

INTERVIEW WITH COURTNEY MULLER

Courtney Muller, Chief Corporate Development & Strategy Officer of Clarion Events North America, shares her thoughts on how the events industry will evolve, plus her top business tips.

FUTURE EVENT ROLES AND SKILLS

New skill sets, job roles, and team structures are emerging with the digitalization of events, along with a surge in upskilling and training.

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JULY 2021

From the Editor

When I started out in journalism 16 years ago, in a pre-smartphone age, I caught the tail end of the print magazine heyday. News sites and social media were in their infancy, which sounds utterly crazy when they are now part of our everyday lives.

As the digital disruption of publishing took hold, everyone upskilled to become 'multi-platform' journalists. Suddenly, if a candidate for a job didn't have a Twitter account, they weren't getting hired. Audiences soon wanted to pick and choose how and when they consumed news and information. Editors also honed their broadcasting skills to launch podcasts and vlogs simply because readers dictated it.

This kind of change is happening in the events industry now. The future of events will be omnichannel. And event planners must broaden their skills and knowledge to meet this new reality. I believe the single most important thing event pros can do to future-proof their career is to upskill. Business leaders are crying out for digital solutions and talent to meet demand. New job roles and team structures are emerging, along with a fair amount of confusion and a lack of direction from the top down.

To combat these challenges and avoid a talent crisis in the events sector, we take a deep dive into the topic of talent in this month's long read to share some nuggets of wisdom from those leading the way.

Also in this issue, don't miss my interview with Courtney Muller of Clarion Event North America, plus lots more news and industry updates from the world of virtual and hybrid events.

Alison Ledger
VEI, Editor
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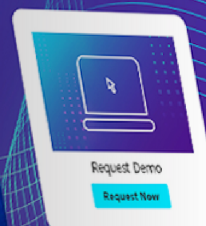
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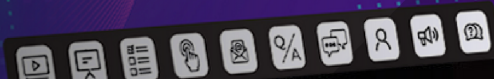
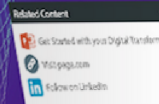
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Need to Know

VEI SKILLS SURVEY

VEI is conducting a global survey to benchmark skills requirements for digital and hybrid events and we would love to hear your thoughts! All responses are anonymous and the research will highlight common areas for development, the new skills required, and the emerging job roles in events. The short survey will only take a couple of minutes, [click here to participate](#).

CLIPR TEAMS UP WITH VEI

VEI has teamed up with [CLIPr](#), a Video Analysis and Management (VAM) platform using AI and machine learning to index video content and make it searchable. The partnership will make VEI's on-demand video library of training courses and events searchable to improve audience accessibility and engagement.

DOWNLOAD: FREE REPORT ON VIRTUAL EVENT MARKETING

Tag Digital and VEI have joined forces to create 'The Virtual Event Marketing Benchmark Report 2021', which provides high-level information for organizers at the forefront of digital events globally. The data collected will be used for benchmarking and determining 'what's good' in various sectors, countries, and for various objectives. [Download the Virtual Event Marketing Benchmark Report 2021 here.](#)

Our Top 3 Most-Read Blogs of the Month...



"All future events will have a digital element – it's simply not realistic to deny that"

In this vlog, Ben Hainsworth, managing director of medical association EASL, talks to VEI editor Alison Ledger about pivoting to digital for EASL's annual congress and the future of association events.

Answers to Common Questions About Hybrid Events

This guest blog from platform provider RainFocus answers event planners' most common questions about hybrid events.

Virtual event analytics: 8 data points to measure your event's success

A major advantage of digitalized events is the wealth of data, analytics, and insights they can generate. Here are some expert tips from Falguni Jain of Hubilo.

50% 10x

One half of event professionals surveyed recently at a VEI event said they expect 40% of their annual revenue to come from digital in 2022.

By 2025, only 12% expect digital revenues below 20% – a massive increase showing that digital revenues will increase 10x, or even 20x, in five years.

SOURCE: VEI'S RE-INVENTING LIVE EVENT



An Interview With... Courtney Muller, Clarion Events

Courtney Muller, Chief Corporate Development & Strategy Officer of Clarion Events North America, shares her thoughts on how the events industry will evolve, plus her top business tips.

