

# focus

Building community  
through shared insights

Issue 28 JANUARY 2020



## PHYGITAL

# A New Dimension in CX

**Customer Experience (CX) has become a vital business strategy for associations**

Customer-centric culture, experience design, and innovation are all part of customer experience strategies. According to a research by ASAE, one of the five tech issues CEOs should focus on is mobility and collaboration with their members. Another study by Ernst & Young states that by the year 2025, millennials will make up 75 percent of the workforce—and that means they'll likely make up a large portion of association membership too. They will be looking for mobile solutions without any decrease in the quality of their user experience.

What strategy should associations put in place to remain relevant and successful in this new era? How to drive growth and at the same time deploy relevant experience to engage with future generations of members and customers?

We asked association leaders to share with us the latest tech solutions they have adopted to improve member/customer experience, how they are using data to deliver more personalized experiences, how they measure success, and what tech investments they are anticipating in the next five years and how these will impact their growth strategy.

### Power Up with Customized Experiences

In a GrowthZone survey of more than 500 association professionals, more than half of respondents—57 percent—said that member engagement or recruiting and retaining members ranked as their top challenge in 2019. To meet this challenge, the **Parenteral Drug Association (PDA)** has implemented several changes in its

## WELCOME

from Richard Torriani

Vice President Global Congress  
Management, MCI Group



## Associations 5.0

### How is your organization embracing the technological shift?

Industry 4.0 is moving towards Industry 5.0, taking the concept of personalization to the next level. Industry 5.0 will allow customers to customize what they want with technologies that basically anticipate their needs and reactions.

What does that mean for associations? New technologies are transforming associations' events and communities. Blockchain solutions, empathetic technology, AI, VR, facial recognition, smart badges, hybrid events, holographic technology - how can these technology trends be applied to your association? What strategy should associations put in place to remain relevant and successful in this new era?

Remember, you don't need to be big to be digital. In this issue learn about organizations that are embracing the digital shift with simple strategies as a first step in this evolution. You will read tips and insights about how technology is helping organizations drive growth and remain relevant whilst improving members and customers' experience.

Let's prepare together for the day after tomorrow. This is only the beginning of the transformation journey. ●

membership structure, including a refreshed website with a mobile-enabled and more dynamic look and feel. It is also enhancing its social media presence through various platforms, exploring other regional tools like WeChat for the Chinese market, and planning more translation to reach its global community.

Another leading organization, the **HR Certification Institute® (HRCI®)**, has put the customer experience as its number one priority. It relies on multiple technology support systems and is committed to delivering the highest quality of services, ensuring the certification process is a smooth and efficient experience. *"HRCI utilizes Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technologies that unify our back-office operations; a data warehouse and data visualization tool to assist with the understanding of customer trends; and front-end experiences to facilitate customer interactions,"* said Dave Meginley, Chief Business Development Officer.

Barbara Connell, COO at the **American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE)** shared that her organization has adopted its next generation digital learning environment - GI Leap - which pulls together several themes. The new learning center is a dynamic, interconnected, ever-evolving community of learners, instructors, tools, and content that characterizes higher education practice and supports the organization in its growing effort towards a competency-based education model. *"Embracing social media and aligning with influencers who support our efforts is another area where we are delving into increased engagement. Within healthcare, it can be tricky to use social media effectively; we use caution and monitor our activity carefully,"* Connell noted.

### Data to Drive Emotional Engagement

Data is key. Leveraging unique insights with the right technology will ultimately boost the competitive advantage to act quickly, work efficiently and provide more customized experiences. *"HRCI uses data to tailor digital communications to our customers, create technology roadmaps and solve customer problems with 1-to-1 communication. The information we gather allows the organization to obtain qualitative and quantitative feedback and identify and address individual experiences and interactions with HRCI,"* Meginley added.

Likewise, PDA is integrating its enterprise system (AMS) to help the organization customize its offerings to members in regions with specific interests. This year, ASGE will also be focusing on capturing data related to personas and segments and tailor its messaging and offerings accordingly.

