



**The Entertainment:** Have the event's entertainment reflect your design and your theme. A winter-themed event could have indoor ice skating entertainers as part of the show. A spring-themed event might showcase a flower market, so that your guests leave with a bunch of in-season flowers handed out by character-attired staff stationed at the flower market stand. If you have the budget and are outside, you might incorporate a firework show or a drone show. Music is also an important component of any main event. Make sure it is consistent with your theme.

**Design and Lighting:** If your budget allows, promote your theme through design and lighting. You can use a vinyl company to decal your bars, walls, windows and floors to ensure your design comes through in the entire room setting. Lighting is also important. Pinstopping or uplighting the room creates an ambience that cannot be created by candlelight alone. Or build your atmosphere through

one of my personal favourites: lots and lots of candles. For venues that offer them, drop down screens or TVs are great as decor background if you don't need to loop logos on them.

**The End to a Great Event:** Though I believe the best experience is the best take-away you can offer your guests, if you would like to give out swag, make sure it tracks your theme! Whether you are offering a candy bag to go, a bouquet of flowers or a memory stick, give your guests something that they will remember.

**The Follow-Up:** Within a day or two after the event, send your guests a thank-you note in tune with your theme. Be creative here, too: why not send a sizzle reel of the event!

In closing, no matter what your theme may be, ensure that you focus on the why in every event. Inspire and immerse your guests in an event that has a clear agenda so that the moments (micro or macro) transcend the event itself. ■

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## Top Event Trends I See for 2018

- **Experiences are important**, but so is keeping them as simple and direct as possible. Create events that are experiential, at which attendees feel as though they are part of a larger community. Further enhance the value of your event by offering your guests interactive and engaging entertainment.
- **Pop-up events** are new and on the rise. A pop-up event's date is typically announced but the venue remains a secret until close to the event date, building curiosity and buzz among the attendees.
- **Event Technology**, AI and augmented reality are becoming important means through which to promote your event before, during and after. These tools allow event planners to create a more personalized experience and to reach the event's audience in more meaningful ways.
- **An event's networking element** has always been important. Some organizations use the services of a professional introducer at events. The introducer connects attendees to the people they want to meet but cannot find for themselves.
- **Planners and attendees** are expecting and wanting the latest dining innovations, such as a buffet dinner and a reception with action stations and tapas. Seating could be lounge style instead of traditional rounds of eight.
- **Health and wellness** is important among planners. This includes meditations, group activities and competitions, all of which form part of the overall event experience.
- **Independent of the event experience**, pay attention to data security, an important factor in ensuring your attendees information is not compromised. Along the same lines, though security is not a new trend, I feel it worth highlighting. In light of world events and tragedies in the past year, physical safety and security will undoubtedly be and should be heightened in the planning and execution of events.