

EXPERIENCE INTELLIGENCE

BY GPJ

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Consumers are seeking out more meaningful IRL experiences that are digital-lite and seamlessly connected to their personal lives.



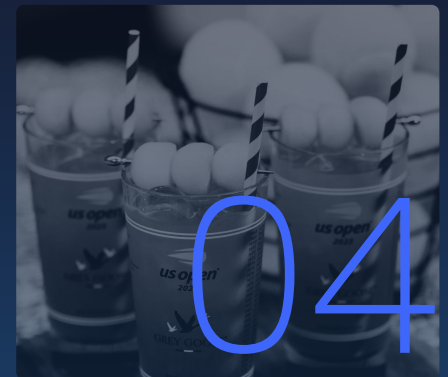
Leave your phone at home and disconnect to connect



Gen Z is saying goodbye to stranger danger



Pet-friendly experiences are the cat's pajamas



Experiences are blurring the lines between online and IRL



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experience marketing

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Leave your phone at home and **disconnect to connect**

Desire is growing for screen-free experiences that make us feel more present.

South Australia has marked one year since [banning phones](#) in public schools; mobile phones are now effectively banned in public schools across Australia. These policies align with a broader, voluntary movement where people are increasingly seeking screen-free experiences. From [digital detox hangouts](#) and [offline clubs](#) to [phone-free concerts](#) and screen-free [restaurants](#), more people are opting to disconnect. This trend is supported by a growing industry focused on intentional attention, with self-help books on [focus](#), academic departments dedicated to [attention studies](#) and experimental schools exploring [radical attention](#).

What it Means

Concerns around technology have shifted from fears of data theft to worries about tech diminishing our ability to genuinely connect and be present. In response, some are taking drastic steps, like turning smartphones into “dumb phones” using [physical app locks](#), buying [nostalgic flip phones](#), or storing devices in signal-blocking [Faraday cases](#).

Key Takeaway

The brand moment built for Instagram may need counterbalancing with moments meant to facilitate more tangible connections. From activations to large-scale events, brands should experiment with screen-free zones or voluntary lockboxes—and see what happens when being present becomes a draw.



Illustration: Sarah Grillo/Axios



Gen Z is saying goodbye to **stranger danger**

Gen Z is ditching the dating apps and seeking chance, IRL connections.

Remote workers, digital nomads, and Gen Z transplants to [big cities](#) are joining [clubs](#) and using apps to find community. Powered by AI and algorithms based on personality tests or user preferences, apps like [Timeleft](#) gives users the chance to meet five strangers over dinner. Others allow users to book [breakfasts](#), [lunches](#), or other local [activities](#) with people they may never meet otherwise. Explicitly not for dating or networking, many of these apps do not require the cumbersome maintenance of profiles, DMing, or swiping—eliminating the work needed to facilitate face-to-face encounters.

What it Means

The app [Geneva](#) calls itself “the online place to find your offline people,” with activities and clubs that provide communal [third places](#) outside home or work. For digital natives, who have never known a screen-free reality, there is novelty in unvetted, chance connections that are not siloed to social media or virtual communities who may never meet IRL.

Key Takeaway

Nvidia GTC recently offered attendees “Dinner with Strangers” reservations at nearby restaurants, which filled up quickly. Such success shows that standard networking can feel cringe as Gen Z and beyond seek out the unique, serendipitous, and informal to cultivate connections beyond their professional identities.





Pet-friendly experiences are the **cat's pajamas**

Animal-inclusive experiences are rising in popularity to meet the growing demands of pet parents.

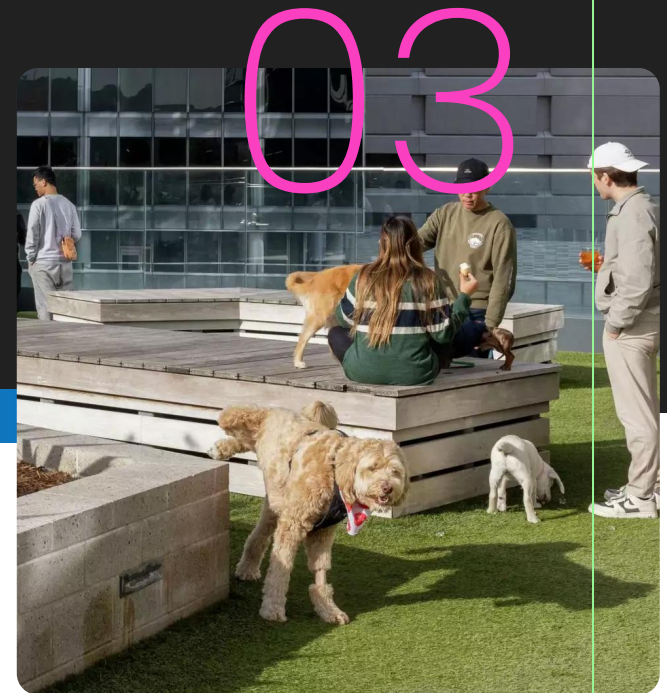
Australia has one of the [highest pet ownership](#) rates in the world; in [cities like San Francisco](#) more people own pets than have children. Brands are looking to tap into this new demographic of customers by increasing their pet-friendly offerings to accommodate man's best friend. Whether it's an airline offering [pet in cabin flights](#) or "[white paw experiences](#)" for its canine customers, to popular brands like [Lyft introducing new initiatives](#) that cater to Fido, to [dog-friendly theme parks](#) and [restaurant weeks](#)—everyone wants a slice of the estimated [\\$259 million annual budget](#) of pet parents.