HOW WILL THE EVENTS INDUSTRY EVOLVE IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS?

I see the industry coming back to the highs of 2019 and growing beyond those highs. I believe we are about to enter a time of economic expansion and that the events industry will benefit as a result. I am the ultimate optimist but I think the combination of live events, and all of the opportunity that exists online with virtual events and engagements, will only grow. Our industry is about making connections and people are going to want that with each other until the end of time.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION AND STRATEGY FOR CLARION FOR THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS?

My vision and strategy for Clarion Events NA is to continue to diversify our business so we can survive any kind of downturn or significant economic, cultural, or natural occurrence. It's always been a goal to attract the best talent in the industry and we must continue to do that at Clarion NA. We work hard on a culture that appreciates its people, is inclusive and open, provides opportunities for all, and tremendous flexibility with how, where, and when people work.

WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT THE FUTURE, AND WHAT WORRIES YOU?

What excites me is the enthusiasm I'm seeing for live events again. But also the online opportunities for connection that the events industry has done a terrific job fostering for the past 18 months. What excites me are the continued advancements and changes in technology that I hope can propel us forward as an industry and as a society. I'm worried about climate change and protecting democracy and the truth here in the US.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER SENIOR LEADERS IN THE INDUSTRY?

I always try to tell people I'm mentoring (including my daughter now!) that it's so important to focus on your people. You need to be as invested in their success as you are in your own, maybe even more invested. Because teams are what make successful businesses, not individuals. When teams work together to build something they're excited about its magic. Capture that magic by investing yourself in your teams and their success – they won't disappoint you.

THE ADVICE I'D GIVE TO MY YOUNGER SELF WOULD BE...

I would tell myself that there are huge opportunities outside the large trade show companies. And to find a start-up show where you have a chance at equity early in your career. Or start a show or business yourself. If you're an ambitious person, you can do it!

THE BEST BUSINESS ADVICE I'VE EVER RECEIVED IS...

1. It's not what you personally do, it's what you GET DONE.
2. Get the best people and put them in the right places and your business will fly.
3. Figure out two or three things that you must do well for your business to succeed – the things that will measure your success and keep your business alive. Do them well and don't get hung up on anything else.



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THE LONG READ

Future Event Roles and Skills: Talent, Training, and Succession Planning for Tomorrow's Events

New skill sets, job roles, and team structures are emerging with the digitalization of events, along with a surge in upskilling and training. To explore these trends, senior event industry leaders gathered for VEI's recent Summit and discussed how organizers can future-proof their careers and businesses.

VEI's Summit 'Future Event Roles and Skills: Talent, Training, and Succession Planning for Tomorrow's Events', took place online with Intrado Digital Media providing the platform. The 90-minute event attracted a worldwide audience from the US, UK, Canada, UAE, and Australia.

To provide fuel for the panel debate, Matthew Pycock, Director of Global Talent Acquisition at Intrado Digital Media was interviewed by VEI Co-Founder and CEO, Sophie Ahmed, on how event professionals can future proof their careers.

Pycock said there has been "huge growth in the need for digital solutions and talent, which will only increase as the sector moves at pace towards hybrid events. Intrado Digital Media hired 350 people globally last year, due to the necessity of our solutions, and we are aggressively recruiting this year as we're seeing a similarly high level of demand for talent."

He continued: "For those looking to make a move into the virtual online events world, or combine their skills to adjust to a hybrid model, this is definitely the right time to start futureproofing your career."

The most important thing event professionals can do is upskill, recommended Pycock.

He suggested mastering new technologies, enrolling in training courses, gaining certification, and "setting aside time each week to upskill and increase your knowledge".

Following Pycock's interview, moderator and VEI Content Director Emma Hilditch introduced the panel and encouraged viewers to submit questions via the platform. Participants were also asked to answer a poll to discover if companies are changing staff resources as the industry moves towards a more hybrid model. The results revealed a mixed picture with 52% of respondents saying they were making some staff changes, while 47% are continuing with their existing teams.

