

# 17 WAYS TO LEVEL UP YOUR CREATIVITY PRACTICE

Creativity and innovation are the hallmarks of the experiential marketing industry but event teams are more challenged than ever to continue raising the bar with less. Indeed, less time, fewer resources and persistent logistical challenges seem to be the new norms when it comes to producing live events.

This May, Event Marketer, with leading event structures partner Highmark TechSystems, sat down with a panel of creative industry leaders at the Experiential Marketing Summit Design Lab to talk timelines, pain points and how AI might help (or hinder) the production of events in the future. Here are 17 solutions and strategies that event teams can use to elevate their creativity—and their production processes.

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## THE PANELISTS



**Kevin Calabrese**  
AVP, Head of Experiential  
Brand Design  
AT&T



**Caryn Mambro**  
Chief Creative Officer  
Opus Agency



**Megan Pulver**  
Executive Producer,  
Riot Experience  
Riot Games



**Mallory Schlossberg**  
Senior Creative, Google  
Cloud Go-to-Market  
Google

## HOW TO COMBAT COMPRESSED TIMELINES

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Timelines aren't likely to get longer, unfortunately. But creative teams can **use compressed schedules as opportunities to fine-tune their processes**. "I think it's about platforms, tools, and process," says Kevin Calabrese, AVP, Head of Experiential Brand Design, AT&T. "It's on all of us to become a little more disciplined and look at the process of design. There does have to be some sequencing of phasing through design and creativity."

2

Being focused on **why your event is important to the person consuming it** can lead you to event strategies faster and more efficiently. "It actually helps in a lot of ways to cut down a lot of the noise and provide really, really dedicated targeted experiences that we feel like our players appreciate in the end," says Megan Pulver, Executive Producer, Riot Experience, Riot Games. "In some ways, the tighter timeline forces you to really focus on what's important."

3

Leaders need to be tuned into how their teams are **managing their time—and their energy** when timelines are intense. "It can be taxing," says Caryn Mambro, Chief Creative Officer, Opus Agency. Creative leaders should consider: "How do you motivate? How do you make sure the health of the team stays intact without being less effective on the work?" she says.

4

A **tight creative brief** is "the single most important thing that you can have," says Mallory Schlossberg, Senior Creative, Google Cloud Go-to-Market, Google. "So everyone is aligned up top. Everybody—the partners, your stakeholders—everybody knows that this is our North star, this is what we're going for. Having those guardrails is so important."

5

Savvy creativity practices **set out clear guiding experience principles** that help them stay on track—and on time. "Have a set of experience principles and values that are the bedrock for everything you do," says Schlossberg. "Research backed, strategy backed, science backed—everything needs to pass through that litmus test."

6

A **customer journey model that applies to all events** can provide similar guidance throughout the creative process. "It actually touches on behavioral economics, behavioral science—I think that it's really important that we build it," says Calabrese. "The principles and standards in approaching how problems come in and how we respond to those [problems] is a huge piece of the discipline and process."

To learn more about Highmark TechSystems or to see the range of modular structures they can provide for your next event or activation, email Matt Andrews at [mandrews@highmarktech.com](mailto:mandrews@highmarktech.com) | 260.483.0012 x2104

## HOW TO CREATE FRICTIONLESS BRAND EXPERIENCES

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Smart creatives don't think inside the silo of the live experience—they think omnichannel, and how their live moment in time will **meet attendees where they are—all the time**. “No matter where their head turns, no matter what kind of medium they want be communicated through, it works,” says Schlossberg. “And the pandemic showed us that people want to be met where they are.”

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Creative practices that **think of events in terms of an entire universe of customer touchpoints** will be more connected—and successful. “I like to think of it less as a list of deliverables and more of I'm building a world,” says Schlossberg. “What exists in this world? If this is true, then what else is true?”

9

Having a deep understanding about **what your customers and audiences are doing at the same time that they're using your product** enables you to focus on creating something that's *additive* to their experience—and respects that most people consume multiple inputs at the same time. “When we're thinking about the full omnichannel experience, we're thinking about all the things that people are experiencing [already], what is the thing that you want them to experience, and then we try and fold in meaningful experiences that add into that,” says Pulver.

10

**Leading with empathy** and doing the deep homework required to become an expert on the communities you serve will go a long way in developing the right creative execution. “As a marketer and a creative, you have to step in the shoes of the audience that you're talking to and figure out, how do we make their world easier? How do we make their communities better?” says Calabrese.

## HOW TO APPROACH AI

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**AI can be a time-saving tool** for creatives, especially in the early stages of ideation. Rendering ideas in AI can save weeks of time traditionally spent building elaborate models. “Whether it's used for pitching or in-house work, to remove that burden and focus on the idea itself goes back to time management,” says Calabrese. “It goes back to tools at our disposal.”

12

Seasoned event creatives know: **new tools are always on the horizon and it's best to embrace them and stay educated**, lest you get left behind. “Fear can be very liberating,” says Mambro. “You can come up with the best solutions that way. In the words of Adam Grant, ‘Knowledge is power, but knowing what you don't know is wisdom.’”

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**Using AI is like picking another brain in your space**—for free. “Sometimes, it pops out something that you're like, ‘Oh, I didn't think about it like that,’” says Pulver. “I think it's an interesting tool that helps folks think about different ways to solve a problem and provide solutions.”

## HOW TO WORK SMARTER

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Clients, this one is for you: **give actionable feedback that maps back to your objectives**. “When you are in a position to be giving creative feedback, you have to be giving really good feedback,” says Schlossberg. “It can't just be, ‘I don't like it, that's not working.’ It has to be actionable. It has to tie back to your brief or your message or what you're trying to accomplish.”

15

Asking “why?” throughout the entire production supply chain helps all stakeholders make better decisions. **“Starting from the place of ‘why’ is really helpful,”** says Mambro. “I find that when we do that, it is a lot easier to move faster.” Mambro says she loves it when her vendors ask why she's making a decision. It enables the vendor to fight for the things that she cares about. “It's really powerful and can help avoid a lot of back and forth. Or, help the team land on a solution that had just not been articulated very well.”

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You don't need a huge budget to tell a great story. Instead, **focus on “the why behind the wow,”** says Schlossberg. “Are you just throwing a lot of stuff out there or is it purposeful? Is it connected? Is there connective tissue? And what values are you trying to say with what you're trying to do?”

17

**The customer knows where the dollars should be spent.** It's up to you to unearth what your target audience really needs. It might be less than you think. “One of the most important things is, who are we talking to? Who are we engaging with? What is the experience that we hope for the person that we're trying to target?” says Calabrese. “They will tell you where to put the money and where your budget is best spent.”

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