### "You can't manage what you can't measure"

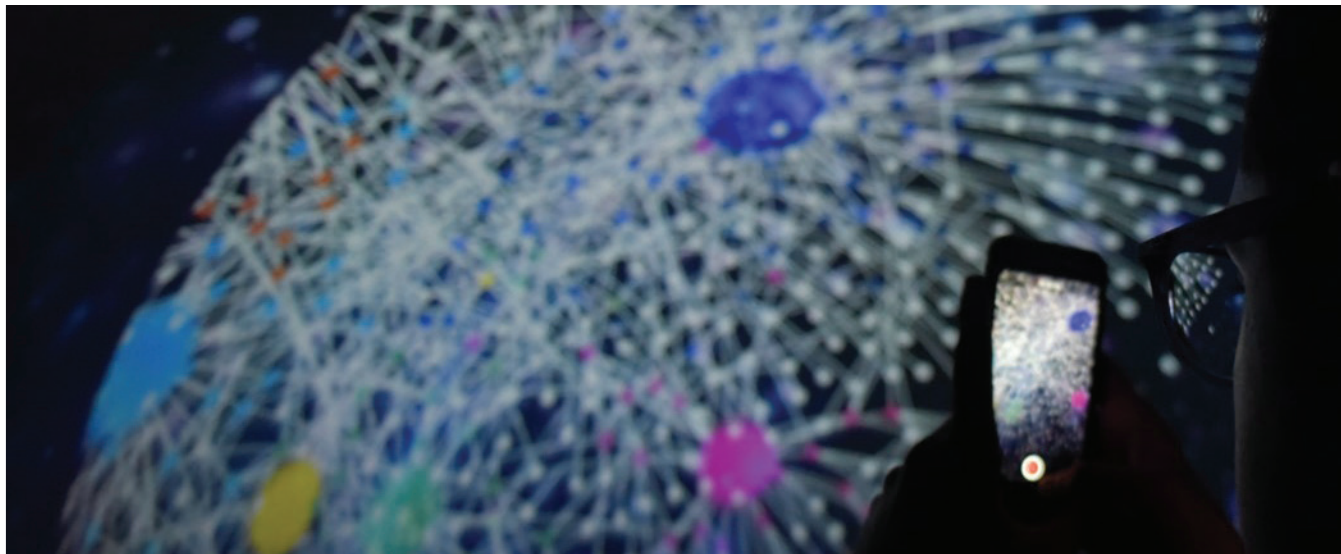
With this statement, Peter Drucker, a renowned management theorist, encapsulated the importance of measuring success the right way because it informs how and where to spend time and effort. If all three organizations interviewed agree that they measure success through three main ways including: customer satisfaction, ROI (revenue) and user experience metrics/engagement scoring, ASGE also takes into consideration member evaluations and increased activity on social media as other methods of effective engagement. At HRCI the resources, tools and processes implemented are always cross-checked for efficiency and end-user satisfaction.

### Looking to the Future

In its journey to create delightful customer experience while improving its core operations, HRCI anticipates a deeper use of machine learning. *"We know our business and the services that our customers expect from us in the future and we will continue to evolve with technology to build the infrastructure and processes that will be essential for future experiences,"* noted Meginley.

As with many associations, expenses related to technology often don't equate to member value, until it becomes apparent the organization is behind the times. ASGE is working to get ahead of that and will invest in updating its numerous software systems, AMS, websites, mobile offerings and learning management system. *"In our global environment, members expect 24/7/365 access to resources. They want to feel like participants - technology tools are critical to helping us meet these needs,"* added Richard Johnson, CEO, PDA. ●

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# Campus Party — Feel the Future

## A Lab for Innovative Experiences

Events are about creating experiences and memorable moments. Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides innovative solutions to keep attendees engaged.

According to Mediakix Research, the influence of Gen Z will rapidly change over the next decades as they will number 2.56 billion globally in 2020. What these new generations of attendees want from meetings is technology that will play a leading part in satisfying their expectations and needs. As for any for-profit organization, digitization has to be at the heart of every association, whatever size, shape, or industry they represent.

