS OUTSIDE

▶ What is the best design and the best space for our event?

How can we make the most of the venue and city to optimise the event for attendees?

Do we even need a venue?





► **Check out new ways to hold breakouts**  
divided by walls or by earplugs? We don't have to be separated to listen to different content. Whichever you choose, make sure that the design or architecture of your event is leading.

### **Other spaces can provide a new vibe**

so go outside your comfort zone and look for behind-the-scenes spaces, kitchens, garages, even moving spaces. A moving bus in the city might double as a breakout room.

### **Incorporate nature**

nature's best: get energy from an al fresco meeting, or a stroll in the park as part of the programme. Who said that all conference rooms need walls?







## FRICION #08 PROFESSIONAL VS AMATEUR

▶ Can we mix professional and amateur audiences at a business event?

Do we need professional speakers or specialists on a subject to get a message across?

### **Add new target groups to grow**

say you have an exhibition or conference for professionals. Can you add a day or a few hours for the general public? Is there a specific session that you could broadcast? Check out the value you could bring for exhibitors. This could be the start of a new event.

### **Always coach your speakers**

some of them may be experienced and know their way around a stage. Others may be specialists in their scientific field. Each has a part in your event design and should know its ins and outs.

### **Offer a first-time track**

there is no such thing as a professional event visitor – so even if your audience knows you well, make sure you have programmes for first-time attendees and share all new elements of your event in good time. We all like to prepare, consider transforming the first event day into a buzz day where everyone chooses their sessions and gets to know what's new.





## FRICION #09 BUSINESS VS PLEASURE

How do we create an environment where visitors feel at home and relaxed while at the same time ready for business and learning?

How do we incorporate that in our content, venue, website or social?



▶ **Cater for wellbeing** and the attendee will take in more content, engage in better conversations. Feeling good generates better a ROI. Attendee pampering!

### **Mix common interests as well as business interests**

imagine matchmaking with a group of people that share their hobbies or zodiac sign instead of their function and company – interesting conversations guaranteed! It is ROI by another name.

### **Programme for shared experiences**

personal friendships come first, business later. So remember to add a good time to your business event, if possible crowd-sourced or easy to participate in. A shared experience helps build a better relationship, and does not have to be over the top. It's all about participation.



## FRICITION #10 OLD VS NEW

▶ How do we focus on new attendees or new generations and still appeal to the silver economy and the natural demographics of our event?

If we change our content or venue, how can we keep the core that attracted delegates to begin with?



► **Celebrate your history**

and use storytelling to create a sense of belonging. Think about a *back by popular demand section* – sessions that stood the test of time, or that can provoke new reflections. Whatever you do, do not lose your foundations.

**Add *Experiment Sections***

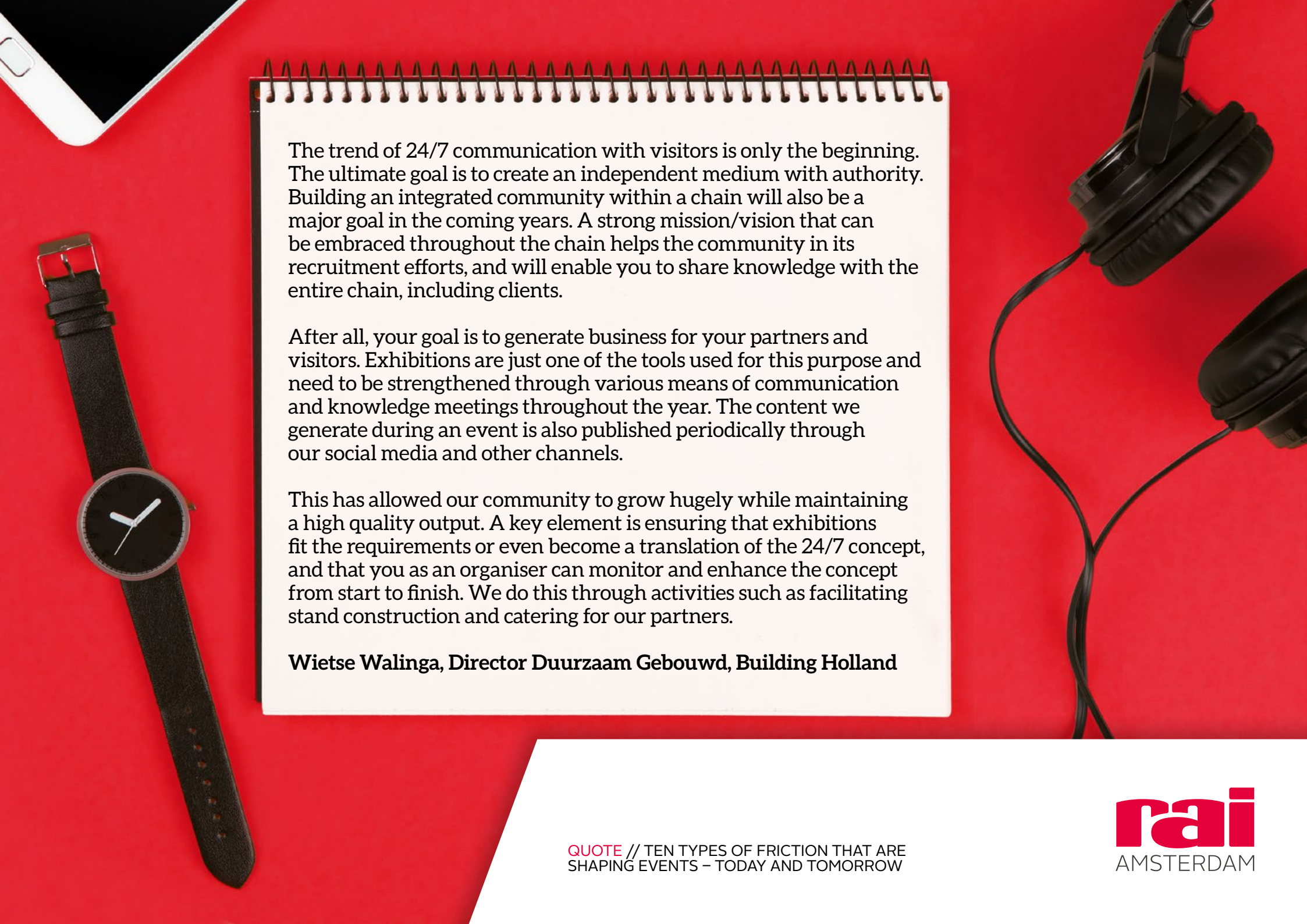
to help innovate during events. Try out new sessions, exhibit ideas or alternative ways to generate content, such as unconferences. One step at the time and helping organisers, exhibitors and experienced and new delegates alike to innovate together.

