

# MIX MATCH & CONNECT

Tap into the fabric of meetings  
– everything is intertwined

# THE FABRIC OF MEETINGS – EVERYTHING IS INTERTWINED

A few years ago, RAI Amsterdam's sales team was invited to present their department's work at a stand during an internal event. Their brief was to find the best way to show their colleagues what they do in a typical working day and how they deal with accommodating customers in all their diversity.

To illustrate their commitment to providing a bespoke solution for each organiser, the RAI sales team used a tailor's dummy who was dressed in different fabrics and outfits on the spot. The metaphor made a single, powerful message come alive: regardless of the size, requirements or individual nature of the event, RAI Amsterdam's sales team always seeks and finds the best fit.

This story is a perfect analogy to highlight the latest developments and global trends that have the power to influence the event industry. All together – you as an organiser, meeting professionals and our industry ecosystem – we form a colourful patchwork of ideas and characters, facing shared industry challenges and seeking to respond to the very same trends. At the end of the day, the question we can ask ourselves is how to create unity from diversity, and how to create value from the many influences of a rapidly changing world. And then, how to weave the threads together into the fabric of successful events.



# THE ULTIMATE TRUTH ABOUT POWER DRESSING – WHERE TRENDS AND EVENTS MEET

**At its core, our industry is about bringing people, communities and businesses together to share and benefit from ideas, knowledge and experience. As such, our industry is open to the world and therefore influenced by global developments.**

These include de-globalisation, the role of AI, political unrest through to geopolitical tensions, the pressure for energy transition and greater sustainability, the demand for increased inclusivity and the impact of Gen Z. Given that these issues are so relevant to the industry, participants will also tend to view your event through the lens of global trends when deciding who they want to be associated with, beyond the specific theme and content of your event. This has a real impact on decision-making, as evidenced by the many reports of last-minute decisions to attend or withdraw from an event.

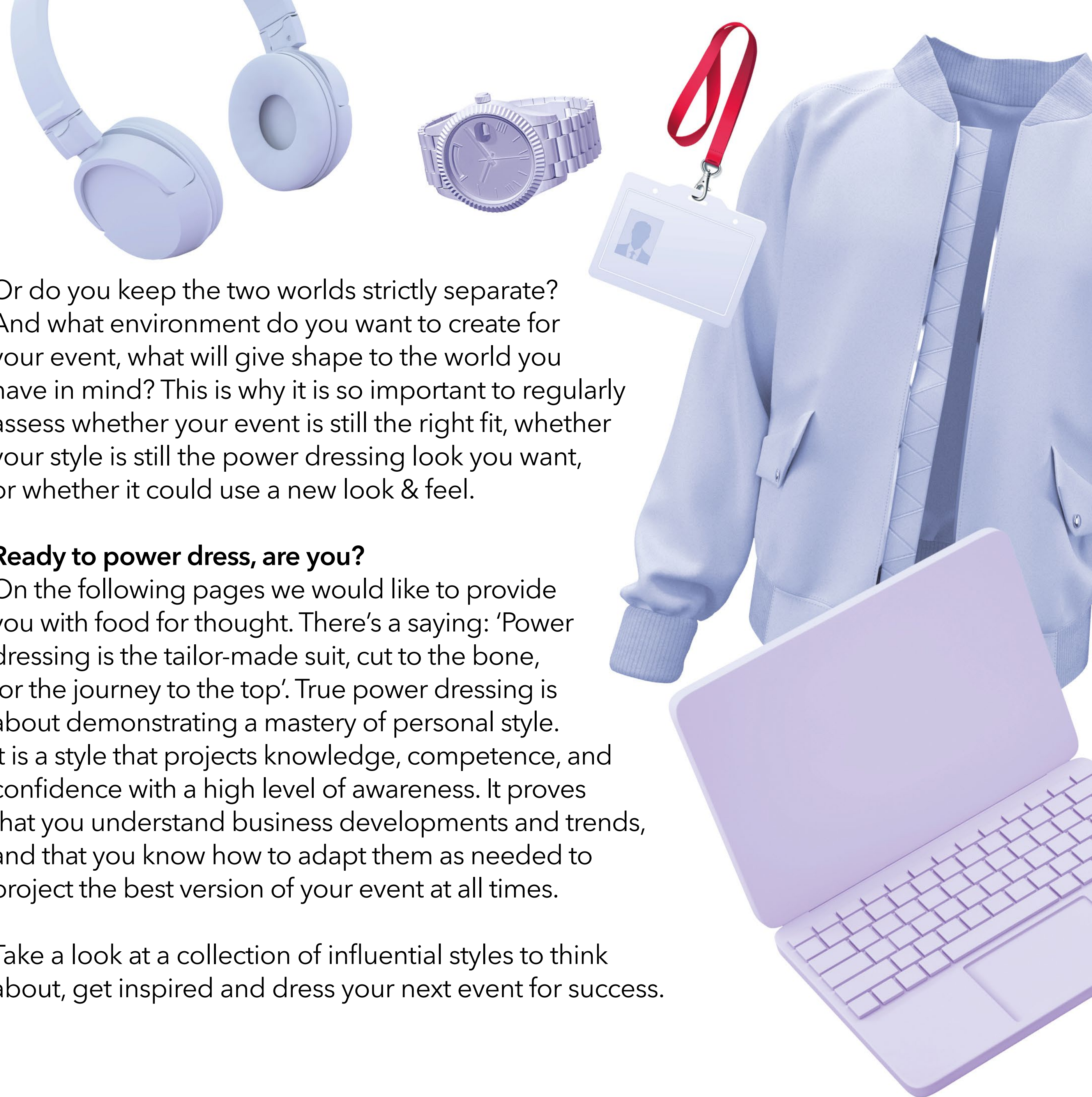
If everything is connected, what does this mean for you as an organiser and how does it affect the style of your event? How do you incorporate relevant trends into your event design and master your style? Do you consider what is happening outside your area of expertise and weave it into your own?

