

SPIRO-ING INTO THE FUTURE OF THE NEW NOW™

Diving into transforming the events industry during disruption, consumer behaviors leading to new opportunities, and four core principles to create successful brand experiences

The historic disruptions rocking the events and experience industry requires new mindsets and new business models to meet changing consumer and client behaviors. Embracing change, rather than succumbing to it, can mean the difference between surviving and thriving as a brand in today's turbulent landscape, say leaders from Spiro, the global brand experience agency for the NEW NOW™. Here's how Spiro's transformative point of view sets the agency up to create events and experiences for maximum impact—and how doing so enables brands to build loyalty, value, and community across channels, platforms, and mediums.

PART ONE: THE EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY'S POST-PANDEMIC NEW NOW

Event Marketer: When and why was Spiro founded?

Jeff Stelmach: Spiro was launched in March of 2022, as part of the GES Collective, born from the legacy of GES Events & Corporate Accounts.

The pandemic completely disrupted the events industry as we knew it. Because of that unprecedented shift, we were inspired to evolve both the way we view and create experiences—not just to survive and prosper in the post-pandemic climate, but to

also lead change for our clients and the industry. Spiro brings together our collective abilities and global power to develop truly integrated solutions for our clients. This includes all the services that GES Events & Corporate Accounts was entrusted with for decades, fortified with new in-house creative resources, a new talent bench of brand experience experts, and a new proprietary approach to how we conceptualize, create, deliver, manage, monetize and quantify events and experiences. We call it CCXD™—Community-Centered Experience Design. The brand experience industry is living in the NEW NOW, and the NEW NOW has a new agency.

Event Marketer: Can you elaborate upon the NEW NOW, and what means to be the brand experience agency for it?

Carley Faircloth: There has been and continues to be huge economic, cultural, emotional, and behavioral shifts taking place across industries and verticals, making it clear that there is no going back to what was pre-pandemic. We can't keep looking for the "Next Normal," "New Normal," or "Back to Normal," because every aspect of the way we live, work, learn, communicate, and collaborate has forever changed. The pandemic has taught all of us that all we have is now—and that "now" is constantly moving and changing. The NEW NOW represents our current landscape, but it's also a mind shift.

Championing the truth that change and evolution are the only constants in our world today allows us to make change work



Jeff Stelmach
Global President

Carley Faircloth
Chief Marketing Officer

Beki Winchel
Director, Thought
Leadership & Innovation

Amy Blackman
Corporate & Brand Strategy

for clients, instead of responding to change happening to them. At Spiro, we don't wait for a "New Normal." We're change embracers, primed to create what is now possible for our clients and for our industry.

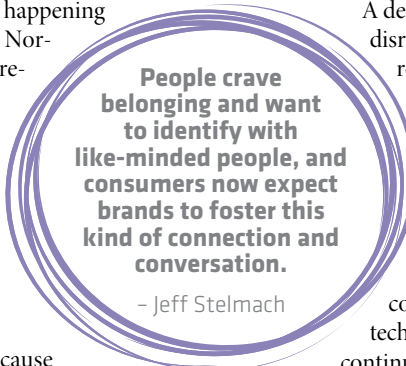
Event Marketer: What does that shift mean for brand-to-consumer engagement and the ways in which we connect?

Beki Winchel: The last three years have left us with a collective experience deficit, which is especially difficult to reconcile because at our core, humans are social animals. Built into our psyche and condition is a desire for connection—to feel seen and heard, to align, and to share and interact with others. That desire and drive has caused many to anxiously await the return of in-person events, but it's much more than that. We've adapted and now seek to connect with each other and with the companies we patronize through multiple channels and mediums.

Jeff: Brands are also no longer built based on how they are portrayed. Now, brands are built based on how they behave. It's more important than ever to develop and nurture strong relationships that are more than simply transactional interactions. This is especially necessary if you want to stand out from the competition. People crave belonging and want to identify with like-minded people, and consumers now expect brands to foster this kind of connection and conversation.

Event Marketer: How do you anticipate the industry will continue to transform over the coming years?

Amy Blackman: We look at macro trends in the brand experience industry for general insight, but for a more in-depth view, we also watch remote work, metaverse, leisure travel, hospitality, and tourism trends for indicators on sentiment and behavior shifts that will impact our industry.



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A decline in global tourism fed by travel disruptions, economic and environmental re-evaluation, and employment's mass exodus within the hospitality industry are only some of the trends that have caught our attention as innovation opportunities. They require our industry to transform—through creating channel-agnostic connections; micro, spoke and localized events; and asynchronous and contiguous communities. Interaction and connectivity technology, platforms, and even hardware will continue to advance and create new solutions to meet this changing set of consumer behaviors.

PART TWO: CREATING EXPERIENCES ACROSS TIME, CHANNELS, AND SHIFTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Event Marketer: Should brands continue organizing hybrid events? Will brands be missing an opportunity by resisting virtual experiences?

