

Top eventing trends for 2017: Smart tech, fabulous food, controlled costs and a return to nature

Johannesburg-based Flint & Tinder Events has collaborated with some of its key suppliers, including Unicord, The Production Works, EPH Productions, Chillfunk Sound and Audio & CME Décor to develop a 2017 trends report for the eventing industry.

“We developed the trend report because our clients trust us to create an experience that is memorable and keeping a finger on the pulse of current local and international trends gives us the ability to create on-trend productions that meet these ambitions and objectives,” says Nicole Reitz-Chidrawi, co-founder of Flint & Tinder Events.



Samantha Ferguson and Nicole Reitz-Chidrawi from Flint & Tinder Events

The key findings across event elements such as venue hire, décor, photography, content and theme, highlighted four overarching trends. Technology is making inroads into the eventing industry, well beyond the bling and lights of the DJ box; food will always be under focus, event hosts are continually looking for ways to get more value out of their limited budget and the environment is a bigger influence than before.

Technological trends

Technology developments promise to offer revolutionary elements to the eventing industry during 2017 by simplifying even co-ordination, enriching guests' experience and simplifying payment solutions for events where commerce is part of the experience.

Eventing apps for mobile devices are making planning and organisation quicker, easier and more interactive, before, during and after an event. Guests can respond to an invitation via an app, and engage with organisers at every stage of proceedings, getting the information they need and providing instant feedback. The apps are customisable and secure, and use condensed information, so are light on data consumption.

iBeacons are low-powered transmitters that identify mobile phones nearby and send and receive information. These could be used to stimulate the networking part of an event, for example, or to share information with guests without having to print expensive (and wasteful) information pamphlets.

The digital swag bag is on the rise, with guests at an event having digital vouchers for gifts sent to their mobile device, rather than being handed a bag full of goodies, many of which they do not ever use. A digital swag bag saves time and money, because no packaging or packing is required and product wastage and negative impacts on the environment are reduced.

too.

Exhibitions and concerts often include a retail environment and offering a closed loop payment system, via a payment card, smartphone or wristband, makes payments quick and secure, avoiding the risks of shrinkage and theft associated with time-consuming cash payments.

Perhaps one of the most exciting technology trends is virtual reality, with well-executed VR content able to offer guests an almost-first-hand experience of a product or destination, avoiding the costs or logistics often associated with a real-life encounter.

Food is not so fast

Guests' food experience can make or break an event and smart event planners are growing their focus on offering healthy food from sustainable or artisanal sources. Craft beers and meals from food trucks are popular because guests can engage face to face with the person making their meal, learning more about where the food is sourced and how it is prepared, at source.

Food labelling is increasingly on trend and in demand, giving guests the nutrition information that they need to manage the calorie intake, make conscious food choices or avoid food allergies that may not be obvious at face value.

The focus on food ethics is also seeing veganism grow in popularity and chefs are embracing the challenge to create tasty, exciting dishes that are just as flavourful and exciting as any other on the menu.

Keep control of costs

The research highlighted that budgets are not as abundant as they were and many businesses are choosing to 'double up' on events to save costs. Businesses are seeking to achieve more than one objective from an event, often scheduling an evening awards event to follow a daytime conference for the same guests at the same venue.

Event organisers have more tools at their fingertips to keep control of their costs too – hunting for a venue no longer entails days of driving around to view potential candidates as the various websites, such as Amazing Spaces and Venueseecker, have made venue-hunting and building budgets into a less time-consuming and expensive task than it used to be.

Back to natural elements

Nature and sustainability are top of mind among event planners and venues, with many of the latter creating spaces in a neutral or natural palette of colours that requires little change (or budget) to customise them for events.

Décor suppliers are increasingly looking to nature for their inspiration, with combinations of simple white flowers, woven cane décor and floral fabrics contrasted with monochrome elements being particularly popular at present.

Real plants are making a comeback in preference over cut flowers and are beautifully juxtaposed against industrial design and geometry, with raw brick walls, tin roofs and converted steel sheds providing the hard backdrop for softer and more natural elements.

"Every event is a complex collaboration of several specialists, from food and beverage to sound, production, and décor," says Samantha Ferguson, co-founder of Flint & Tinder Events. "Working with suppliers that keep up with and set trends in the local market means that we can offer our clients access to a support team that is on top of its game."