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Start with Purpose

The purpose of your gathering is more than an inspiring concept.
It is a tool, a filter that helps you determine all the details,
grand and trivial.

— Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering*

As a Jewish kid growing up in Toronto, it was not obvious I would one day work closely with a church group to create a successful film festival in Calgary, but working on that event for several years was how I came to learn about the importance of *purpose*.

I was on the board of directors for a nonprofit organization in the process of establishing an environmental and human rights-themed film festival. While waiting for a taxi in a trendy Calgary coffee shop, I happened to pick up a community newsletter calling for volunteers to help plan the inaugural Marda Loop Justice Film Festival. Was this an opportunity to combine efforts? After sending an email, I was invited to attend a meeting in a church with the six founding organizers, a few of them in their senior years.

They laid out their plans to share great documentaries with the community, and I asked them why. They seemed surprised by the question, so I explained, “You could design other types of events. Why a film festival?” I was met with stunned silence.

It felt rude to ask directly, but I wanted to know if they were trying to leverage the film festival as a way to introduce their religion to new audiences. I was considering whether to recommend that my board colleagues should pool their resources with this church group. I couldn’t figure out if this was going to be a

small community church group gathered around a screen with a potluck or a major opportunity to reach a wide mainstream audience and encourage them to act on important causes. Inspiring change through film would be the defining purpose my colleagues and I would rally around.

What Is Purpose?

Your purpose defines *why* your event and organization exist, beyond financial gain. Establishing an overarching and inspiring purpose ensures that the well-being of people and the planet is not consigned to programs or add-ons that fluctuate as you react to competing priorities and irregular levels of funding. A clear and effective purpose drives every aspect of event strategy and execution, including staffing, training, budgeting, format, logistics, supply contracts, partnerships, and communications.

This should not be confused with your vision, which describes *where* you want to arrive, or a future state. Purpose and vision are not always referred to by name even when they exist. They are often buried in long-winded mission statements. I strongly encourage making your purpose, vision, mission and values statements separate, distinct, and concise.

An effective mission statement communicates *what* you will do to arrive at your vision, including specific initiatives or tactics. Your mission can change several times as your event grows and evolves, but your purpose should remain constant.

Your values represent *how* you want to behave in order to achieve your mission.

In combination, your purpose, vision, mission, and values should articulate the positive impact your event aims to make for society.

Does My Event Need a Purpose?

What if it's just a concert or music festival? Can't it just be about the music? That status quo thinking is on its way out. There are risks to using outdated thinking as an event organizer and plenty of lost opportunities to have a positive impact in the local community.

Taylor Swift's record-breaking Eras Tour, for example, was a smashing success by every measure, but it's the local economic impact she had that may be

most profoundly remembered and admired years after her catchy songs fade into the background.

Swift donated to food banks in every stop she made on the tour and employed various local businesses for her and the touring crew's daily requirements. She also awarded unprecedented bonus payments totaling over US\$55 million to her entire US touring crew, including \$100,000 to each of the fifty truck drivers involved in transporting the tour's production equipment.¹ The local impacts she left behind were positively life-changing for many people struggling during a difficult time of inflation and pandemic recovery.

After two devastating years of COVID-19 and social isolation, we are all hungry to reconnect with community, celebrate traditions, learn, and be entertained, but let's not default to old conventional patterns. Instead, let's reimagine the way we gather to be more purposeful, inclusive, and waste- and emissions-free. Doing this with a specific formula in mind will unleash the full potential of events to reach larger audiences, enrich our lives, and empower people to live their true values and meaningfully contribute to a better world.

Events Matter

If you're in the events business and you made it through the COVID-19 pandemic, I congratulate you for your resilience. Not only was it a financially devastating period for event planners, service providers, suppliers, and venues, it was also physically, mentally, and emotionally traumatic for almost everyone.

Many events professionals who saw their revenue disappear turned to other industries and side hustles to get by. Some of them are never coming back. For those of you that made it through and are still here in the events industry, you need to know that *your work matters*. In fact, events matter much more than we previously realized.

Recent research out of the UK shows that loneliness and social isolation are directly linked to increased inflammation, which can lead to dementia, depression, and cardiovascular disease, which is the leading cause of death globally.² Conversely, in-person, face-to-face meetings stimulate the brain, help form strong bonds, and offer surprising health benefits, according to additional research published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*.³ Events can serve as valuable community reconnection points with positive health outcomes.