Or do you keep the two worlds strictly separate? And what environment do you want to create for your event, what will give shape to the world you have in mind? This is why it is so important to regularly assess whether your event is still the right fit, whether your style is still the power dressing look you want, or whether it could use a new look & feel.

## **Ready to power dress, are you?**

On the following pages we would like to provide you with food for thought. There's a saying: 'Power dressing is the tailor-made suit, cut to the bone, for the journey to the top'. True power dressing is about demonstrating a mastery of personal style. It is a style that projects knowledge, competence, and confidence with a high level of awareness. It proves that you understand business developments and trends, and that you know how to adapt them as needed to project the best version of your event at all times.

Take a look at a collection of influential styles to think about, get inspired and dress your next event for success.





10 influential styles to get you thinking about your current format, concept, and ambitions. We invite you to mix and match your project with tailored inspiration and weave the latest trends into the fabric of your event.

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# THE BASICS

## NEW RULES

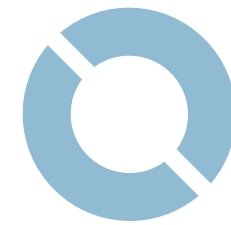
# THE BASICS

**People, sessions, networking, exhibition floors – these are the foundation of your event to share knowledge and do business. The basics of meetings and events are your trusted companion on your event tailoring journey. They allow you to set the overall style and facilitate the design of the rest of your outfit to ensure you cover all the touchpoints. First things first: make sure you have everything in the right place.**

At first glance, it seems as if the basics have changed very little. People still want to get together to learn and network, and are prepared to invest considerable travel time, effort, money, and knowledge to make it happen. Take a stroll around any trade show in 2024 and you're likely to see the classic aisles, the meeting rooms, the lunch breaks and the networking lounges. While this is a solid foundation to build on, make no mistake: new layers have been added to the basics.

Whether you call it vintage, classic, old-fashioned or historic, take a good look at your format and stick with what works.





**Growing global trends are affecting practically every aspect of your event. And that, in turn, is reshaping your relationship with visitors, exhibitors, sponsors and other stakeholders.**

Sustainability, technology, data, digital infrastructure, event design, interaction planning, customer journeys, to name but a few, are all key ingredients to consider as essentials for your next event.

There are many ways to ensure the basics are in place. The first step is to look beyond the timing and boundaries of your physical event. By staying in touch with you throughout the year, we can work together to ensure your fundamentals are strong and up to date.

We have a range of solutions, from virtual webinars to smaller spin-off events, roadshows and local exhibitor meetings, to help you build a solid foundation and master your style.





