

How an Immersive Event can create lasting impressions



In this white paper, **Adele Symonds, Marketing Director APAC at Encore Event Technologies** explores how our senses and emotions are linked with experiences, specifically events and how our experts achieved it.

It is important for the events industry to create experiences that inspire, elevate a message or bring brands to life. But while you'd be forgiven for thinking it's just about doing things bigger and flashier, when it comes to understanding immersive events, the clue is in the name.

According to theorists of the experience economy such as Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, the most prolific experiences are authentic, and memorable and are most effective when they stimulate all five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch), provoking emotions and feelings, and allowing people to participate and be involved.



What's an Immersive Event?

To explain the concept simply, it's all about finding creative ways to host your event to engage all the attendee's senses - while conveying your message. What's going to make this a story they want to tell others? Can you incorporate sensory elements, like sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste?

When it comes to the actual strategic creation of such an event - it's about engineering experiences on all kinds of levels. "Immersive events are all about layering," says Adele Symonds. "This starts with event design and the creative strategy. Every element is considered - food, entertainment, theming, graphics, screen content, lighting, sound, and more. It's about taking all the elements and making them sing the same tune."

"If you achieve that, then guests feel as though they are in the event, not just at the event. That takes a strong creative strategy and a production team that are working together seamlessly."



From engaging some senses to full immersion.

Immersive events today are often technological and planning masterpieces. But we can likely all think of examples we've experienced. We've all walked down the street and smelt food cooking which reminded us of family meals, or a holiday serving local delicacies.

Our Event Designers have come up with many ingenious ways to tantalise the senses and create atmosphere. Imagine an event themed to a German-style Christmas market with the scent of mulled wine or Gluhwein, decorated trees styling elements, roast chestnuts and log fires in the air... delicious!

Engaging some of our senses at events is not a new concept, but with the tools Encore has available to us, it can be taken to new heights and new levels of immersion. Thanks to the explosion in all forms of electronic technologies, we have theatrical lighting, PA systems, projection, live video, computers, surround sound, and LED screens - and it continues to evolve at lightning speed.

The science of engagement.

Aside from the senses, it's important to remember that people experience four styles of learning – Visual, Auditory, Written and Kinaesthetic (movement and sensation). People don't always learn the same way, so it's a chance to appeal to your audience more broadly. When you stimulate senses and invite interaction and participation, you light up pathways in people's brains – which increases the chances of your messages being understood, retained, shared and recalled. This creates mindful engagement. And when you consider taste and smell triggers? You can create powerful sense memories too.

Finding nuggets of gold through collaboration.

A big part of the process is truly understanding the audience you're working for. Shaping the event starts well before bump in, and the Encore Event Technologies' in-house creative team and technical experts have the experience to guide you through.

"In the initial meetings our event managers have with clients they discuss their brief with the aim of find those 'nuggets of gold' that shape the event," says Symonds. "From there, we design a creative strategy, including the event's physical elements, and all the supporting technology."

But collaboration is the key to success.

"It really takes a multitude of minds. The creative team will suggest an idea, then the tech team will enhance it with their ideas and capabilities and the work together with the production team to execute. We recently designed an immersive showcase event where the audience experienced an activation comprising a walkway of tall LED video columns, triggered by touch screen where they selected the themed experience that wanted as they walk through. The tech team then suggested we add immersive audio which followed guests as they walked, with lighting added haze for atmosphere."

“When you stimulate senses and invite interaction and participation, you light up pathways in people's brains.”



Immersive Tech – What’s in the Toolbox?

We touched on learning styles earlier – here’s a breakdown of how we can appeal to each of them with tools and technology.

Kinetic

Encore Event Technologies have been using interactive touch technologies for years, developing our own touchscreen platform called IntelliTouch. This platform can achieve almost anything that interacts with the human hand on a touch kiosk or iPad, from filling out interactive quizzes to creating graphics that can be used elsewhere in the event. For example, we recently created a touch platform that enabled audience members to design their own digital fish on arrival. That fish was then let loose in virtual LED ‘fish tanks’ in the venue and then onto an immersive video wall with hundreds of other virtual fish created by the other attendees.