**Campus Party** is one of the largest global technology festivals, with over 60 editions held in the last 20 years, in more than 15 countries. The technology festival encompasses innovation, creativity, science, digital entertainment and entrepreneurship, and has partnered with MCI Brazil since 2015.

For its 12th edition, Campus Party Brazil (CPBR12) wanted to make the individual the center of interest and used cutting-edge technologies to best understand needs and preferences, and anticipate expectations for the best visitor experience.

### Magazine that Anticipates Interests

For the event MCI Brazil came up with an online magazine that allows users to create a custom profile. Based on the user's preferences, the magazine intelligently

brings the latest news and insights. All individual actions are registered and used to make readers' experiences even more personal. Readers can also earn credits and get rewards by reading and contributing to the magazine.

### Data Wall to Reveal Engagement

A 360° real time Data Sky was designed to visually display the data gathered. First, visitors were asked to describe themselves using 6 hashtags. After having identified recurring trends, the data were projected across a dome made of data constellations. A 'wow' moment that connected people to the universe of science and data.

### Empathetic Technology to Read Emotions

Empathic AI was applied to understand the profile and emotional state of attendees. During a brand activation event for a famous soda, participants' faces were analyzed allowing the event organizer to take a peek into attendees' feelings like never before. Were they enjoying the activity? Or were they frustrated or bored with it? These are important things to know when preparing for the next event.

Amongst the other innovations were Magic Mirror and Gamification. Applying these new technologies to live events is all about creating fun moments for attendees while getting insights that will help your future performance. ●

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## CPBR12 in numbers

6  
Days

1000  
Hours of Content

900  
Speakers

40  
GB Internet

82,000+  
'Campuseros'

18  
Countries



## AUTOMATION

# Bots and Automation to Boost Attendance

When it comes to new technologies, it can be difficult for associations to determine when, where and how to begin adaptation. Associations want innovative tools to gain visibility, access real-time data and feedback for a reasonable investment.

For an international congress due to take place in Brazil in July 2020, MCI Brazil was mandated to boost attendance within the local Brazilian professional community and reach a larger audience. In order to achieve this, MCI Brazil applied ethical hacking techniques and digital automation to the event communication. The objective was to confirm 300 new attendees including professionals, authorities, universities, press and sponsors, during a two-week campaign using both automated invites and traditional confirmations. For a minimal cost, MCI Brazil implemented innovative techniques including Application Programming Interface (API) with LinkedIn, email sequence automation, AI for custom interaction and inbound marketing techniques through content creation. Based on their interest and position, people received updates on specific congress news directly on their LinkedIn profile. Another tool was used to send sequences of email automation to these new contacts.

The campaign surpassed expectations with some 337 confirmed delegates, and database enrichment with an additional 1,800 new leads. The automated campaign only needed two days of prep work by a digital specialist, allowing the event team to focus on more strategic issues. ●

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## COMPELLING

# Top Tips to Adopt Chatbots

According to **Business Insider** experts, 80% of enterprises will use chatbots in 2020. Another study by Opus Research predicts that 4.5 billion USD will be invested in chatbots by 2021. If the corporate world seems to have adopted this new technology, are chatbots really for associations? Some will argue that chatbots, or digital assistants, are complex, expensive and not fruitful for all businesses. However, there are several ways associations can use chatbots: from performing transactions, sharing updates or pushing out important news and information. In general, chatbots provide faster and more personalized customer service. But that can also lead to some frustrations. Here are five tips to look at before integrating chatbots into your organization:

# 1

### Define Goals and Expectations

Understand where it makes most sense to implement and define conversion goals.

# 2

### Know Where Your Members and Customers Engage Online

Consolidate data in one single unified database.

# 3

### Personalize your Chatbot Platform

Give it a name and clearly define the intention to avoid frustrations.

# 4

### Start Small

One feature at a time. Go for the basic vs the spammy chatbot.

# 5

### Learn by Testing

Review, evaluate and optimize regularly. Think about what media and other integrations are possible.