# SUSTAINABLE FABRICS

## THE GOOD FIT



# SUSTAINABLE FABRICS

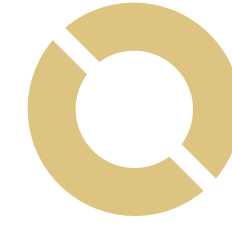
**Selecting the perfect fabric is your first step in event tailoring – eco-friendly design, climate-conscious realisation and healthy connections.**

Where once the sustainability of an event was considered an extra recommendation, it is now an absolute necessity. We're seeing a shift in the meetings industry towards more sustainable practices, a development enhanced by the use of technology and dedicated resources.

The sustainability of an event is a multi-faceted issue that requires a mixed approach, a wide range of measurements and a varied, renewed focus from all stakeholders. It is based on your desired outcome, but also on how comfortable you are with it. For some it may be one or two specific targets, for others it may be quantifying the footprint of all the products used during the event. Or measuring the environmental impact of travel to and from the event – and letting your exhibitors and visitors take these measurable results into account.

Here's what you can borrow from the fashion industry's more sustainable models: *reduce waste, reuse materials and recycle*. Whatever you do, make sure your event leaves a sustainable legacy. It will perfect your event's style and increase your brand's exposure.





**Finally, and most importantly, sustainability isn't just about the environment.**

It's also about making sustainable use of people's time and ensuring their wellbeing. Achieving this means managing the process early on. It requires better preparation, with more pre-arranged appointments, other visits planned near the event destination, smaller meetings before, during and after events.

It also means harnessing what we call *curated serendipity*: by making a smart use of data, each event organiser can add value and have a greater impact. Your visitors and exhibitors are entrusted with more responsibilities, which you as the organiser can seamlessly facilitate. That's serendipity plus.

Practicing on different sustainable fabrics will give you a sense of which ones fit your project and audiences, and which ones complement your event tailoring the best.



**MADE TO MEASURE**  
**A TRULY TAILOR-MADE**  
**PERSONALISED EXPERIENCE**



# MADE TO MEASURE

**Personalisation has never been more important. The general attitude towards personalisation is changing, and it's the driving force that's enabling the most successful organisations to unlock the value of their audiences on a massive scale. Personalization is a force multiplier – and business necessity – now considered a basic expectation.**

Today's event attendees and delegates are influenced by personalisation in all aspects of their personal and professional lives. They expect organisations to deliver personalised interactions tailored to their needs and preferences. If you look at the media, live and real-time media is no longer the norm. All media can be paused at any time and consumed anywhere. When it comes to events, participants expect to experience everything in a way and at a time that fits their profile. Events begin long before registration opens and continue long after the doors close. We are seeing that visitors and exhibitors are registering later than ever before. This new phenomenon allows you, as the organiser, to stay on top of things, to be able to adapt the content by identifying where needed, and even to differentiate between different audiences. You can change (small) parts of your event by allowing attendees to indicate their interest in specific topics or speakers. Right up until the last minute.





**While the event is running, you can still co-create with your stakeholders – visitors, exhibitors, but also the venue and all the communities involved. For example, by creating more interactive and flexible sessions.**

You can even create complete *tailored experiences* where every element of the event can be customised with different blocks of content. From adaptable stages to adjustable seating, customisable digital displays and versatile catering setups – all designed to deliver unique and engaging experiences.

In addition to personalisation leading to a more agile operating model, the fact that events are no longer linear means that different attendees can have different experiences at the same event, at the same time. As an organiser, you can therefore offer *made to measure experiences*, even using the same blocks of content, but delivering them at different moments in different setups.

Tailoring offers and outreach to the right person, at the right time, with the right experiences, is how personalisation delivers results. To achieve this, you need to get a thorough understanding of your delegates' needs, preferences and objectives.





**ZIPPER STYLE**  
**THE BEST OF**  
**EVERYTHING**  
**ALL ZIPPED**  
**TOGETHER**

# ZIPPER STYLE

**Look out into the world. See how other industries or other formats could enrich your event, discover the pieces that radiate value. Then put the best pieces together. Think of it as building a flexible puzzle: each piece has a specific place and must fit perfectly. And each one adds value to the overall experience.**

Increasingly, we are seeing events that temporarily incorporate each other. Often this is around the theme, such as five-title exhibitions that combine niches and focus on a broader development. For example, tech events combining segments such as IoT, cybersecurity, AI, big data, cloud computing and blockchain. Different topics, different events, all zipped up together in a single garment.