We've all likely attended various kinds of events for personal and professional reasons. Every sector has them, therefore events affect each of us and every segment of the economy.

Events connect us to our community and to each other. They stimulate our senses through music that makes us move, spectacular sights that spark imagination, and scents reminiscent of days long past. We mark major milestones, express cultural traditions, meet new people, learn new skills, and communicate inspiring ideas through events. We also celebrate the triumph of the human spirit through competitions and sporting events.

As an event organizer, you are the conductor of an orchestra, full of moving parts that come together to entertain and delight. The environment you create can serve as an escape from everyday pressures and challenges, and it can make space for connection, reflection, and epiphanies.

However, too often, events take the form of wasteful, resource-intensive gatherings that glorify excess and exclusivity. Municipal landfills serve as graveyards to past events with single-use signs, swag, water bottles, coffee cups, and food waste compressed under decades of unnecessary junk—all of it slowly releasing harmful methane gases into the atmosphere. Events themselves generate significant greenhouse gas emissions, especially when you factor in all the travel required and energy expended. The plastic waste from those events has very likely traveled thousands of miles, and it will eventually leach its way into the food we eat and water we drink.

Instead of being beneficial, events are threatening our lives.

The purpose of business is not to produce profits. The purpose of business is to produce profitable solutions to the problems of people and planet.

— Colin Mayer, Future of the Corporation
Program Lead at the British Academy

Your Purpose Should Lead to Change

In my experience, it's always better to be a driver of change than be a victim of it.

With your next event, you have an important opportunity right in front of you. You can join a movement with momentum and help determine the future of the events industry. The benefits for doing so are many.

Moving beyond status quo thinking requires an honest assessment of your organization's core pur-

pose, which should be a clear, concise, and aspirational statement about why you exist and what impact you want to have.

According to Priya Parker, author of *The Art of Gathering* (and the inspiration for the title of this book), people often begin event planning with a *format* in mind. They might say, “I like TED Talks, so let’s plan a series of eighteen-minute speaker presentations.” But this is a misguided approach that will result in a less meaningful event.⁴ To make your event matter, you need a clear understanding of how it connects to an overall purpose and helps all involved arrive at a solution to a problem.

Purpose Is Not CSR or ESG

Purpose is often conflated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) or programs designed to invest in local communities, increase transparency, and/or address stakeholder concerns. CSR is often used as a way to secure a social license to operate. Purpose can also be confused with environment, social, and governance (ESG) practices, which aim to quantify non-financial risks for business decisions and investors. Both CSR and ESG are inward-looking and competitive; neither inherently seeks to make a positive impact in the world.

Purpose is a more holistic framework built right into an organization’s mandate, which is inherently outward focused, collaborative, and solutions oriented. When deeply integrated, that purpose will guide your organizational culture, strategy, relationships, and event operations. When difficult business decisions are faced, those most aligned with your purpose will be prioritized—even when it’s the more expensive option. Your purpose becomes your *do it anyway* factor because it’s a commitment to stakeholders and the foundation upon which everything else is built.

Purpose Determines Partnerships

When I met those aspiring organizers of the Marda Loop Justice Film Festival at their church and asked about their intentions, after their stunned silence, they eventually summarized it this way: “We want to welcome people into our church and share great documentaries.” Then I asked the *elephant-in-the-room* questions: “Why your church? Are you trying to introduce the audience to your religion?” To my relief, a number of them responded in unison, “No!”

Table 1.1. Evolution from CSR to Purpose

	Past—CSR Leadership By Example	Forward—Purpose Catalyzing Collective Action	Examples
Intent	Build profile, reputation and differentiation	Accelerate change and mobilize networks, collaborations, and partnerships to build a better world	Energy Futures Lab ⁵ was established as a safe and brave space for unlikely suspects from industry, government, academia, NGOs, and Indigenous communities to collectively chart Canada’s energy transition.
Focus	Our organizational strategy	Our shared human challenges	GLOBE Forum ⁶ completely sold out in 2022 for the first time in 30 years by creating a platform for participants to co-create the road map for Canada to achieve net zero in the next decade.
Goals	Be less bad—subjective and difficult to measure	Be restorative—reversing, reusing, improving in a way that is clearly measured and communicated	Calgary Folk Fest ⁷ went from incrementally increasing recycling to decreasing its total waste volume and diverting 95% of it within 5 yrs.
Relationships	Stakeholders are “recipients”	Stakeholders are active partners in a social movement, recognizing partnerships may require support and capacity building along the way	GLOBE nurtures a national youth network, which plays an active role in the design and execution of the event, and subsidizes youth leaders to attend and actively participate.
Champion	Manager or advisor	Everyone from the CEO to the contract workers	Calgary Folk Fest trains every volunteer on its sustainability milestones in the onboarding process, regardless of role.
Benefits	Unclear	Tangible—new investment opportunities, attraction of top talent, clients, partners, long-term viability, and reduction in risks, costs	Heritage Park ⁸ opened the new Innovation Crossing to engage visitors on energy transition, unlocking new partnerships, capital, and transformed the tourist attraction into a dynamic events space.

