GOING 'BEYOND THE ROOM' THROUGH CCXD™
(COMMUNITY-CENTERED EXPERIENCE DESIGN)

How to use brand experiences & events to build thriving, persistent communities through a four-phased approach.

POWERED BY

Spiro™

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As audiences continue to crave the feelings of togetherness & connection that were paused during the pandemic, many event marketers are taking a broader look at their event portfolios to consider how their live experiences can become better catalysts for vibrant communities that stay connected, engaged, and—the gold standard—*participating* all year long.

Delivering a community-generating event requires a unique approach. The experts at Spiro, the global brand experience agency for the NEW NOW™, have developed a framework called CCXD™ (Community-Centered Experience Design) that positions events as spaces for communities to spark, thrive & grow.

Spiro's point of view is that events, either in person or remote, are incredibly powerful opportunities to develop connections that last far beyond when the event ends. Traditional approaches focus on the event itself & not what happens when people go back to their day-to-day routines. The following questions are at the heart of Spiro's new CCXD approach:

- How will a brand be optimally positioned to connect with people?
- How will a brand foster connections between people?
- How can a brand deliver connections that continue after the experience ends, so that audiences remain engaged & participating?

We talked to Amy Blackman, Futurist & Innovation Strategist at Spiro, who broke down ways to apply the framework to your events, how you can be responsive to audience expectations & what dividends you—and your communities—will reap as a result.

Ready to unleash the power of an evergreen community on your events? Read on.

Event Marketer: *Before we get started, Amy, tell us about your role.*

Amy Blackman: Sure! I'm a futurist & innovation strategist at Spiro. It's kind of an unusual title, so I'll explain a little bit about what I do. I float between all the functions—marketing, sales, people & culture, strategy, creative—and the larger world. My job is to think about business from a macro perspective & to think "on" Spiro's business. What are universal shifts in human and consumer behavior & how can we harness solutions for our clients to get ahead of them? I incorporate a little bit of macroeconomics, behavioral economics, & global policy, looking at how they're impacting how we live, work, transact, socialize, meet, travel, engage, communicate & connect.

EM: *What are some universal shifts in consumer behavior you're seeing right now?*

AB: I'll start by what is a constant, rather than what is shifting. The desire for connection & the drive to belong to community. It's coded into our DNA, it's universal & it's what makes us human. Consumer behavior will always reflect this drive.

As for what is shifting: In our increasingly isolated & technology-driven world, we are in a state of connection & community deficit. It is critical that brands & organizations become more intentional & systematic about how they function as facilitators of connection. Brands can be part of the solution to pay down our deficit by delivering connective moments & experiences, thereby becoming the catalyst for community.

EM: *What role can brand experiences and events play in creating those communities?*

AB: Events, either in person or remote, are incredibly powerful opportunities to develop connections that last far beyond when the event ends—human-to-human & human-to-brand. Traditional approaches to live event design & brand experience activations focus on the event itself—what happens in the room, not what happens when people go back to their day-to-day routines, as in, what happens "beyond the room."

However, community exists exactly in that space—beyond the room. Audiences now expect brands to foster connection and conversation in the room—at the event—and beyond the room. Brands must become more adaptive, intentional & systematic about facilitating high-impact moments of connection, so much so that the result is a "beyond the room" brand community. Beyond-the-room communities are when brands really start to see exponential dividends to their event investments, capturing share of mind, share of voice & share of market.

EM: *How can event marketers shift their mindset from events being a single place in time into community-building platforms?*

AB: We're not just experience makers, event marketers or brand strategists. We're community designers. As community designers, we can start to create community in a four-phased approach—our CCXD process—that begins in the room & expands "beyond the room", exponentially.

EM: *Great—let's get into the four phases. What are they and how do they work?*

AB: We define the four phases as Community Mapping, Building, Activation & Dividends.

Phase One: Mapping (happens in the room).
Phase Two: Building (happens in the room & beyond).
Phase Three: Growth (happens beyond the room).
Phase Four: Dividends (how we track & measure the ROI of community in the room & beyond).

Phase One, Community Mapping, is the intentional design of spaces to plan crossing points & remove barriers to human connection. Community-centered spatial design informs how we map the room. It has the potential to set the stage for chance encounters, social interactions & collisions of like minds. So, by designing spaces through a community lens, we're creating a fertile ground for social interaction among different groups of people. These are the seeds of community.

Phase Two is Community Building. Once we have a spatial map that enables community, we have to get thoughtful about human-centered programming & strategies.

The building phase is about designing for interaction, human curation & intentional experiences that exceed "handshakes and howdies," or what we call networking. Creating a community means mobilizing members to think & act collectively, rather than merely build a network that benefits the individual. We can be intentional about the interactions we design to mobilize community that continues "beyond the room", rather than just plain old networking.

The Seven Principles of CCXD
(Community-Centered Experience Design)

1. **Purposeful & participant-centric:** Do you know what your participants want, need & care about?
2. **Inclusion & Demographic Diversity:** Are you incorporating all different perspectives, ideas & shared experiences?
3. **Collaboration & Shared Purpose:** Are you supporting & encouraging participants to work together to advance the common good, whatever that is?
4. **Openness & Learning:** Are you listening to each other through openness & applying that information in new ways that generate new possibilities?
5. **Transparency & Trust:** Are you being clear & open about your process? Are you holding confidentiality with rigor?
6. **Impact & Action:** Are you ensuring that each effort has a real potential to make a difference?
7. **Sustained Engagement & Participatory Culture:** Are you promoting a culture of participation with joint enterprise-based programs?

EM: *Tell us about the growth phase.*

AB: Phase Three, Community Growth, is the "beyond the room" phase. This is where spatial mapping & interaction building start to yield continuity of connections.

The intention is to understand the optimal programs, platforms, technologies & outputs that will move people from *engagement* to *participation*. Are they up for committing to a mastermind group? Forming a chapter? Creating a salon? Contributing to a dashboard? Being active on a messaging platform? Adding to a resource library? Creating an innovation or moonshot group? Taking field trips or having immersive experiences? How about just attending a good old-school meet up?

Note that all of the activities I list have action verbs attached: The focus is on calls to action & also *growing* the places and spaces where these newly connected humans want to participate.

EM: *And phase four?*

AB: Phase Four, Community Dividends, is where we go beyond & beyond. Once a community is fully established, it inevitably grows branches, because its members start to feel a sense of ownership in its value & a sense of stewardship in how it expands.

In this phase, there's continued brand engagement, market share, ROI, competitive advantage & all that good business & revenue goal stuff we can quantify & measure against. Communities pay dividends to business. They also pay dividends to other humans through shared experience, knowledge exchange, skills transfer, innovation, collaboration & well-being.

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>
> —Amy Blackman, Spiro

To learn more about Community-Centered Experience Design, email Megan Livermore at MLivermore@thisisspiro.com.