SLEDGE

Five trends that are set to shape 2027

The practices defining the future of events and marketing



The creative comes out on top

With AI at our fingertips we can all play, explore and imagine how events might look and feel, but that doesn't necessarily mean the ideas it generates are feasible, and ensuring they land isn't in everyone's wheelhouse, it requires a very specific skillset.

A company's internal events team might want everything from a curved screen and in-the-round layout, to overhead chandeliers and a robot or two thrown in for good measure, but can they combine everything meaningfully?

More often than not they don't have the vision to bring all elements together under the one story or theme. This is where the event creative thrives, which is why we see this role being in hot demand in 2027.

Ultimately clients can imagine more with AI, but what they lack is the ability to translate things into event settings. We predict more will come to their agencies for this creative service as a result.



Most clients expect that we know how to use AI better than them in a creative sense.

Becca Shanks
Creative Services Director, Sledge

Event agendas take a breather

Wellness has taken a front row seat at events in recent years as people demand more, with quiet rooms, mindfulness sessions and exercise stations the norm. Now it's the agendas themselves that need a little TLC in this area, and we expect to see increased attendee pushback when they're too crammed.

A less is more approach is what will win in 2027, and we'll be encouraging clients to steer clear of jam packed programmes in favour of those that are built around breathing time. This means they might address four subjects really well instead of eight in a rushed, overwhelming way, as well as give attendees space to do things like decompress, journal, meditate, or simply be.

It's important to note shared experiences are what resonate with people the most, so carving out time for them to organically connect (instead of in a one-way sales spiel scenario) is key if they're to leave feeling like they got genuine value out of an event.

79% **of UK consumers say wellness is a "top" or "important" priority. – McKinsey's Future of Wellness research**



Content shifts (back) to skillset-led

Technology might be making it easier to make content, but now we're seeing companies expect one person to produce a lot of assets at speed with limited resources, all while covering multiple creative disciplines.

This has resulted in an oversupply of subpar assets that don't cut through, because they aren't backed by the specialist skills of the camera operators, sound recordists, editors, animators and producers that are needed to create the story-led ones that do.

We predict there will be a shift away from this quantity over quality approach in 2027, as companies come to realise investing in the skills needed to produce great content, not just more content is what will help them achieve their goals.

And the content that's set to deliver on this? It will be backed by strong storytelling and the expertise of several people to bring it to life. It will be well shot, recorded, edited and produced, and serve a purpose beyond simply filling a screen, feed or blank billboard.



There's a growing expectation to produce more content, faster and with fewer resources, but that shouldn't come at the expense of quality, creativity or the people behind it.

Ben Heaysman
Head of Film & Content, Sledge

Venue budgets go boujee

We don't see event budgets increasing per se, but the way spend is being allocated is changing.

The venue is becoming the jewel in the crown, with brands happy to spend extra on farflung locations, luxe retreat style vibes, and FOMO inducing host sites over conventional spaces.

We see the trend being driven by two main causes. Peoples' schedules are more packed than ever, so companies are pulling out all the stops in the hope delegates choose their event over a competitor's.

The second links back to the rise of face-to-face in the age of AI. Organisations know we get more value out of connecting IRL vs. virtually, and an awe-inspiring location to do this all in?

Now that's going to result in rave reviews, so they're willing to make the extra investment to win over their audience.



AI cost concerns rise

AI usage might be ubiquitous, but discussions around its cost – not just financial, but environmental and ethical too, are set to dominate the year ahead.

With everything from rising storage fees to the token model impacting bottom lines, companies will need to reconsider their internal spend.

In 2027 agencies need to develop consistent AI pricing models for the range of services they provide, or risk being left behind.

We also see there being enhanced vigilance around data protection and security as questionable tools face more scrutiny, meanwhile with data centres popping up all over the globe at a rapid rate, the environmental impact of these buildings will be front and centre.

The key takeaway? While AI might be convenient, it's not without its challenges and consequences. Whether it's generating a quick mock up or layering in some subtitles, we need to be more conscious of our actions.

> **AI is poised to use the same amount of water needed by 1.3 billion people by 2030, with its power use to triple that of 650 million.**
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> – The United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health