Source: Rotchild, Leor (based on work from Junxion Strategy).

“Then why is it so important to you to hold this film festival and do it in your church?” I asked. “Well, the church is free,” they responded, and I had to agree—a free venue was a pretty good reason to select it. The Riverside Church in Calgary is also a beautiful wheelchair-accessible space with top-notch audio-visual capabilities.

Jenny Krabbe, the de facto leader and the strongest personality of the church group, finally articulated what I was waiting to hear: “We are trying to use film as a way to inform people about important moral issues in the world.” That was more consistent with why I was there. I asked why one more time and was rewarded with: “So they will get involved and take some action.” Bingo! There it was, the purpose of the event: to inspire people to get involved and take action.

Once our common purpose was clearly established, we were able to move from *why* to *how*. We agreed some documentaries could be depressing, and the challenges depicted might seem too daunting and hopeless to motivate audiences into action. I proposed highlighting heroic people and organizations already tackling big challenges. We planned to focus on the issues themselves and invite speakers who would inform audiences about constructive ways to get involved and further the causes explored in the documentaries.

We also established a nongovernmental organization (NGO) village (now known as Peace Fair), an area devoted to people learning more, uncovering meaningful volunteer opportunities, and supporting charitable causes through donations or purchases of baked goods and holiday gifts.

Together, we grew the Marda Loop Justice Film Festival (now known as the Calgary Justice Film Festival) into an annual 4,500-person event showcasing dozens of social justice and environmental documentaries and causes. The festival’s success led to a year-round quarterly film screening series as well as expansion into multiple venues and satellite locations—in Red Deer, Canmore, and Fort MacLeod in Alberta, and Sarnia, Ontario.⁹

Lead with Purpose to Land Your Dream Partner

Dream big for a moment and think of the ideal client you’d like to work with. Your purpose and theirs will ultimately determine whether you fit as partners. For me, as an ambitious new entrepreneur running a sustainable events business based in Calgary, it was a no-brainer who my dream client was: The Calgary Stampede, also known as “The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth.”

Each year, the Stampede welcomes a million visitors through its gates in the very heart of a city that is itself populated by just a little over a million people. It encompasses numerous attractions including a parade, a rodeo, art and agricultural exhibitions, an amusement park, Indigenous cultural celebrations and competitive pow-wow, a food and music festival, and a fireworks display—for ten days straight.

I was often asked how I landed the Calgary Stampede as a major client in my first year of business—and how I maintained them as a loyal and trusting partner each year after that. The answer is simple: I led with purpose. I sought to demonstrate how my company’s purpose, which was to “make our communities more livable and sustainable for everyone, one event at a time,” could help advance the Stampede’s purpose “to preserve and celebrate our western heritage, cultures, and community spirit.”¹⁰

In our first meeting, I suggested they reframe the negative stereotype of “Cowboys VS. Indians” with the more accurate narrative of rural agriculturalists and Indigenous Peoples as “the greatest environmental caretakers the world has ever known,” and I connected each of our environmental service offerings back to their purpose around preservation and community. I expressed my genuine belief that doing this could help heal our community, one event at a time.

I was asked to deliver that exact same presentation four times to different teams at the Calgary Stampede and was told by one of the people who saw it each time that environmentalists like me don’t usually speak to them that way. “Usually, people want to point out what’s wrong with us and how they can fix us, but your approach is all about helping us become who we’re striving to be.”

I understood what he was getting at. Focusing on the Stampede’s *purpose* helped me secure their business, but reframing the Stampede was a key motivator for the top talent we were able to attract.

Putting in long hours for a corporation is hard. Putting in long hours for a cause is easy.