But we can go even further than that. Global issues such as sustainability, energy transition, inclusivity and so on can also be appropriate for medical associations, both as organisations and as topics for breakout sessions at an event. After all, every industry faces the same issues. So why not look at human resources at a conference on elderly care? Or examine how emerging technologies such as AI are changing the way we work.





**Combine B2B with B2C, plan surprising guest speakers or create full side events where the connection to your own theme can generate some important new insights.**

These factors can vary to suit the moment. Zip one segment to your event, then zip in something else at the next edition. Or zip in a second element. You can add to and subtract from the core without affecting the heart of your objective. Think of a pair of jeans where you shorten the legs. Both physically and online, you can hook and unhook subjects. You might eventually even come up with a new stand-alone title, based on a different model altogether.

One thing is for sure: a good zipper event will seamlessly weave together innovation, established components and new themes into a smart whole.





**PREMIUM PATCHWORK**  
**A MASTERPIECE**  
**OF CRAFTSMANSHIP**



# PREMIUM PATCHWORK

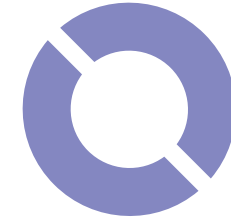
**Uncover the serious art of quilting. Combining different experiences, usually within a shared framework, makes the big picture more colourful. This will firmly hammer your style credentials home.**

While zipper events usually have changing ideas related to content and form, with a quilt everything is fairly fixed. But that doesn't necessarily make for boring or predictable events.

On the contrary, a set mix of smaller parts can together form a single pattern that celebrates the multiple layers and diversity of your event.

A place where attendees enjoy new experiences at every level along with a repetition that gives your event a certain rhythm. Each stakeholder can then opt for the groove of their choice.





**By merging target groups and blending formats in a fusion of ages, session types, networking moments and times of rest, everything can be sewed into a fixed pattern.**

Combining substantive sessions with musical performances or sporting activities, wellness, networking moments, matchmaking sessions and unconference initiatives – memories last longer when feelings and reason are interchangeably addressed.

As an organiser you determine the patterns and are the master-tailor who brings shapes, colours, styles and materials together. While a quilt may not be seamless, the transitions are handmade and everything is doubly connected with an overall pattern. Surrounded by one overall frame.

What kind of patchwork quilt is your event?

And how wide or narrow do you make the common framework?





**HOMWEAR & SNEAKERS**  
**THAT OH-SO**  
**COMFORTABLE FEELING**

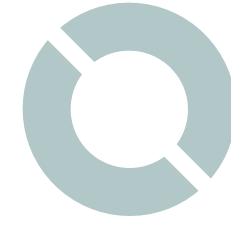
# HOMWEAR & SNEAKERS

True to the motto 'dress for the job – and the life – you want', today is all about self-expression. Feeling good about yourself and choosing a style that reflects your personality is the name of the game. And remember, it's easier to take in information, connect and actively participate when you're feeling comfortable and just plain good.

It's remarkable how quickly the days of wearing a suit and tie to a conference seem to have disappeared. For new audiences and new generations, personal style has become more important than conforming to the norm.

Feeling comfortable and looking your best is increasingly influential. We know from experience that people who feel good take in more, which can only add value to an event. With this in mind, focusing on the wellbeing of participants and adding wellness elements to your event can pay off big time.





**There are a growing number of initiatives designed to bring that comfortable *at home* feeling to your event and improve the overall delegate experience. These include time and space for wellbeing, healthy food choices and active breaks.**

Sensory stimulation is high on the agenda. Use light, sounds and smells. Use outdoor spaces and nature. Set up matchmaking sessions while enjoying a walk. Offer wellness corners and quiet zones in different areas of your event setup. Add sound therapy in those spaces to escape the hustle and bustle of the exhibition floor. Include moments for everyone, not just delegates of exhibitors, to relax and recharge. For example, think of ways to ensure your speakers start a session rested, worry-free and focused.

Healthy food is another important pillar. Offer light and nutritious options that will boost energy rather than cause a slump. Consider fresh fruit, vegetables, salad bars and healthy smoothies on the menu, or even an entirely plant-based selection.