Carley: There are many people and brands continuing to question whether or not the demand for "hybrid" or "omnichannel" events will remain as in-person experiences increase. However, the future of events and experiences is past the distinctions of IRL or URL. Now, audiences are adept at jumping between digital and physical. We now live in a new space, and to truly thrive, we must embrace it.

"Hybrid" is here to stay, but it's much more than that. Both the technological innovations and changing consumer and client behaviors have already put hybrid in the rearview mirror. For NEW NOW experiences, audiences can be together and

remote at the same time, or both live and asynchronous. Most importantly, the choice is up to each individual. It's what we call ARL™—All Real Life.

Amy: Consumers have come to expect a different level of engagement than ever before. Now, we can engage with experiences regardless of the time, place, space, and medium we choose to participate from. Our experiences are all ARL—and it's all good! We are not waiting for an “old normal” to return or looking at hybrid event execution as an inconvenience. Instead, we meet clients and their customers where they are, which offers a new set of monetization possibilities and approaches.

Event Marketer: What is your Pursuit of THERE•ness™?

Jeff: THERE•ness™ is a concept that launches off the truth that in the NEW NOW, experiences meet you where you are. These experiences transcend distance and spatial boundaries, exist beyond time constraints, and are larger than physical and digital channels. With all of the new ways we are empowered to attend events and experiences, each attendee decides what these things mean to them. What it means to be THERE is relative to your individual preferences and choices.

We are committed to the idea that whenever, wherever your THERE is, your experience can be. We always start by asking our clients, and asking our clients to ask their customers, “Where is your THERE?” This invites an innovative mindset that sets us up to explore what's possible.

Event Marketer: What's a primary driver for Spiro?

Beki: It all comes back to the needs of our clients and their customers. Each one of us as human beings are driven to form connections with one another, share ideas and inspiration, and find common bonds. No matter where or when our THERE is, and regardless of the mediums and channels we use to connect, successful experiences serve as catalysts for those connections.

We create experiences that ensure connections can continue long after the “meeting” itself ends, encouraging communities to form and grow. One of the ways we do this is through our proprietary CCXD (Community-Centered Experience Design) process and system. It also helps to ensure that our offerings will change in step with how the technology within the business interaction and connection space continues to develop, which will in turn continue to transform the way we engage.

What's most important is not to lose sight of the ultimate purpose of an event or brand activation: connections that continue into community. People attend events and experiences, but they join communities.

Event Marketer: Why is it important to create communities and not just have people attend events?

Amy: In our current super-networked economy, the next generation of business leaders and leading businesses will become community mobilizers, rather than just offering networking or connective touchpoints.

Networking is when you want something from someone. It's a transactional and one-way action. Community happens when

someone wants something from you, too. It's a subtle difference with a big impact that starts with a connective moment or experience and grows into a sustaining body. Building a community is the overarching goal. Building a network is the conduit to that goal, and networking plays a key function in realizing the goal.

A community is a group of people who feel responsible for collaborating on a shared purpose that supersedes their individual needs. Members of a community—as opposed to a simple network—expect relationships within the group to continue, and they hold one another accountable for effort and performance. Creating a community means mobilizing members to think and act collectively. Instead of building a network that benefits only the individual, the focus is revealing ways individuals within the community can give value to each other.

Community is not a throwaway concept and creating community-centered experiences shouldn't be viewed as simply a new coat of paint on existing offerings and processes.

Event Marketer: What are some of the things Spiro has done and will continue doing to maintain its leadership in an evolving industry?

Carley: Everything we've talked about is a summation of what we call our “Core Four,” which include the NEW NOW, THERE•ness, ARL and Community. These are really a distillation of how we think, see, and deliver solutions for our clients, the industry, and the world.

The Core Four drive us to not only transform our offerings, but also lead the way for our clients, the industry and the world as champions of innovation and change. With each of these concepts, we've harnessed a practice that encompasses a deep understanding of our macro-global reality, combined with how humans are now behaving, how technology is advancing, and how our collective priorities, needs, and preferences are changing. That led us to create a framework for delivering high-impact connective experiences whenever and wherever our clients' THERE is.

Jeff: We have built thought leadership, innovation, future-casting and strategic foresight into Spiro's core value proposition and our agency's DNA.

Our industry-disrupting point of views are at the center of how we think, strategize, and solution for our clients. It's also how we move the industry, rather than be moved by it. We will continue to expand our capabilities and talent to be examples of what future-fortification looks like for our industry. Ultimately, our competitive set offers the same services.

What sets us apart is being service-ready for what is coming next, rather than servicing what is happening now. The special sauce of disruptive leadership is being change-embracing, rather than change-avoidant. As consumer behavior transforms in exponential time, we must change in lock step.



Connect with us:
marketing@thisisspiro.com
www.thisisspiro.com