— Elon Musk

Recruit Top Talent

A strong and inspiring purpose helps to attract top talent, motivated volunteers, and a generally more engaged staff, which results in decreased turnover and burnout and increased innovation stemming from a greater sense of buy-in. Team

members are more motivated to bring forward new ideas to increase efficiency and maximize impact when they have a very clear idea of the overall purpose.

We were very fortunate at DIG because we were able to attract top collaborators: operations managers coming out of an extremely well-paid oil industry; event managers with large-scale, high-profile events experience; and municipal waste and recycling specialists willing to sort through trash and compost for hours on end. DIG certainly did not lure these professionals with competitive compensation; in fact, some of them volunteered their valuable time. One benefit of the job was access to free music festival tickets and other events, but many of our most talented and experienced team members never took advantage of such perks. They showed up and worked hard because they felt they were part of a community of like-minded people, passionate about the environment, effecting positive change *“one event at a time.”*

Purpose, Vision, Mission, and Values

Your purpose statement is a sentence or two defining *why* your organization and event exist. It’s not about financial gain. It’s not a tagline, program, or marketing campaign, and it’s not the same as your vision, mission, and values.

The well-known Burning Man event serves as a good example to highlight the difference between these four elements. Since its inception in 1986, Burning Man has inspired a global cultural movement and loyal community. Each year more than seventy thousand people gather in the Nevada desert for the annual nine-day festival that includes art installations, spontaneous performances, wild costumes, and celebrations. Burning Man is organized by a nonprofit called the Burning Man Project. Its reason for existing—its *purpose*—is to *“produce positive spiritual change in the world.”*¹¹

Unfortunately, Burning Man’s purpose is buried in its long and wordy mission statement, and they would do well to separate and highlight it. Similarly, their vision is embedded in the same statement. An effective vision statement describes a future state or destination which is *where* they want to arrive. For Burning Man, it seems that destination is an active and creative society connected to the environment: *“A society that connects each individual to his or her*

Social purpose is a “North Star”—
an ongoing quest, forever pursued.

— Social Purpose Institute, United Way

creative powers, to participation in community to the larger realm of civic life, and to the even greater world of nature that exists beyond society.”

Your *mission* is *what* you will do to arrive at your vision. There could be several missions that show up as specific initiatives or tactics within your event operations, strategies, or communications describing what you will or won't do for a specific audience.

Simplicity of TED

TED has produced one of the most impressive global event brands in history. Originally focused on technology, entertainment, and design—hence the name, TED—it is now responsible for countless viral TED Talk videos that advance its more general purpose to “*foster the spread of great ideas.*” TED aims to “provide a platform for thinkers, visionaries, and teachers, so that people around the globe can gain a better understanding of the biggest issues faced by the world, and feed a desire to help create a better future.” Most TED admirers know this purpose through the popular tagline that summarizes it: *Ideas Worth Spreading.*

So succinct and consistent is TED's purpose, that, through a radical decentralization of their business model, TEDx events have proliferated around the world, making the event series fundamentally more inclusive—while adding rocket fuel to the spread of ideas. While TED's tagline may come across more like a mission statement, it's important to note their mission has actually changed multiple times, but it was all in service of their purpose to spread ideas as widely and rapidly as possible.

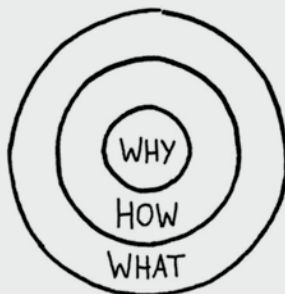
As an organizer of one of those TEDx events in Calgary, I cornered TED staff at a TED Active event, which gathered TEDx organizers from around the world, and I pressed them about how to get our TEDxYYC Talks picked up by TED.com (YYC is the airport code for Calgary). I was told that sound quality mattered a lot and visual quality, too, to some degree, but it was really all about the quality of the ideas and their potential to change people's minds or behaviors.

Burning Man’s mission is to “*nurture and protect the community created by Burning Man and its culture.*” What they developed in connection with this mission was the Ten Principles as guidelines for the worldwide network of “Burners” who connect with each other to foster Burning Man’s values through local community events and other year-round activities. All these efforts are geared toward the ultimate purpose of producing positive spiritual change.