This poll kicked off a discussion around staffing. To overcome some of the new challenges brought about by digitalization around talent and staffing, Janice Rogers, Corporate VP, Human Resources, Diversified Communications, recommended: "Look at your existing talent base and do a skills gap analysis to discover which skills you need to build up and to make sure you're providing relevant training opportunities for employees who have the aptitude to work in the digital and live events space. There are definitely transferable skills there. Also, look externally to more diverse talent pools to fill the gaps."

"In the short term, there are going to be some freelance and contract positions to fill some of those gaps," replied Mike Frost, co-founder and global recruitment director, Expocast. "Remuneration is going to be an issue, particularly if you compare events to the tech industry, or the energy sector, for example. In the long-term, we need to be approaching educational institutions to ensure more young people are aspiring to join events."

Organizations will need to work harder to attract top talent, said Catherine Dogra, head of digital marketing at Informa Connect. She said: "Companies need to be masters of their own PR. We need to work hard to ensure we're attracting talent and working with graduates, offering apprenticeships and running local mentoring schemes."

Rogers pointed out that offering flexibility and hybrid working can help to attract talent, but it can be challenging to manage teams effectively and maintain company and employee cultures. She suggested that PR efforts should focus on "differentiating ourselves from other industries. We may not be high tech or the highest payers, but there are reasons that people come to work" in events. "We need to work out what compels people to work for us and get the word out."

NEW JOB ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

New roles emerging include virtual event producers and project managers, and webcasting jobs. Intrado Digital Media, for example, has a new position called a 'solutions tier-three specialist' which is responsible for diving deep into platform and product-related issues. They are also helping to develop next-generation solutions as the tech is so new that there is a limited number of people in any industry that possess the skills and depth of experience.

Chris Mitchell, VP Operations, Intrado Digital Media, added: "One area where we are potentially seeing a new role emerge is hybrid event production. Someone needs to tie together the online and the onsite experience."

In Frosts' observations of the recruitment market, he has noticed "more upskilling, rather than brand new roles". "From a sales perspective, there has been a shift away from phone bashing towards a much more consultative and solution-selling approach. There's a big push for digital marketers at the moment, whereas before it was more marketing generalists."

"With digital events, businesses are now drowning in data and need people to generate better data insights for content and their customers. There's more of a focus on content and therefore PR roles. Everything is much more customer-centric."

And new job roles will continue to emerge as the events sector evolves, pointed out Tracey Judge, founder, and CEO, Soundings: "The people that we need – they don't exist. We're all growing and changing. As the industry continues to learn, we will continue to map out the new positions that need to exist. Initially, we will need a lot more talent as everyone adjusts, and where we are going to continue to need talent is in the virtual piece."

Training and certification in virtual and hybrid events is a huge asset for candidates and a great way for event organizers to futureproof their careers and businesses concludes Mitchell: "If someone from a traditional event planning role has upskilled themselves, it tells me they're adaptable, flexible, and willing to learn. Upskilling is a very good move to make."

TOP CAREER TIPS

Identify event companies that value their employees and have a 'promote from within' culture so you know you will be always learning and growing.

Matthew Pycock, Director, Global Talent Acquisition, Intrado Digital Media

There is a talent drain on the industry. Organizations must create opportunities for training and upskilling, and hire employees with different skill sets to broaden their reach. Management teams need coaching on how to manage hybrid teams effectively.

Janice Rogers, Corporate VP, Human Resources, Diversified Communications

Event roles now require agility, energy, persistence, and a growth mindset. If you can demonstrate that you can flex your existing experience to new roles, you'll go far. Put your hand up, upskill, and cross-skill.

Catherine Dogra, Head of Digital Marketing, Informa Connect

For companies, everyone – from the top down – must continue to learn how things are changing so they can tie that into recruitment strategies. We need to be aware of how we are competing with other industries for talent and the obstacles for recruiting, such as remuneration. Ensuring job satisfaction is maintained when upskilling and moving people into different disciplines will be crucial for retention.

Mike Frost, Co-founder and Global Recruitment Director, Expocast

There's an opportunity for event professionals to specialize now. Think about where your strengths are and where you want your career to go.

Tracey Judge, Founder and CEO, Soundings

Think about the type of role you want, the roles available, and the skills required. Adaptability quotient is fundamental for any role in the events space.

