

How

# TECHNOLOGY



is transforming  
meetings  
and events.

When you think of meeting or event technology, the first thing that comes to mind may be apps or registration software. While those are integral to a modern event, it's time to think more broadly about how technology can help you to accomplish your goals and objectives for your meetings and events programs. First, it's helpful to understand the difference between event tech and event management tech, which we believe should be your focus in 2023.

Event technology is all about the attendee experience. Think: managing and engaging your attendees or delegates around the actual event, including on-site activities such as check-in, badges, event apps and real-time surveys. Event management technology, on the other hand, is about the planner experience. This tech is what drives the backend of your events, from the ideation to the meeting request process all the way through to the actual sourcing, building, execution and reconciliation of your event. Though it's less front-facing and less glamorous, event management tech is the workhorse of your meetings and your secret weapon to leveling up your programs. From managing financials to sourcing, contracting, suppliers and more, event management technology is the builder that ties every piece of your meeting or event together.

It's also the area where BCD Meetings & Events is heavily focused. Recognizing and celebrating the fact that we're in a people-based business, our goals prioritize providing expert resources to clients to support them throughout their planning processes. That's why our event management technology solutions equip our teams with the tools they need to manage and standardize performance and data, as well as to deliver excellent service. We see significant opportunities to improve the way the backend of meeting planning works for our clients to maximize efficiency and to level up the attendee experience, all through leveraging technology. BCD M&E's suite of solutions brings people and technology together to help evolve the event or meeting planning experience.

HERE'S HOW



## BCD M&E'S PROPRIETARY SOLUTIONS

### Third-Party Extensibility

A lot of great third-party players exist in the event management technology space, but BCD M&E has its own suite of proprietary solutions to fill gaps, to augment the collective knowledge of our teams, and to enable processes where a third-party tool may not quite fit a need, or the needs of a client aren't ready or robust enough for a third-party tool. Our tools integrate with, and are sometimes built on top of, third-party solutions so we can help clients make the most out of investments they've already made.







## Venue Search


Coming out of the Covid-19 period, the profile of meetings is changing, as are the locations and types of venues where these events are taking place. Being able to leverage data to make predictions around sourcing can greatly help clients make appropriate decisions about how they want to channel their spend, and the locations in which they want to channel it into. BCD M&E's proprietary sourcing technology is designed to make people as good as they can be. One way in which we do this is by layering in predictive analytics on top of our volumes of historic sourcing data, making it possible for a team member – even a new hire – to be empowered with all the knowledge and insights they need about great locations and venues to source for a particular client or event.

## Life Sciences

While many meeting categories have internal compliance requirements, the life sciences category is unique in that it must be carefully managed to adhere to external governmental industry compliance. Operational teams have very different operating procedures for managing healthcare professionals, speakers and general delegates of life sciences meetings compared to other categories of meetings.

Our goal is to deliver a highly adaptable and secure digital experience for life science professionals. By using a flexible development model, we can provide a true molecule to market approach supporting our clients throughout their product lifecycle. We accomplish this by supplementing industry leading third-party software with our proprietary digital products.

Our best-in-class solutions also drive efficiencies for our operational teams to deliver excellence in service while managing the complexity of life science industry rules and regulations. We ensure our products drive compliant behavior while providing meaningful insights to program data. For example, say you're inviting a healthcare professional (HCP) to an event. Is their contract status up-to-date? Does this HCP meet eligibility criteria to attend this event? Does the HCP's past interactions and payments affect their eligibility to participate in a program? These are just a few examples of how BCD M&E provides risk mitigation through compliance driven controls embedded in our products.





## DATA INSIGHTS

We all know the importance of data. You can view it from a historical perspective, to tell the story of what happened, but you can also harness it to look into the future and project what your needs are going forward. The challenge for meeting planners lies in collecting the right data, ensuring data quality to maximize its value and getting into the right hands.

### Data Quality

If you have good data, you can view not only what's happening now, but what's going to be happening in the future. The challenge with traditional data collection is that a large percentage is typically derived from manual data entry, which means it will naturally have errors – from lack of completeness to simple inaccuracies. It's nearly impossible for third-party platforms to address this because they're often so customized to a particular client and it's difficult to build in measures to manage quality across the board.

BCD M&E's data solutions have a built-in quality-control engine which can address these errors with speed and accuracy. Think of it as a machine in which the flow of data comes in, going first through a cleaning place that manages the quality of the data. With every client, we review critical data points, including those high-traffic points that power their reports, and write specific logic addressing those. Then it's reviewed at a regular cadence to allow us to address potential errors on a weekly or daily basis. This way, we ensure reports are telling an accurate story.





