

WE DESIGN BRAND EXPERIENCES

FROM EVENTS TO → ECOSYSTEMS

How enterprise organizations are navigating
scale, strategy and impact



Voices from the front lines of experience leadership

Experiences are no longer just moments. They're becoming systems that influence pipeline, perception and relationships over time. To explore what this shift looks like in practice, Events Leaders Exchange (ELX) and Augeo Experience convened a series of executive roundtables with global experience leaders across industries. Their perspectives gave us the on-the-ground insights to help shape this snapshot of where experience leadership lives in 2026.



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Plus five additional global leaders who participated under the condition of anonymity.

The industry isn't lacking ambition. It's lacking infrastructure.

What's changing isn't belief - it's what experience is expected to do.

Experiences are no longer just moments. They're becoming systems that influence pipeline, perception, and relationships over time.

Enterprise organizations are investing more in experiences than ever before. More events. More audiences. More expectations.

But behind the scenes, many teams are still operating with structures and measurement models built for a very different era.

Across conversations with experience leaders navigating this shift in real time, one idea surfaced consistently:

Organizations aren't struggling because they don't believe in events.

They're struggling because the systems surrounding those events haven't kept pace with their importance.

What makes this moment particularly interesting is that the gap isn't just operational. It's human. The forces shaping how people resist change, remember experiences, and build trust are the same forces determining whether experience programs succeed or stall. Understanding both the systems and the human behavior inside them is what separates programs that scale from programs that plateau.

This paper explores what leaders are experiencing in this moment, the tensions they're navigating. The changes already underway **and what the next evolution of enterprise experience programs may look like.**



Where experience
programs are
being asked
→ to do more

Centralization can bring tensions

As organizations scale, event activity tends to expand organically across business units, regions, and functions. Over time, this creates fragmentation not only in execution, but in accountability and strategic clarity.

Leaders increasingly recognize the need to centralize their event programs to tell a more compelling story. Whether that's through the creation of a center of excellence, establishing a strategic meetings management program, or centralizing resources, the goal remains the same. Not to control every event, but to establish shared standards, visibility, and credibility.

This shift reflects a deeper change. Centralization is no longer simply about efficiency. It is becoming a mechanism for legitimacy - a way for experience teams to demonstrate disciplined decision-making and earning a stronger voice in strategic conversations.

Organizations that fail to create this alignment, risk continued duplication of effort, inconsistent brand expression, and difficulty defending investment at the executive level.

“If there’s no go-to place for what good looks like, then there are no standards.”

Stacey Gromlich,
Sr. Director, Global Events | Siemens

→ BEHAVIORAL INSIGHT

Loss Aversion

Standardization can often feel like loss, even when it creates value.

That’s why alignment efforts can trigger resistance before they create clarity.

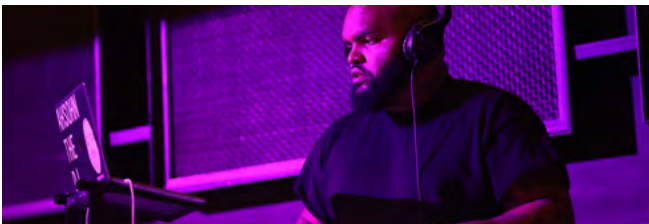
“Centralization comes down to three things: efficiency [cost and time], experience [consistency], and effectiveness [turning events into a business driver].”

Nicola Kastner,
CEO | Event Leaders Exchange

Budget pressures are forcing strategic discipline

Cost scrutiny has long been a theme in event management. What's changing now is how teams are responding.

Rather than defending individual events, leaders are increasingly introducing portfolio-level thinking. They're prioritizing investment based on strategic value rather than historical precedent.



In many organizations, this shift is prompting a new set of questions. This isn't about doing less. It's about investing more intentionally in what matters.

- **Which audiences matter most?**
- **Which experiences truly drive impact?**
- **And where should we focus investment to create meaningful outcomes?**

This shift moves the conversation from justifying spend to making smarter investment decisions that benefit more people - a necessity as experience programs continue to scale.