Chris Mitchell, VP Operations, Intrado Digital Media

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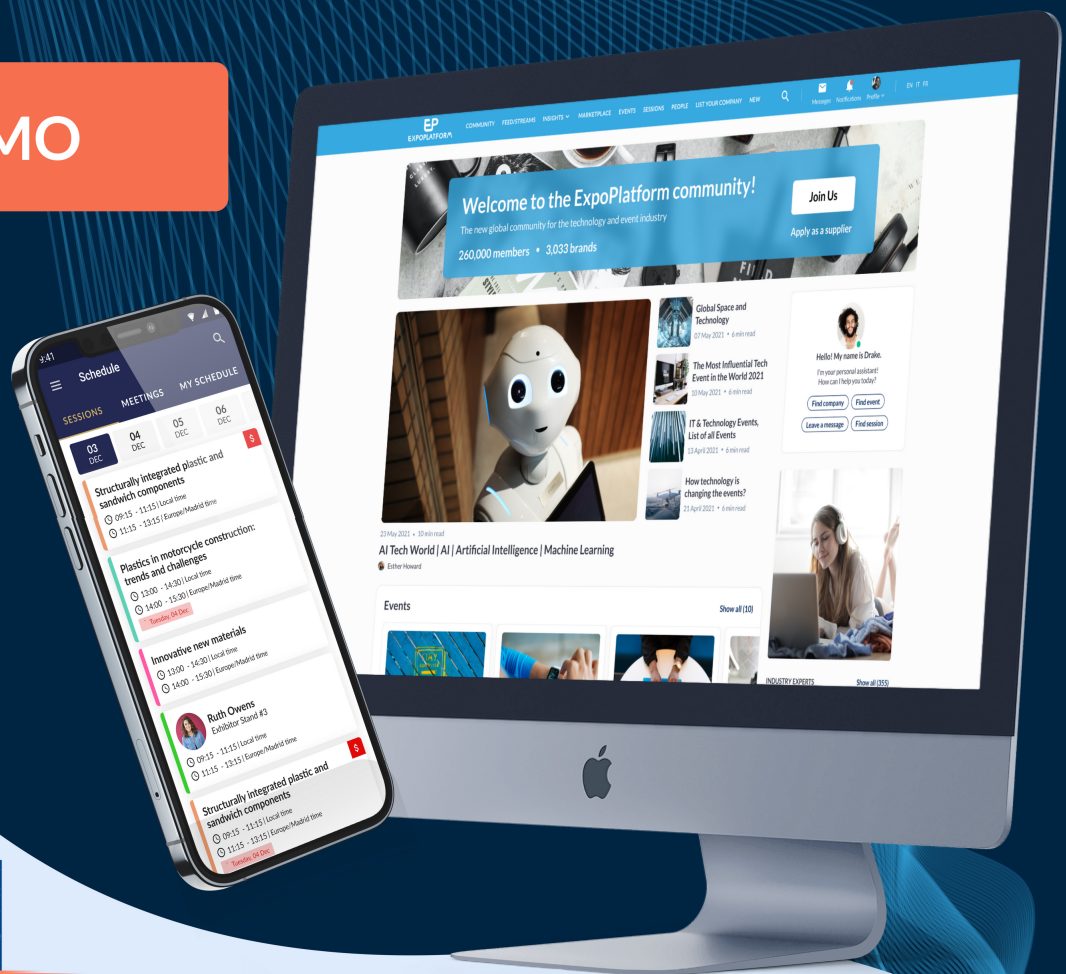
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VEI Certification:

Increasing Audience Engagement – An overview of module 3

At the heart of VEI's offering to the global virtual and hybrid events community is the VEI Certification Program. The ever-growing online training program comprises 11-plus on-demand modules, providing a step-by-step guide for all event disciplines, across sales, marketing, content, and operations.

Each month in The Fix, we will provide an overview of one or two modules, plus some top tips for planning virtual and hybrid events. This month, we provide an outline of Module 3.

MODULE 3: INCREASING AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Keeping your audience engaged is essential. Learn how to drive meaningful engagement, and provide unmissable experiences.