**Embrace the past to connect people**

polaroids, Kodak moments... remember those? Well, they are back, as is the vintage look in design and food items – with a new twist, obviously.







The trend of 24/7 communication with visitors is only the beginning. The ultimate goal is to create an independent medium with authority. Building an integrated community within a chain will also be a major goal in the coming years. A strong mission/vision that can be embraced throughout the chain helps the community in its recruitment efforts, and will enable you to share knowledge with the entire chain, including clients.


After all, your goal is to generate business for your partners and visitors. Exhibitions are just one of the tools used for this purpose and need to be strengthened through various means of communication and knowledge meetings throughout the year. The content we generate during an event is also published periodically through our social media and other channels.

This has allowed our community to grow hugely while maintaining a high quality output. A key element is ensuring that exhibitions fit the requirements or even become a translation of the 24/7 concept, and that you as an organiser can monitor and enhance the concept from start to finish. We do this through activities such as facilitating stand construction and catering for our partners.

**Wietse Walinga, Director Duurzaam Gebouwd, Building Holland**

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Organisers will use more and more tools to understand the needs and demographics of their audiences. Facilitating a platform for matchmaking and sharing ideas before, during and after an event is increasingly important. The ideas shared before your event can be used to fine-tune your programme while also serving as a starting point for discussions in sessions where the audience itself decides which topics to tackle, there and then.


The industry needs venues which embrace the technology we need and provide good digital connections with free Wi-Fi. While we are currently used to fitting our events within the accommodation supplied by venues, in future it will be the other way around: venues will be flexible enough to fit around our event, whichever shape or format we choose.

**John Hyde, Reed Exhibitions,  
Exhibition Director Helitech International**


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The future of live events is bright. The power of the human touch has proven an invaluable asset in a world of technologies. However, I think that there is no longer a blueprint for successful events. More than ever we need to be agile, offer tailor-made solutions, get out of our comfort zones, experiment and continue to innovate.



We need to create partnerships, content and experiences together with our stakeholders and shape each individual event to connect the right people, beliefs, businesses, networks and opportunities.

I believe taking the lead in creating these events and managing traditional expectations of all parties involved is the key to continued success.

**Annette Bos, Show Director,  
Aquatech Global Events, RAI Exhibitions**



We are dedicated to organizing sustainable, targeted events that continue to provide value to both exhibitors and visitors.

Indeed, many of our events are already celebrating two decades of success, with even more passing the 10-year-mark. We'll continue to strive for excellence, putting value before profit.

**Graham Johnson,  
Managing Director,  
UKIP Media and Events**



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The medical/scientific market segment is suffering from a significant reduction in support due to changes in compliance regulations. While the trend skips some of the large associations, for now, it is evident in most meetings. Knowing that what we have done until now in terms of support is no longer the norm, we should find new ways and streams of support for our clients. Use such threats as opportunities to set new industry standards and norms.

We are working hard to develop personalized marketing to attract better new attendees to our events and show them the benefits of the event. Incorporating new formats, such as hybrid, is another way of finding new value and ROI for all stakeholders.

The traditional frontal presentations will slowly lose their standing as the sole format of sessions and content dissemination.

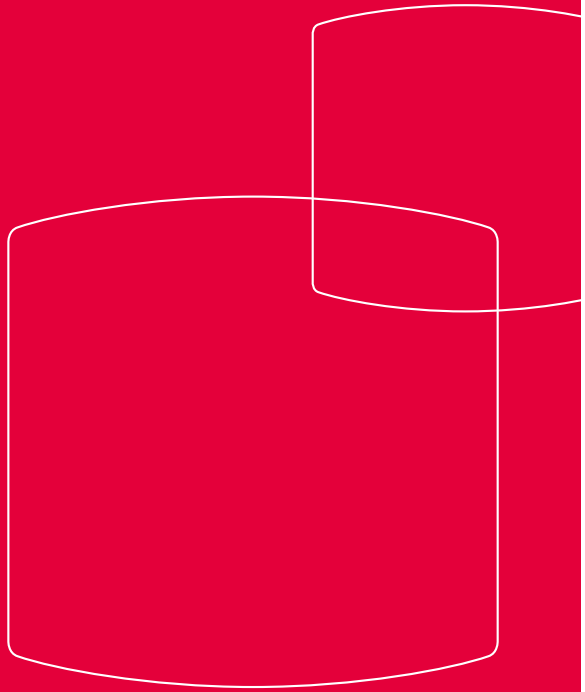
Meetings will accommodate various session formats with different set-ups and hall sizes. We are working on the scope of needs and expectations of our clients and their attendees. For that we are using Meeting Architecture: our attempt is to structure the format of meetings in order to establish a positive return on investment for all stakeholders.

**Dan Rivlin, CEO Kenes Group**

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