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## DATAISME

# MCI Anticipates Needs with Smart Badges

The new key measure of success is attendee engagement. However, with an increasing amount of data points ready to track everything and anything throughout an event, how can we be sure which ones to rely on to effectively measure ROI?

The large amount of data collected from registrations have become more digestible and actionable with the use of smart badges. With an entire ecosystem to track and monitor, smart badges provide real-time data about the meeting's performance, allowing staff to react immediately, be more flexible and responsive. A pan-European healthcare organization wanted to get a better understanding of delegate behavior at its annual meeting, where delegates go and why, what they do and why; and ultimately own more data to better prepare for future events. To respond to this need, MCI Geneva introduced the smart badges which would analyze real-time delegate interaction and behaviors, overall attendance curves, and provide headcounts per area. Based on real facts versus assumptions, the data collected through Heatmap allowed the organization to improve decision-making, customer offering, attendee satisfaction and overall onsite logistics. The smart badges allowed better predictability and cost allocation by eliminating 'wasted costs' such as empty rooms or unnecessary catering areas. ●

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## MEDIATECTURE

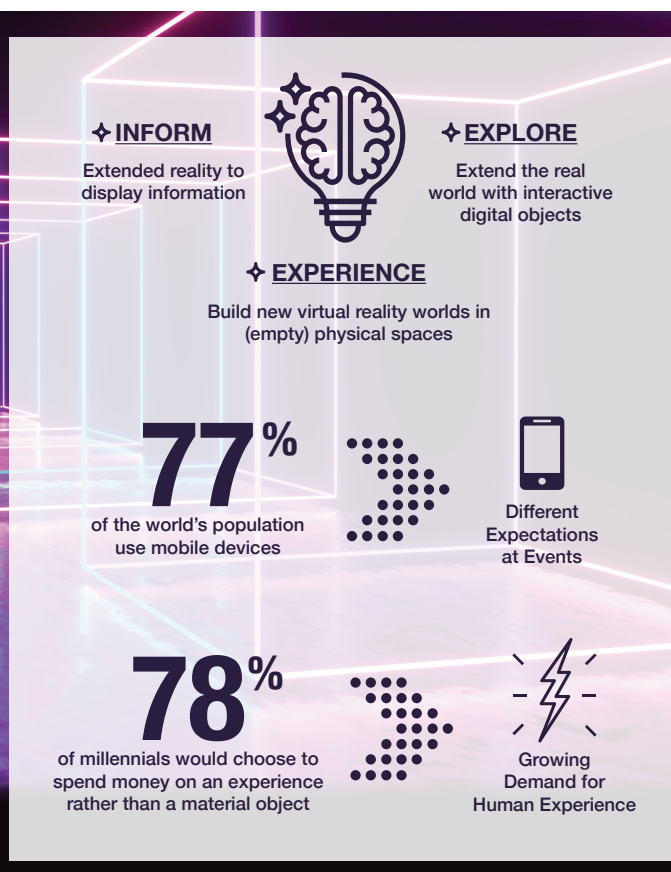
# The Future of Exhibitions: Designing Spatial Experiences

Association-based trade shows like any other association events are affected by increasingly demanding attendees and the changing technological environment. Attendees have new reasons and different expectations about why and how they are attending. Moreover, unprecedented technologies are allowing the creation of disruptive experiences for attendees.

These are massive opportunities for associations to build better and more purposeful exhibitions to connect individuals. A new generation of exhibitions is born, and it is only the beginning.

To receive a copy of MCI's research study 'The Future of Exhibitions' visit <https://www.mci-group.com/news-and-insights>.

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# MCI In-House Team Cracks the Code of API Development

**DiscoverEU** is an initiative of the European Union that gives 18-year-old EU citizens the opportunity to discover Europe through learning experiences. Traveling predominantly by rail, they get to discover Europe's stunning landscapes, cultural heritage and history, and connect with people from all over the continent. Young people can apply during the two application rounds which take place each year. Successful applicants are awarded a travel pass and invited to share their travel experiences through social media channels.