The course covers:

- How to keep your audience engaged for the duration of the event
- How to create personalized audience experiences
- How to develop engagement techniques to extend human communication
- How to create effective moderating for a professional and interactive experience
- How to create new ways to engage with your customers to develop deeper customer relationships

The VEI Training Modules also include the following topics: Introduction to Virtual Events, Attracting Your Audience, Developing Strategic Content Design, Monetizing Your Virtual Event, Mastering Sales Skills For Virtual Events, Choosing the Right Technology, Executing Your Virtual Event on the Day, Measuring Success Post-Event, Building Your Online Event Community, An Introduction to Hybrid Events, with more modules being added soon.

TOP TIPS

"Salespeople must learn to sell 'transformationally', which means understanding clients' worlds, then educating the client on how and why things need to be done differently now. The result is a customer who has learned something new from the sale itself, who buys something that meets their needs, and who is much more satisfied with the salesperson's approach. They see the salesperson as an expert in their field, and this credibility leads to stronger, mutually beneficial business relationships."

**Neil Shorney, Chief Possibility Officer,
Navanter**

"If your community has its own language, apply this to every session, every room, every hallway, every interaction so when attendees turn up, they already have a sense of belonging because the event is speaking their language. And we all know, belonging drives behavior."

**Robert Dunsmore, Independent Creative
Director of Live Events**

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VEI alumni stories: Chris Lee, Informa

In this month's Alumni Stories, we speak to Chris Lee, managing director of Vitafoods, Informa Markets, for his top tips on delivering digitalized events, plus his review of VEI's Certification Program, which he recently completed.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE COURSE?

I was in the original pilot scheme to assess if a partnership with VEI would be a good investment for Informa. I completed, assessed, added comments, and suggested potential questions for the development of the course and modules. I was attracted to the course for the importance of reinventing our legacy event offerings to smart events in the future.

WHAT DID YOU FIND USEFUL IN THE COURSE?

The education for all stakeholders in a team and being able to learn more about how your primary function needs to evolve. Additionally, having the opportunity to look at what other team members will need to focus on to close vital skill gaps for our accelerated digital vision was critical.

It was also a great opportunity to understand the emphasis on the need to reset, reflect and recreate for new models in the future. Long gone is rinse and repeat. Having my team use the practical worksheets to create new possibilities, ideas, and strategies have proved very useful, too.

WHAT WERE YOUR FAVORITE MODULES AND WHY?

I enjoyed the 'Building Your Online Event Community' module, due to the importance of digital data management and engagement outside of physical events. Also, the emphasis on a community manager and how we shape that role for the future will be critical for understanding buy-side and sell-side behavior and experience.

HOW HAS THE PROGRAM HELPED YOU?

The program has helped the team and I pause, reset and rethink everything we knew. It has provoked thought to abandon legacy thinking and helped to innovate and challenge formats and structures. It has also identified the importance of continued internal and external education for digital engagement products.

“Never stop educating your customer on the value of digital and data.”

HOW HAVE YOU USED THIS NEW KNOWLEDGE SO FAR?

It is our target to have all colleagues trained through the VEI Program. We have organized two digital events this year so far and have applied the learnings to our content programs, audience engagement strategies, commercializing the value proposition, improving better execution during the event itself, and, importantly, measuring the level of success post-event.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS FOR DELIVERING DIGITALIZED EVENTS?

Invest and train your staff. Upskill them now for your future digital demands. Create new digital, data, and community roles to close skillset gaps or needs for structural change. Be honest about where a new hire needs to be and what roles you can transition. Never stop educating your customer on the value of digital and data. Do not follow the crowds when it comes to selecting a platform partner. Customize that for your market and customer and be sure that your chosen supplier will develop a product platform with you as partner for the best possible user experience.

Also, broadcast your content at the right time and in the right way for it to be consumed at the optimal time and by the right people. Do not lose all of the serendipity when you produce a digital event – consider the wellbeing of your audience and make it fun.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT VEI'S
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PROGRAM HERE.**



[You may also be interested in VEI Alumni Stories: A venue perspective from Marina Papadopoulou of Church House Westminster in London](#)



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