Active breaks such as short walks, stretching sessions and even group fitness classes are also increasingly on the menu. These time-outs help people stay physically active while reducing mental fatigue and improving concentration. They also provide an opportunity for networking and informal conversations outside the traditional meeting environment.





**VINTAGE ALLURE**  
**INNOVATION THROUGH**  
**RETRO INSPIRATION**

# VINTAGE ALLURE

**Vintage and retro trends are making a remarkable comeback, reviving the timeless charm of classics and blending it with the dynamic flair of contemporary styles. It is now a cultural force, able to appeal to multi-generational audiences by blending styles that complement each other. Stay in style, be on trend.**

We know that you already regularly take stock of what needs to be updated or changed about your event and format. The world is changing and you are in step with it.

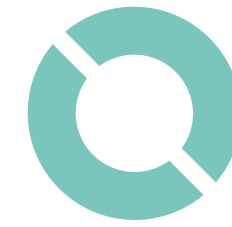
New generations, techniques, and materials are transforming *old school* meetings into immersive experiences that take participants on the journey you have created for and with them.

In itself that's all perfectly fine, of course, but just like in the fashion world styles and choices often come back around. There's a good chance that half of your delegates will have lived through the 80s and 90s, while the other half will see it as trendy vintage. So be careful not to change things too drastically, as the old ways can quickly become trendy again.

Whether you call it vintage, classic, old-fashioned or historic, take a good look at your format and stick with what works.







**While we may no longer all be willing to obediently attend large plenary sessions with that famous speaker, this is no reason to plan only small sessions. Nor do these small sessions need to maintain the speaker/audience format.**

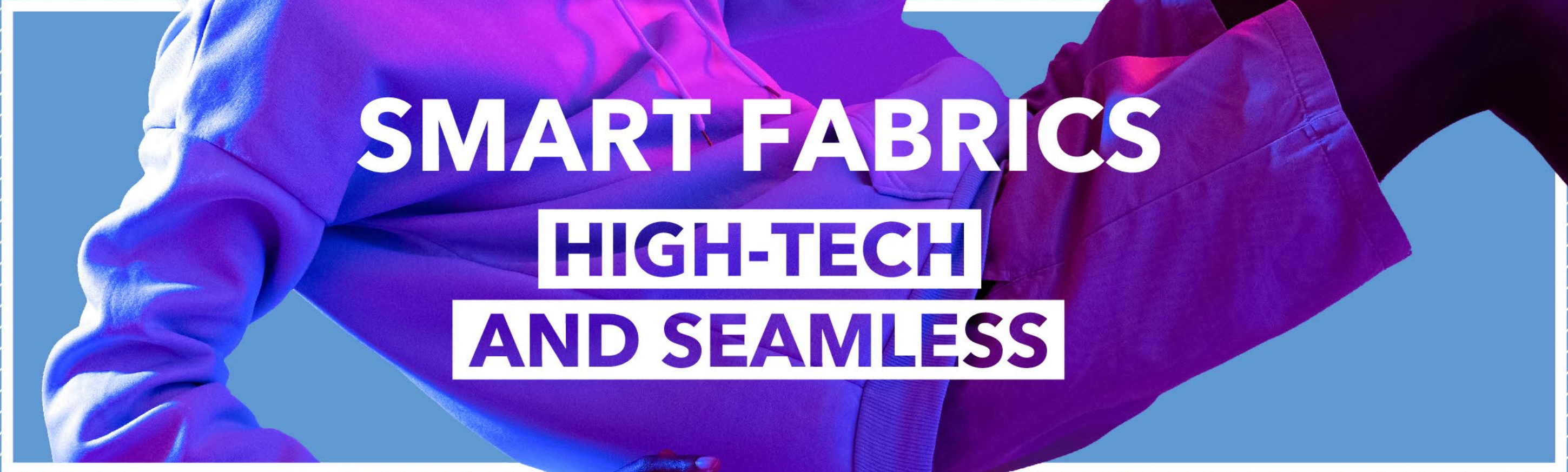
Collaborate with rising stars or, say, start with a pre-crowdsourced question and let participants work together to come up with a solution. Again, the golden rule is to strike the right balance between old and new – you can still easily plan that offline Q&A session with big industry names.