What it Means

In a world where hyper-personalisation is the expectation, and audiences are becoming more selective about the experiences that demand their engagement—increasing accessibility for our furry friends and finding ways to incorporate them into the experience could be a major factor in determining where someone spends their time and money.

Key Takeaway

Choosing locations with pet-friendly accommodations, introducing pet-focused yappy hours, and hosting moments like puppy adoption drives can enhance experiences for animal-loving attendees, differentiate your experience from the rest of the pack, and more effectively tap into a lucrative demographic of consumers.



Santiago Mejia / The Chronicle



Experiences are blurring the lines between **online and IRL**

Driven by digital natives, experiences are evolving beyond the confines of a single place or point in time.

Events are no longer confined to physical locations; instead, they're being amplified by digital platforms and social media to engage wider audiences. At the US Open, for instance, the [viral popularity](#) of the signature Honey Deuce cocktail on TikTok led to [a surge in sales](#), pulling at-home spectators into the event's energy. Grey Goose took this further by [partnering with restaurants in New York City and Chicago](#) to offer the cocktail on their menus, even introducing a canned version that could be delivered to homes, allowing fans to engage with the event in real time from anywhere.

What it Means

As Gen Z and Gen Alpha come of age, they're changing the experiential landscape. Events are becoming multidimensional, transcending geographic boundaries and creating ongoing, interactive experiences. Fans can now feel like participants rather than just observers, whether through live-streamed content, viral social media trends, or in this case, enjoying the same cocktail as those in the stadium.

Key Takeaway

Virality online is increasingly fueling engagement at in-person events, creating event extensions that build brand awareness and loyalty. Brands should respond by crafting experiences that blur the lines between virtual and real-world participation to amplify reach and create lasting emotional connections.

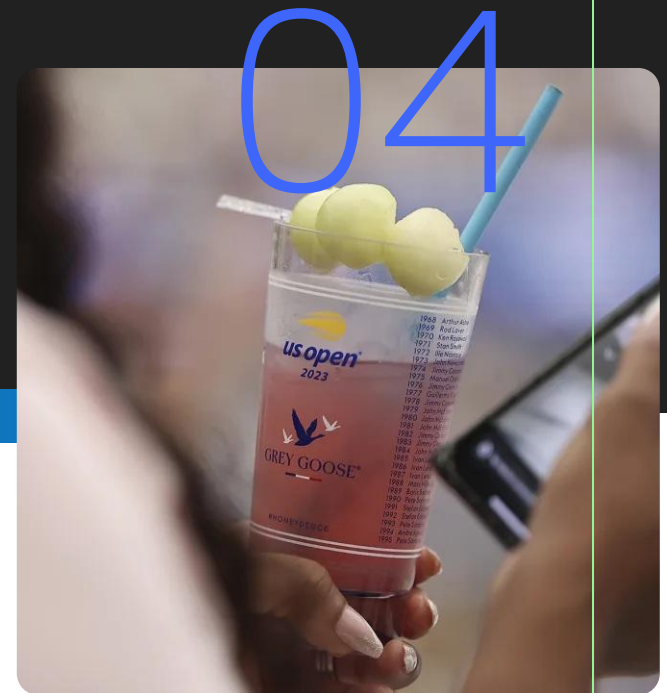


Image: Dustin Satloff/USTA/AP



OUT-THERE EXPERIENCES

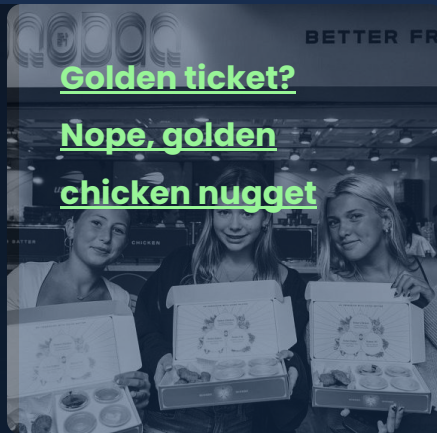
People, brands and marketers continue to push the boundaries of physical and digital experiences, with new and creative executions popping up across the globe.

Direct donor
engagements took
the form of Kintsugi
workshops



Hagar International awarded silver APAC Effie for "Unbroken" campaign hoping to bring awareness to efforts required for the reintegration of modern slavery survivors into society.

Golden ticket?
Nope, golden
chicken nugget



Coqodaq brought a whole new level of luxury and exclusivity to the U.S. Open with their caviar covered nuggets.

Fake cult US
bakery pop up
dupes cookie
lovers



Sydneysiders duped by \$17.50 cookie pop-up 'impersonating' cult US brand.

KFC kicked off
fashion week



KFC named APAC Effie finalised for Kentucky Fried Couture campaign, a fashion show featuring colourful branded threads.