## Data and Democratization

Data democratization refers to the process of making data more accessible and available to a wider range of people within an organization or society. The goal of data democratization is to break down barriers to accessing and utilizing data, so that everyone, regardless of their technical skill or job function, can use data to inform their decision-making processes.

Any meeting or event involves collecting many data points related to your attendees, spend, savings, suppliers, compliance and more. This data can often be siloed in various third-party systems, and not widely available to a larger set of stakeholders and decision makers within an organization. BCD M&E's proprietary solution breaks down these silos and provides data and aggregate visualizations to a wider group, fostering a more data-driven culture that supports desired outcomes, collaboration and better decision making.

## Small and Wide Data

We've all heard and know the importance of big data – i.e., large amounts of complex data sets – and we often focus on this to provide better reporting and insights into a particular vertical or industry as a whole. However, small and wide data (or the small data approach) can be equally/as beneficial. This is data collected from operational teams that enables us to provide insights and reporting on how a particular process or efficiency can be improved, which directly impacts performance – and is typically gleaned from an individual, more manageable data set. Ingesting this small data and joining it together with other pockets of data (such as time tracking or purchasing) grants the ability for additional insight that can augment the data story. Even when it comes to attendee experience data, this comes into play: Everyone is capturing it, yet not many are turning it into an actual story by producing insight around high-level interactions.





## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND BUSINESS AUTOMATION

Looking ahead to the modern and next frontier of event management, the term we use to describe technologies now powering formerly manual tasks is M.A.R. The acronym stands for machine learning, artificial intelligence, and robotic process automation – three technologies that BCD M&E is using to propel its tools and clients forward. These are not new technologies by any means, but we have a large initiative to incorporate these into our DNA. The meeting and events industry is heavily driven by processes and data, and we can harness these technologies to ensure we are providing our clients greater insights and ensuring our most valuable resources – our employees – are able to focus on the most strategic parts of their jobs.

### Robotic Process Automation

Also known as RPA, **robotic process automation** is the most basic form of emulating human behavior, with machine learning and artificial intelligence ranking higher in complexity. RPA can mimic a human through keystrokes and mouse movement.

One way we're actively using RPA today is to move and process data in multiple systems. Most meetings require data to live in multiple systems: some third party, some proprietary and some internal to the client. We use robotics to take data from the core business system and move or replicate it into various systems that are required. This brings efficiency to a process by saving operational teams from having to do the manual moving or re-keying while reducing the opportunity for error.

Equally important, RPA enables teams to offload daily manual and repetitive steps and focus on the strategic parts of their jobs instead, leading to greater employee engagement and satisfaction as they use their minds for broader things beyond data manipulation.



## Machine Learning

While RPA is great at playing back instructions from a human, machine learning, a subfield of AI, allows for a machine to imitate intelligent human behavior. In an industry that's packed full of data, machine learning enables us to better predict the future to help structure how we build and shape meetings. With robust historical and current data sets, we're able to harness this technology to build models and algorithms to provide future insights. For a real-world example, consider Netflix recommending new shows based on shows you've previously watched and rated highly. In the meetings industry, one application for machine learning is resource modeling: Using historic data to identify and build future resource requirements and teams, ahead of time, for program expansion or new client engagements.

## Artificial Intelligence

With meetings exceeding pre-pandemic levels, the volume of invoices is also trending upward. Organizations often use RPA in the finance department to take invoices into their system, but you can also layer in **artificial intelligence** (AI) to intelligently process electronic or scanned invoices and extract its data into a structured format, making financial reconciliation much easier. For instance, AI can read line items (such as bedroom cost or food and beverage) and split them into data points within your own system.

AI is especially helpful within life sciences, where AI can pull information from images of receipts and make sure those are aligning with compliance regulations for reporting. The best part: AI "learns" along the way and gets better over time at the task.

What's next for AI: You've probably heard about ChatGPT, which is built on top of OpenAI's family of large language models. The impact of ChatGPT has the potential to be revolutionary. In the events industry, ChatGPT is poised to transform the conventional chatbot, allowing for more natural conversation and fewer pre-determined replies. This innovation will prove particularly useful for massive events and conferences, where tens of thousands of people might have unique questions that cannot be answered with stock replies. With AI, delegates will be able to interact with the chatbot as if they were speaking with a meeting planner over the phone without the need for extensive manpower.

**Understanding how to leverage both event management technology in addition to on-site event tech is crucial. Enhancing how technology is maximized on the backend to harness data and improve processes supports business growth and arms planners and stakeholders with knowledge to make better, more informed decisions. In a service-based business, equipping teams with the tools to work smartly is fundamental to delivering better solutions.**



Visit **BCDME.COM** to learn about our technology strategy.