Think of your event as a company with a multi-generational workforce: a mix of ages and styles moving forward together. Step out of your bubble and try on each other's clothes.

Going vintage can bring an inspiring look and feel to networking: tell a story with classics from your industry, show how things have evolved and look forward to a bright future together. Reuse settings and speakers in a *where are they now* segment. Or give your networking lounges and meeting places a classic feel by serving popular dishes from your association's founding year or spinning vinyl in a wellness setting.

Vintage is back, and the turntable now works in harmony with the cloud.





# SMART FABRICS

**HIGH-TECH**

**AND SEAMLESS**



# SMART FABRICS

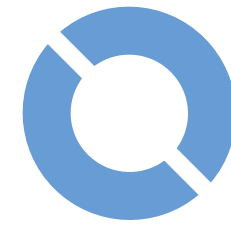
**While smooth connections are expected before, during and after an event, they are increasingly taken for granted. Add to this the fact that attendees – and sometimes exhibitors – are making last-minute decisions about whether to attend your event, the beginning of the customer journey becomes is even more critical. So what tools can best support you?**

Looking for sleek, wrinkle-free event essentials? AI tools can make all the difference. By predicting visitor behaviour and preferences, you can create a tailored offer and target your marketing more effectively. Think content generation, streamlined logistics planning and seamless personalisation of the visitor experience.

Other areas where you can make an impact include registration pages and scripts for your social media posts. The attendee experience will be personalised by AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants. And last but not least, they will provide you with valuable insights on how to increase your impact and personal experience as an organiser. All in compliance with international privacy rules and regulations.

This seamless journey continues at the venue itself, where the digital infrastructure needs to be dressed for the occasion.





**Data reception cannot suddenly be different when entering a venue. Attendees expect the same 5G coverage at an event as they enjoyed on the way there. Or at least the level of WiFi service they're used to, even if thousands of others are logged in.**

Similarly, consider the use of digital twins when designing the setting and reviewing your logistical planning. By visualising the design of your event in a virtual environment, you will be able to identify potential bottlenecks and come up with options that you may not have thought of at the outset.

### **Ready-to-wearable**

The seamless journey you envision for your event can also be made easier through the use of wearables, such as a smart badge. Picture room access or personalised recommendations based on delegates' interests and preferences. By monitoring the badge data in real time, you, as the organiser, can also gain a number of other useful insights. For example, they can make changes if a session is about to get too full or advise on overcrowded catering points.

Remember that the key to success is to keep things simple, so we invite you to think carefully about the design of the badge. What do you want to be instantly accessible? Do you want to use the badge for access only or also for payment? Do you want to add a game element or an extra layer of information embedded in the QR code or RFID chip?





**ACCESSORISE!**  
**MUCH MORE THAN JUST**  
**NICE-TO-HAVES**

# ACCESSORISE!

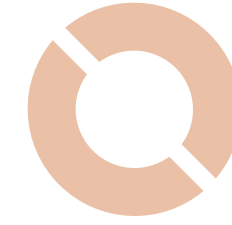
**Make no mistake, they're more than just nice-to-haves. Yes, you can ask ChatGPT to create a marketing plan and format for a 300-person event with five breakout sessions, lots of networking opportunities and a party night. But is that enough? Of course not.**

We've already mentioned the importance of the essential features that go beyond the content of your programme and can add that extra something to make your event really stand out.

These components – which include, among other things, catering, event technology and wellness offerings – have moved from being peripheral to being an integral part of your event. All of the many 'accessories' you may wish to add to your event style should contribute to the overall experience at all times.

As such, they can be the deciding factor that makes the difference between a standard meeting and a transformational one. One where all the stars align to tell a cohesive story. Where form meets content, physical meets online, within and beyond the confines of your event.





**So which accessories do you want to include in your event? And how do you make them work within your content?**

Setting an overall theme is one way to go and can act as a framework to operate within your event concept and ensure everything fits together. For example, an event theme could be about green and nature, or hyper-localisation, or adding a touch of extravagance, or simply keeping things simple.

What suits your stakeholders? And how far could you stretch the theme?

Don't forget to consider the potential beyond your event dates. You could organise meetings for exhibitors or delegates in the form of a quick catch-up or roadshow, share your filmed content online and discuss new insights or developments, run monthly Q&As on your portal or launch blogs. You could even take the addition of accessories literally and open a webshop with branded items for the particular edition of your event.