That clear purpose and consistent approach enabled us to sell out our TEDxYYC events to 1,600 people each year, create an innovative learning environment for people to connect with one another, and recruit world-class speakers—more than 30 of which were featured on TED.com and streamed over 3.5 million times.

It was through local TEDx events like ours that unknown speakers such as Brené Brown and Simon Sinek catapulted to stardom. Theirs are some of the most widely watched talks in TED’s history. Had TED not innovated their business model to make it more accessible, the world may never have known about Brené Brown or Simon Sinek, who are household names in some circles today.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Sinek’s TEDx Talk, the most viral of all time, introduced mainstream audiences to the topic of purpose. He introduced us to his *Golden Circle* and explained that, too often, people lead with what they *do*, while people are more attracted to *why you do it*.



Why = The Purpose

What is your cause? What do you believe?

APPLE: We believe in challenging the status quo and doing things differently

How = The Process

Specific actions taken to realize the Why.

APPLE: Our products are beautifully designed and easy to use

What = The Result

What do you do? The result of Why. Proof.

APPLE: We make computers

FIGURE 1.1. The Golden Circle. Credit: Simon Sinek.

An organization's values will shape *how* you want to act to achieve your vision. They describe the ethos and culture you are developing for your team, your supply chain, and your audience.

Burning Man's values are captured in its Ten Principles:

- Radical Inclusion
- Gifting
- Decommodification
- Radical Self-reliance
- Radical Self-expression
- Communal Effort
- Civic Responsibility
- Leaving No Trace
- Participation
- Immediacy

These values serve as a guide to shape the actions of the Burning Man community as well as the organizers, who should nurture these behaviors by example. These are the attributes they believe will lead them to be successful in their mission to achieve their vision in service of their ultimate purpose to produce positive spiritual change in the world.

How to Craft Your Purpose Statement

A great purpose statement is first **found**, then **lived**, and, finally, **communicated**. It may be tempting to jump right to the communication of your new purpose statement, but that carries the risk of coming across as inauthentic—a form of *purpose-washing*—if it is misaligned with a clear demonstration of that purpose in action.

Look Back

The right place to begin, regardless of event type or scale, is a *look back*. Ask yourself: *Why am I doing this?* Is there a particular problem you want to solve? What passion or motivation draws you to this event? I encourage you to re-

reflect on your initial intention, especially if you are someone who has been planning events—or this particular event—for many years.

We often begin a major endeavor with one type of experience in mind, but through the steep learning curve of practicality, time constraints,

Gathering is a form of leadership,
it's not a form of logistics.

— Priya Parker

and financial reality, we too often come out the other end with something feasible but fairly conventional compared with the original vision. This is a natural part of any process, so it's not necessarily negative, but if we completely lose sight of that initial Big Idea, we run the risk of spending our precious time and resources only to deliver an event for a limited number of people who will find your event unremarkable, uninspiring, and forgettable.

A look back may involve revisiting your origin story. When I was invited to advise on Heritage Park's Innovation Crossing project in Calgary, for example, there was a lot of confusion about what they were trying to achieve with their beautiful new space. When I came on board, it was a static, museum-like experience attempting to tell a convoluted narrative about how innovative the oil and gas industry is, but there was nothing at all innovative about the experience.

It was helpful to take a few steps back and work with the leadership team at Heritage Park on why they had pursued this project in the first place. It brought us right back to the origins of Heritage Park, which was established in 1963 to "*preserve the history of the West and educate guests of all ages*" about the transitions that took place over a long span of time.

Look Out

After looking back, the next step in developing a project's purpose is a *look out*. It requires a full assessment of the key risks and challenges in the world most relevant to your business and the future of your industry. How do you determine which issues are most relevant? Consider your values and build out from there. Why values, as opposed to your mission or strategy? Because missions are fluid and strategies can fail. Values tend to be long-lasting. Ask yourself and other team members:

- What do we all care deeply about?
- How can we amplify that to make the world better?
- What concerns or frustrations do we have about our industry?
- How can we change what frustrates us most?
- What are the best practices in our industry?
- Who are the key influencers?
- Can we collaborate or establish partnerships with those influencers?

Whether you're at the early stages of establishing your event's purpose or reviewing an existing one, I invite you to think big and draw inspiration from the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹² They will prompt you to reflect on the world's most urgent to-do list and connect your event to a bigger movement for change. The SDGs were unanimously adopted by all 193 UN member nations in 2015. There are 169 targets summarized under the 17 broad goals, which you can see in figure 1.2. As you review these Sustainable Development Goals, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which SDGs could we contribute to if we were wildly successful?
- Which SDGs could we credibly align with our purpose and values?
- How would we measure performance progress in these areas?
- What partnerships make sense for us to establish to address those SDGs?