Launched in 2018, the project was presented to MCI Brussels just a few months before being launched. This is when MCI Brussels realized they only had two months of preparation time, between the "Call for Tender" and contract signature in order to set everything up. Isabelle Deniaud, Director Conference Management and Asset Development at MCI Brussels, shares with us their journey from out-of-the box thinking to development, implementation and award-winning success.



**Isabelle Deniaud**  
Director Conference  
Management and Asset  
Development  
MCI Brussels

## DiscoverEU in Numbers

(since launch in June 2018)

27,175

travelers helped via  
email and chat

83,166

visits to the Knowledge  
Base, creating 8,610  
conversations

### What was your first reaction when the project landed on your desk?

**Isabelle Deniaud:** My first reaction was should we go for it or not. Organizing travel tickets in high volume for 18-year-old travelers isn't MCI's core business but we decided to take on the challenge and bring an innovative solution to the whole booking process.

### What was the scope of the project and expectations?

**Deniaud:** The project consisted of booking 14,500 tickets for young travelers, which has now been increased to 70,000 tickets. The backbone of the project was in managing high volumes of incoming and outgoing communications and working with a complex registration process split over multiple validation steps, including identity verification. The project uses various technologies and all the support and documentation needs to be provided in six European languages. Our client wants real-time reporting, as well as managing surveys and getting participants' feedback. For this, multiple tools need to be used, with data hosted on various platforms; making it complex to get one simple overview of the project.

### What was your strategy and what solutions did you implement?

**Deniaud:** Our first step was to put our best heads on the project and think out-of-the box about how we could make it work more efficiently with minimum human interaction by integrating automation throughout the whole process, whilst guaranteeing high productivity and profitability.

Our in-house team then conceptualized and developed an integrated solution which would deliver the same level of delivery and reporting but in a much faster and efficient way. The various tools used are all connected to one single central database developed specifically for this project. The system is built so that it allows automated e-mailings and text message reminders, sending out survey links and more. The central database allows us to synchronize data from all tools being used, also facilitating GDPR requests and reporting.

More features are under development. Recently we've added an AI-based multilingual customer care solution, and we are implementing a chatbot to answer travelers' requests 24/7.

### How scalable is your solution?

**Deniaud:** DiscoverEU can be scaled up to larger numbers. At the end of 2020, we expect to have serviced 100,000 travelers. Because it is a fully tailored solution it is not applicable to other clients; but the creative thinking process, the researching and implementing of technologies, and developing key partnerships in order to optimize the processes is something that is easily replicable to other projects. The biggest constraint being the financial investment in technology.

### Some learnings you can share?

**Deniaud:** This project has obliged us to think differently and as a result we have developed a fully customized solution that did not exist on the market. The thought process around DiscoverEU has also taught us on how to completely rethink our customer care/ser-

vice solutions. This has motivated our talents to embrace new ways of working, in order to be able to provide state-of-the-art customer care to our (future) clients.

### Any recommendations for membership-type organizations?

**Deniaud:** Size doesn't matter. Any organization can be digital and implement simple strategies to bring automation into their processes. The area most transformed by technology is networking, where the trend is towards online member communities and other innovative solutions to foster interaction between members. My recommendation would be to focus on data analytics and business intelligence, bring in the right heads, and keep in mind that sometimes the best ideas come from the least expected sources. Build your roadmap, research in-house and outsourced options, and start implementing. Invest in digital assets that will offer cutting-edge experience. Technology and automation enable organizations to do business differently than traditional models. Be ready for change.

One thing is for sure, as we go along, no area is untouched by technology. Membership organizations need to make the jump in order not to be left behind. Technology and associations need to go hand in hand in order to remain relevant and successful. Even if it might get bumpy along the way.

### What do you think should be the top three priorities?

**Deniaud:** Robust, personalized and user-friendly. This is key for developing cutting-edge solutions.

### One last word?

**Deniaud:** The DiscoverEU project has been awarded the 2019 EU Ombudsman's award for "Excellence in citizen-focused services delivery". The project has also been awarded the fifth annual National Geographic Traveller (UK) Reader 2019 award in the 'Right Track (Rail)' category. On 4 December our team went to London to receive the award, a fantastic achievement and milestone! ●

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## MCI IN THE NEWS

### MCI USA Partners with FASEB

Last November, MCI USA announced the addition of ten new scientific societies through a new partnership with the **Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)**, growing MCI USA's client base to 65 clients receiving full-service management.