We could even say that good accessories make an event. After all, your outfit is never complete without buttons, shoes, an umbrella or a bag: what will your overall look be like?





**ONE SIZE FITS ALL?  
OFF-THE-SHELF  
OR BESPOKE?**



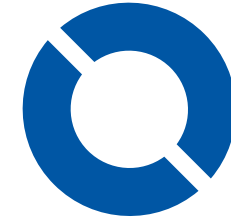
# ONE SIZE FITS ALL?

**Are you wondering how to rethink your event format and where, if at all, to add that personal touch? In the age of hyper-personalisation, you want each attendee to have a unique experience. So... which approach do you take: off-the-shelf or bespoke? Is your audience happy with a standard format, or do they crave a tailored experience?**

How you cut the cloth depends on what your stakeholders want. Firstly, exhibitors have a specific perspective, mainly financial. They also expect everything to be taken care of. So for many, standard stand packages that allow personalisation by layering size and decor are a godsend. It offers customisation within a clear framework. From a sustainability perspective, choosing modular stand packages, designed to be reused, means less transport and building materials use. Exhibitors often welcome the added value and clarity this brings. Finally, knowing the costs up front makes it easier to target and calculate ROI.

Because everyone starts at different points, personalising delegates' experiences can be challenging. Repeat delegates at a familiar event in their home country are likely to be more relaxed than first-time delegates in unknown territory. Yet, both are part of the first session of your immersive, sensory event. Anticipate all the different starting points by creating entrances, setups and flows. Include relaxation points for all to allow for a calm start to the journey.





**AI is a key influencer here. It affects the way you keep your event personalised and relevant throughout the year.**

The better you can analyse your data and sources, the better you can anticipate and respond to individual needs. Consider the sources you already have and the data you specifically request or collect. Use feedback from your last event and traffic from your online channels. Create bespoke schedules, session and exhibitor endorsements, curated one-to-one meetings and alternative session notifications. Don't forget to let delegates know how they can relax. Suggest a half-hour walk outside where delegates can meet, share views on topics and enjoy some downtime.

Venues are increasingly a blank canvas. They have the technology and space to bring ideas to life, within your audience's needs and your budget. Are you still considering a one-size-fits-all approach? For out-of-the-box ideas, tap into the creative thinking of your venue team. Turn a bus or boat ride from A to B into an ideal elevator pitch or mini-breakout meeting. Consider citywide events – from small to large gatherings – that engage the local urban environment in planning, content and scale. Take advantage of the many opportunities to create micro-events within the larger framework to make people feel at home – whether you want to keep things quiet or busy. It all becomes part of a carefully crafted, immersive experience. And when people feel good, the overall ROI of their event attendance is significantly higher.



A close-up photograph of a person wearing a blue checkered suit jacket over a white shirt. Their hands are clasped in front of them. The image is set against a background of diagonal white lines on a grey field. A white-bordered box is overlaid on the left side, containing the text.

**CONCLUSION**  
**TAILORING TIPS FOR**  
**THE PERFECT FIT**

# TAILORING TIPS FOR THE PERFECT FIT

**As an organiser, your priority, and challenge, is to create experiences that inspire, inform and motivate your delegates to actively participate, connect and fully interact.**

The process starts with looking at each component of your event and taking inspiration beyond its boundaries. Remember that tailoring is not a one-size-fits-all type of craft. It's about creating a unique design that fits your event like a glove. How do you do this? By asking whether your format or concept is still relevant in a rapidly changing world. By mixing and matching the right insights – combining current trends, leveraging data, technology and creative thinking. By shaping the style of your event down to the last detail. By weaving stories into the fabric of your programme.

With this food for thought, we invite you to consider new ways to create a memorable, impactful experience that lingers long after the event is over. This in turn will help to energise your audience, increase engagement, improve satisfaction and deliver a value-added event for all.