Visual

LED panels and LED walls have become common in events, with their modular ability to be built into almost any shape or curve, combined in small numbers or giant spans, and all addressed as one big canvas. There’s still a place for projection mapping, particularly outdoors, on very large walls, and from above, onto tables. A recent Encore event saw content flow across giant LED screens surrounding the audience, and onto the plates in front of them, seamlessly blending the two technologies.

Real-time manipulation of video is one of the hallmarks of immersive events, distinguishing it from cinematic playback. Powerful software tools including Unreal Engine, the platform created by Epic Games to create immersive video game environments, can now be used by technicians to affect video live, integrating the movement and actions of real presenters with digitally created imagery in real time.

Jack Poulos - a Technical Event Director at Encore specialising in vision - says it’s about two-way communication between the audience and the event itself. “It’s about inviting the attendees to make connections. Then we engage all the senses in sync with the visuals. For us in video, that means working very closely with all the other event professionals – so more communication, more on-site testing. We need a unified team, from tech staff right through to food service.”

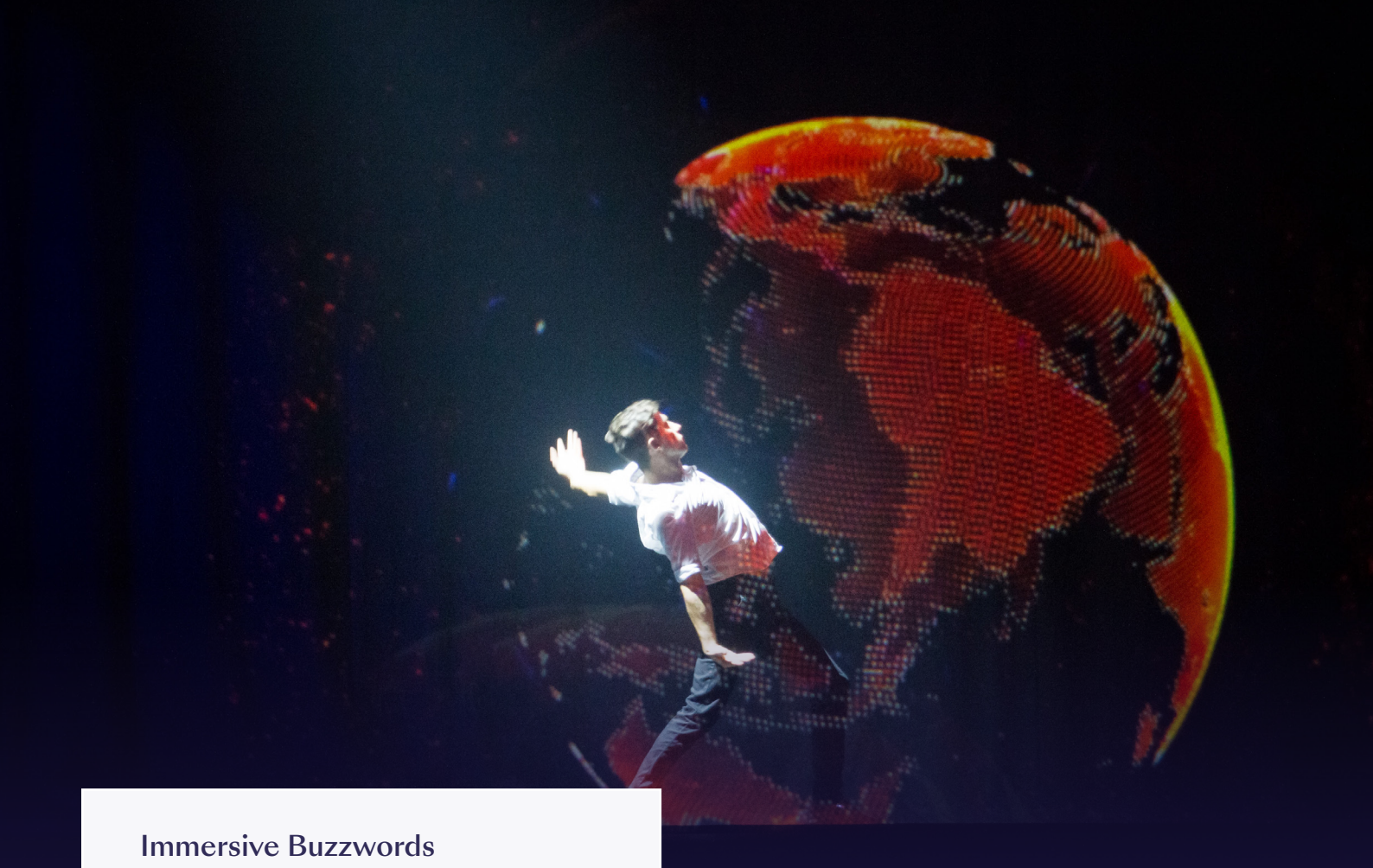


Audio

Immersive audio is different from the familiar ‘surround sound’ of the commercial and home cinema in that, like immersive video, it can respond in real-time to actions and movement in the real world. Immersive audio uses multiple loudspeakers hidden around an event space to create a realistic ‘pathway’ for audio to appear to travel around the room. Given enough loudspeakers, a sound can travel 270 to 360 degrees around the audience.

For example, Encore created an immersive event for 1,000 people in an auditorium. On walk-in, visuals of iconic locations like Bondi Beach saw the audience immersed in a realistic soundscape of waves, wind and seagulls. Later, during the presentation, when tennis legend Roger Federer spoke via video, tennis balls wooshed over the audience’s head, hit on either side of a virtual audio tennis court by racquets.

“What I really enjoy about using immersive audio at events is that it’s much more natural,” says Daniel Carver-Shadbolt, a Technical Event Director specialising in audio. “A traditional PA system, with speakers to the left and right of the stage, produces a two-dimensional sound image (stereo) which is frankly, unnatural. It’s not how sound in the real world works, and your brain knows it. Immersive audio is three dimensional, just as it is in reality. Immersive audio allows for more control over the space and gives us another element of creativity to get audience reactions you can really play with.”