“Events are probably one of the places [leaders] look to first when they want to cut costs... if you've got a center of excellence and a strategy... you can stand behind what you're presenting.”

Fiona Richardson | Sr. Manager Audience Engagement & Events | Siemens



Experience teams are being asked to lead differently

At the same time, the role of events within enterprise organizations is expanding rapidly. “Events” now touch (and is integral to the success of) many teams within the organization.

Experience teams are now frequently expected to influence brand strategy, support revenue goals, generate insight, and foster community. Often without parallel investment in systems, data integration, or talent models.

This creates a transformation gap.

Teams are being asked to operate as the strategic orchestrators while still equipped primarily for logistical execution. They need to be the conductor of the orchestra - but without access to the right instruments.

Organizations that successfully navigate this transition are those that treat experience capability as an enterprise discipline rather than a functional task. And understand that elevating experience lifts the success of all teams.



“We’re a smaller events team, but the expectations are high.”

Jill Wilson | Director, Corporate Events | Leidos



Why progress
slows - and
what moves it
→ forward

Measurement is the credibility gap

If you can't measure events, do they even matter? Measurement challenges were among the most consistent concerns raised by leaders.

Event data often lives across multiple platforms - marketing systems, CRM tools, and regional trackers. All with unclear ownership and inconsistent definitions of success. This fragmentation limits the ability for leaders to tell a coherent story about impact of events and programs.

At the same time, leaders are increasingly aware that traditional metrics capture only part of the picture. What people choose to attend and how engaged they are can often tell you more about their intent than traditional metrics.

As a result, mature organizations are shifting their focus from proving isolated event ROI to improving decision confidence across portfolios. The goal is not perfect attribution, but better-informed investment choices. As visibility improves, measurement shifts from proving value to shaping better decisions.

→ BEHAVIORAL INSIGHT

Visibility builds confidence

When impact is unclear, organizations default to skepticism. Measurement isn't just reporting. It's what makes investment feel safe.

“The biggest challenge is effectively measuring the impact of events when we don't have control over the data.”

VP, Meetings & Events | Fortune 500 Financial Company



Why change efforts often stall and how teams move through it

Even when strategic direction is clear, implementation often encounters resistance.

Moves toward standardized systems can feel like loss of autonomy. Process documentation can be perceived as judgment. And studies show losses feel roughly twice as powerful psychologically as equivalent gains. Centralization feels like losing autonomy even when the net benefit is objectively positive which is why resistance shows up even when strategy is sound. Without thoughtful change management, well-designed frameworks can fail to gain traction.

“When [other stakeholders] were part of the process, I saw a shift — it felt less like I’m doing this to you and more like you’re doing this with me.”

Amanda Gonzalez | VP, Events | Vista Equity Partners

Leaders emphasized that transformation efforts succeed not through enforcement, but through engagement. When stakeholders are invited into the design process and see how new approaches support their goals, adoption begins to take off.

This human dimension of change is often underestimated, yet it frequently determines whether new operating models stall out or see big success.

→ BEHAVIORAL INSIGHT

Restriction creates resistance

Standardization can feel like losing control even when it improves outcomes.

That’s why resistance shows up even when the strategy makes sense.

The hardest outcomes to measure are often the most valuable

This creates a very real challenge event leaders are facing. While these behavioral elements tell a stronger story directly tied to event impact, they also require more sophisticated and creative measurement strategies to capture. Navigating this tension requires new forms of measurement, storytelling, and executive education.

Perhaps the most candid insight across discussions was that the elements of experiences creating the greatest long-term value are often the most winding or difficult routes to track.

Relationship-building, belonging, peer interaction, and shared problem-solving moments can influence perception and decision-making long after an event concludes. This is where experience begins to behave less like a campaign and more like a system. One that accumulates understanding across programs, notices what's resonating at a human level, and uses that intelligence to design more intentionally over time.