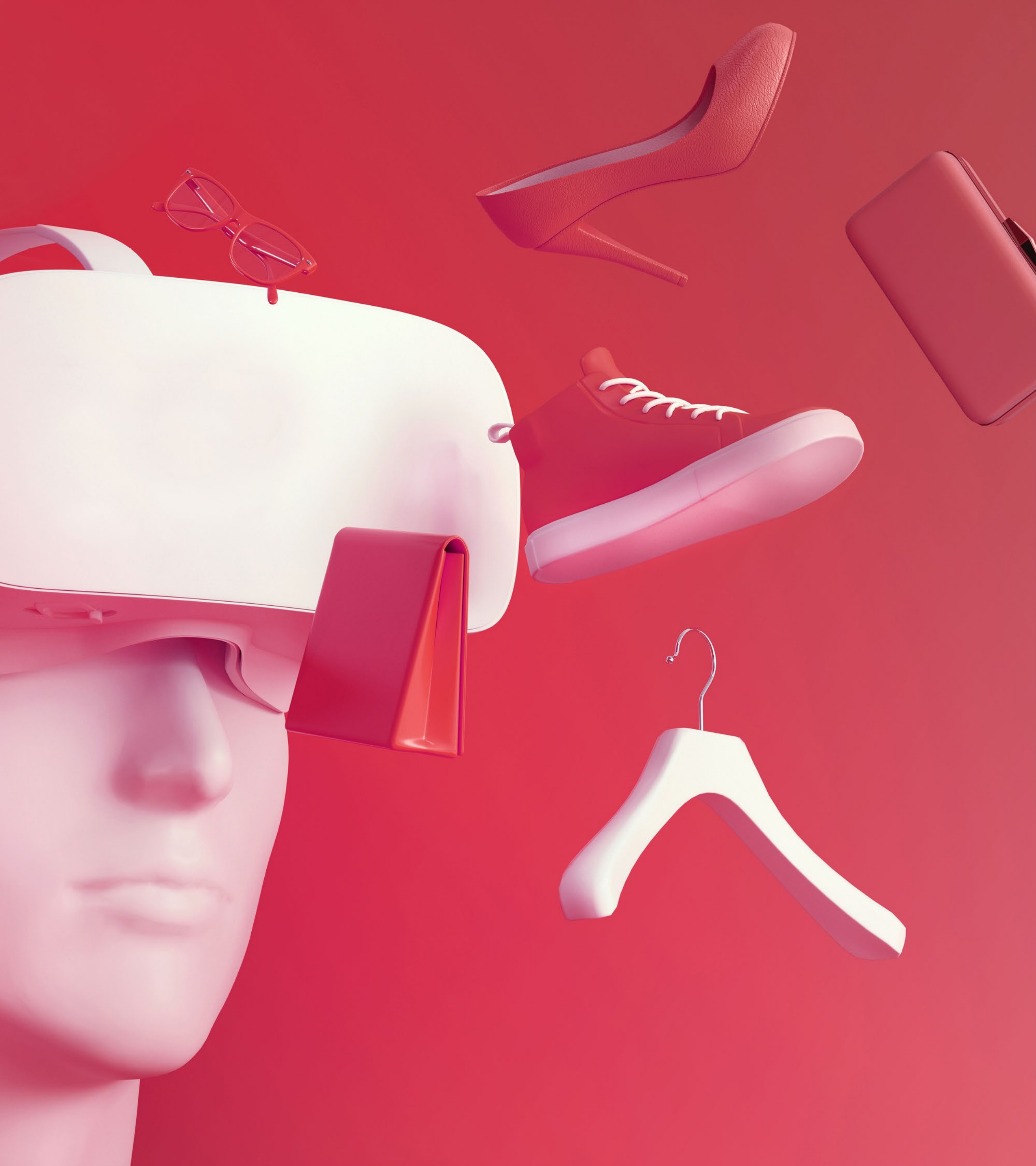
From personal experience to valuable transformation, success and impact.

Now that we've gone through the steps of tailoring techniques for your event, there's one more thing to consider: the perfect fit. It's the icing on the cake, the final piece of style.

So here's a final hint before we close: no matter how much technology we use, the craftsmanship of the organiser shines through in every event. The fabric you choose sets the tone for your final product – it is like choosing the canvas for a masterpiece. Colours are matched, different materials are mixed. Each piece of fabric is sewn and assembled into the right size, shape and style. But keep in mind that it remains an interplay between the creator and the person who is to experience it.

**Let's weave, mix and match...  
and together find the perfect fit.**





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# HOUSE OF EVENTS HOME OF YOUR INDUSTRY

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