Immersive Buzzwords

AR: Augmented Reality

AR refers to the actions and vision in the real world interacting with digitally generated and controlled video and audio. For example, you might have a presenter that 'catches' a virtual basketball that hurtles towards them across video screens around the auditorium, or a virtual dance partner that performs with real dancer on stage, reacting in real-time to their movements.

Immersive Audio

A broad term that includes using audio processed and sent to many loudspeakers to create the illusion of movement, through to audio processed to completely change the acoustics of space – like making a meeting room sound like a cathedral.

Immersive Video

The use of both computer generated and real-world imagery, distributed across multiple transmission mechanisms, including LED panels and projections, with an element of interactivity for the participants.

Real-World Inspiration

Live AR

Real life example: You may remember when Katy Perry performed the song 'Daisies' on American Idol in May 2020. This performance was captured entirely 'in camera', meaning the effect was achieved live on stage, with Katy performing in front of a wrap-around LED screen. Real time manipulation of the computer-generated imagery and tracking Katy's movements in real time create the three dimensional effect. Effects like this are now achievable at any live event.

The Lume, Melbourne

This astonishing, vast, semi-permanent space in Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre uses 360 degree projections and an immersive audio system to deliver an utterly overwhelming artistic experience. It has been used to showcase the works of Van Gogh and Monet, and it also available for corporate events.

Theatre World

You've most likely heard immersive audio without even knowing it. Canadian circus phenomenon Cirque Du Soleil pioneered the technique and use it in all their productions. Productions recently running in Australia including Harry Potter and The Cursed Child and Mary Poppins both have extensive immersive audio components. Even our own home-grown Australian Outback Spectacular and Dracula's Theatre Restaurant, both on the Gold Coast, use the technology.



Let's immerse your audience in a brilliant event.

With all this in mind, at the heart of it, Immersive Events are an opportunity. Done well, they're a memorable, informative and even mesmerising interaction with your brand or event, which can be invaluable when it comes to engagement. The Encore team is here to help – let's talk about taking your event to new heights.



Questions and enquiries

Connect with us and discuss your event needs

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