“What we’ve learned is that content doesn’t always move the needle. What moves the needle is our attendees, and their exposure to other attendees.”

Martin Butler | Sr. Director, Enterprise Events
T-Mobile



What
progress
looks like
when it
→ works

Progress begins with visibility

Organizations further along the maturity curve are not necessarily running fewer events. Instead, they are building systems that allow experience programs to scale more intelligently.

Centralization can sit on a wide spectrum. Some organizations centralize execution globally, while others focus on governance, visibility, or portfolio oversight.

In many cases, transformation begins with a simple but powerful step: mapping activity across the enterprise.

This foundational work enables organizations to reduce duplication, prioritize investment, and align experiences more closely with strategic goals.

Rather than imposing rigid mandates, mature programs often rely on calibrated guardrails.

These systems guide behavior without eliminating flexibility – a necessary balance to strike at enterprise scale.

“Not every meeting needs a meeting manager – but once you reach a certain threshold, you have to go through a centralized planning organization.”

Director, Executive Events
Fortune 500 Consumer Goods Company



“There has been a lot of focus on visibility – and that’s still a big and important piece of the work.”

Joan Wells | President, Augeo Experience



From events to experience intelligence

Events are increasingly being understood not as isolated moments, but as interconnected components of audience journeys.

In this emerging model, insight accumulates across programs, enabling more confident strategic decisions over time.

Leaders consistently described success not in terms of tighter control, but greater insights. As visibility improves, experience teams gain credibility, influence, and the ability to shape enterprise strategy. This is the shift from activity to intelligence.

The next frontier isn't simply better execution or more sophisticated reporting. It is the development of intelligence systems that allow organizations to design, measure, and evolve experiences as a coordinated portfolio.

“Once you have a program in place, you have to get the value out there sooner rather than later.”

Dean Armintrout | Sr. Director, Experiential Marketing
Zendesk

Leadership doesn't want more detail – they want clarity. Where is the spend, why does it exist, and what is it doing for the business?



→ BEHAVIORAL INSIGHT

Clarity enables actions

When outcomes are unclear, decisions stall.

As visibility improves, uncertainty drops, giving leaders the confidence to act, prioritize, and invest more strategically.

How to move from activity to impact

Plan

Portfolio Visibility

A shared view of experience activity across regions, teams, and audiences.

Collaborative Planning

Cross-functional goal setting between all relevant stakeholders and teams

Executive Visibility

Translating experience activity into narratives leadership can act on.

Design & Execute

Scalable Formats

Repeatable experience frameworks that flex across markets and audiences.

Governance Guardrails

Clear thresholds and workflows that guide activity without slowing innovation.

Experience Orchestration

Choreographing how audiences move through experiences over time, so the relationship deepens with each interaction.

Measure & Learn

Decision Intelligence

Measurement that informs future investment - not just reports past performance.

Behavioral Insight

Understanding how audiences engage across touchpoints to reveal intent.

Continuous Learning

Building institutional knowledge that carries forward across teams, programs, and years.



Designing what's → next

As experience leaders, you're navigating a period of real change.

Not just in how events are executed, but in how experience is understood, measured, and valued across the enterprise.

As expectations rise, the role of experience is becoming more visible, more connected, and more consequential.

The organizations making progress aren't simply improving execution.

They're building the systems that allow experience to scale more intentionally, more intelligently, and with greater impact over time.

What comes next?

For many teams, the next step isn't more activity - it's more clarity.

- **Where is experience happening today?**
- **What is it actually driving?**
- **And how might it evolve if treated as a system, not a series of moments?**

augeo experience

Augeo Experience is a global experiential marketing agency designing and delivering brand experiences for the world's leading organizations. Rooted in strategy, driven by intelligence, and built to move audiences to action.

augeoexperience.com



ELX is the leading invitation-only community for senior event leaders from the world's largest and most influential organizations.

eventleaders.com

Explore more in our 2026 Experiential Trends Report or connect with our team to continue the conversation.