### Carlos de Sebastian joins MCI

Carlos de Sebastian joins MCI as Director, Association Relations – Latin America. "I am excited to join as I have always been interested in MCI's greater suite of innovation and solutions. I see this as a great step for the LATAM region's development." said Sebastian.

### Congratulations...

MCI Brazil has been awarded two 'Prêmio Caio' awards: gold for the **International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO)** 2018 congress in the category International Congress and silver for the **Latin American Business Aviation (LABACE)** 2018 congress in the category B2C Fair, Exhibition, Conference & Exhibition.



MCI Benelux and Logos have received the **Innovation Radar Prize 2019** from the European Commission for the D Hybrid project, a client since 2017.

MCI Middle East has won two WOW Awards Middle East this year: the Gold Award for Association/Industry Convention of the Year for the 23rd World Congress of the **International Federation for Surgery of Obesity & Metabolic Disorders (IFSO)**, and the Silver Award for Government Convention of the Year for the Dubai Health Forum 2019.



Shawn Cheng, CMP, Senior Project Coordinator, MCI Canada has been named one of the 2019 Planners of the Year.

MCI UK Project Manager Bryony Stevens has been recognized as one of the 2019 CN30 class by **Conference News** which celebrates industry's top young talents. ●





# Blockchain for Association Meetings

## Reaching a Level of Trust and Transparency Never Achieved Before

If you see blockchain as another new technology among many others, you are wrong. With an expected market size of 11.7 billion USD in 2022, blockchain promises to revolutionize the way businesses operate, the same way the internet impacted our digital world a few years ago. And while many of us have heard of blockchain technology applied to finance and banking, it's been making its way to the event industry, too.

### Block What?

The Blockchain Revolution (2016), stated: *"blockchain is an incorruptible digital ledger of economic transactions that can be programmed to record not just financial transactions but virtually everything of value"*. When a customer performs a transaction in a blockchain, it is distributed across numerous servers, each able to verify the record against each other. If, at the moment, most blockchain transactions concern cryptocurrency, almost anything can be traded in this way.

### A New Level of Trust

If lack of trust costs brands USD 2.5 trillion per year (Accenture Strategy report), with blockchain comes a digital institution allowing a level of trust and transparency never achieved before. IBM Vice President Blockchain Business Development, states *"blockchain solves business problems where trust is part of the solution—you can't do that with a database."* Blockchain tech allows customer data to be stored in a way that is much more secure, open, and transparent than traditional systems, which is likely to encourage customers to share their information

## Influence of Blockchain on Events

1

Ticketing – elimination of duplication and counterfeiting

2

Reduction of transaction costs – re-intermediation

3

Enhanced experience – deep customized interactions

with retailers more readily. And with more data comes the opportunity for greater customization.

### Exclusive Experience

In the near future, blockchain tech will be able to offer personalized, and exclusive experiences to customers. The way payments and contracts will be handled, the basic experience of buying or selling a product or customer protection systems will be impacted. With blockchain, experiences can be tokenized, using new digital assets to reward customers, which represents a whole new frontier for marketing.

### Wii for Associations

Blockchain tech is going to transform brand experience, and revolutionize how conferences and events are organized, ticketed, and run. By using digital assets (tokenization), associations can create a new level of social rewards for members and content creators. Marketing will be more efficient, helping to target and reach the exact audiences. Smart contracts will make it easy to reduce transaction costs.

MCI is at the forefront of this innovative technology - MCI Canada created a Joint Venture with the Blockchain Research Institute to launch BRG, a new company focused on creating a global community on enterprise blockchain. In 2019, MCI delivered the Blockchain Revolution Global (BRG) meeting - the first truly worldwide enterprise leadership community for blockchain. ●

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