FIGURE 1.2. The United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Credit: United Nations.

Look to Stakeholders

Speaking to your stakeholders is another important part of the process to determine what's most material to them. In the process, you may discover in what way you are uniquely qualified to make a significant positive impact.

On the Heritage Park project, for example, we spoke to a number of stakeholders. We all agreed the most urgent and relevant topic to address was energy *transition*. We arrived at the idea that transition stories throughout history could be the perfect backdrop to engage visitors on what navigating this current

energy transition might require of us. This process led to interesting conversations and new relationships with key influencers in, as well as outside, the energy industry, which Heritage Park had no previous exposure to.

Look Within

The final step in the process of finding your event's purpose is to **look within**. This should include an honest assessment of your strengths, culture, assets, brand, reputation, and track record. Talk to your staff, suppliers, clients, sponsors, partners, and guests, and ask them:

- What makes you proud to be working with our organization?
- How would you describe our culture?
- What are we really good at?
- What makes our events memorable?
- Where are the areas we can improve?
- What are we uniquely positioned to contribute?
- What existing programs can we leverage?
- What might we need to stop doing?
- How can we incentivize the behavior we want and the change that we need?
- What new opportunities might open up as a result of pursuing a grand ambition?

When Heritage Park leaned into the idea of using historical artifacts, anecdotes, and interactive displays to engage visitors on the challenges and opportunities surrounding energy transition, they knew it could be a divisive topic for some. After all, they are situated in Calgary, the very heart of Canada's fossil fuel industry, and many of Heritage Park's largest donors were active or retired senior oil and gas leaders.

As Priya Parker notes in her book, having the right kind of controversy provides a level of tension that can make gatherings more energetic, more lively, and ultimately more memorable. That tension, when channeled effectively, can lead to greater understanding and breakthrough solutions.

Heritage Park's strong reputation as an educator positioned it perfectly to offer a safe space for disparate groups to explore ideas, have important

conversations, break bread, and find solutions to common challenges. This realization influenced the design of the space. Instead of having bulky, immovable artifacts taking up a lot of the available space, a flexible design was developed to accommodate flowing crowds as well as convert into an event space for gatherings and meal service.

By understanding the key differences between purpose, vision, mission, and values; integrating the *look back, look out, and look within* approach; and collecting feedback from your various stakeholders, you will have all the tools you need to define a compelling purpose for your event or organization.

Once you find your purpose, conduct a simple self-assessment of it through the free Social Purpose Assessment tool available from the Social Purpose Institute at the United Way.¹³ See the Tools and Resources section of this book for the link.

Going through this process and finding your organizational purpose will help elevate your event from yet another gathering to something truly inspirational, important, and good for the world.

Build a Better Future

The events business is a deadline-focused, high-pressure profession with myriad small and large variables that can determine the difference between wild success and economic ruin. It helps to be reminded that your event can be so much more than just another conference, tourist attraction, or client gig. Events help us connect with and expand our community. They can expose us to new perspectives, cultures, and ideas. They can be personal or professional opportunities to learn, grow, and explore.

After many years of working with hundreds of major music festivals, sporting events, and conferences, I was surprised by the low number of purpose-driven event organizers and their notoriously poor articulation of a compelling purpose.

I was fortunate that an early experience with the Justice Film Festival helped me see how important it was to establish a purpose as a way to establish trust, find space to collaborate, and build for the future. A new generation of organizers now runs the Marda Loop Justice Film Festival. They changed the name to the Calgary Justice Film Festival, but the purpose remains: *“To influence positive*

behavioral change by sharing environmental and social justice films that inspire and engage neighbors to become global citizens.”

I met my wife at the Calgary Justice Film Fest. We were both drawn to the event based on our common values and sense of purpose, and our virtual baby shower was attended by some of the people who were part of that purpose-driven community we helped to nurture.

If the events industry is going to exist in the future, it will not be because we have a human right to live music, networking, or sporting events. It will be because, for the short time that these events take place, we can connect to something bigger than ourselves, something meaningful, and catch a glimpse of the future we need and want to live in and the community we want to be part of.