BEST PRACTICES · XR AT EVENTS

How to Use XR at Events: Best Practices from Planning to Follow-Up

Extended reality (XR) can bring an entire facility, process or equipment portfolio into an exhibition space. For equipment exhibitors, this offers a way to show more than individual products: visitors can explore how equipment fits into a process, understand its surrounding environment and discuss applications that would be difficult to demonstrate physically. Sartorius's experience with HakoBio illustrates how a compact, guided mixed-reality presentation can support these conversations across trade shows, customer events and showrooms.



THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The most important principle is relevance.

An immersive experience should not compete with the purpose of the event. It should help visitors understand something useful and give them a reason to continue the conversation. Achieving that requires attention to the entire journey, from defining the experience before the event to following up afterwards.

FROM PLANNING TO FOLLOW-UP

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Start with the conversation you want to create

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BEFORE THE EVENT

1 Start with the Conversation You Want to Create

DEFINE THE OBJECTIVE AND AUDIENCE

Begin with the commercial or educational purpose, rather than the technology.

Is the experience intended to introduce a broad portfolio, explain a process, demonstrate spatial relationships or open a discussion about a customer's facility?



Sartorius initially adopted mixed reality to address a practical limitation: its portfolio was too extensive to display in a small showroom or exhibition booth. A virtual facility provided a way to place equipment within relevant workflows and accommodate visitors with different interests. The same experience could then be used in different event formats.

This does not mean every visitor should see everything. A broad portfolio needs a selective presentation. Prepare a small number of routes through the content, each connected to a recognisable audience need. The objective is to make the next conversation easier, not to deliver an exhaustive tour.

DESIGN A STORY, NOT A TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION

The guide's narrative is central to the experience.

Operating the application becomes relatively straightforward with practice; the more important skill is bringing visitors into a story.

BUILD THAT STORY AROUND THREE QUESTIONS

What is the visitor looking at?

Why does it matter to their work?

What would be useful to discuss next?

Prepare a concise core experience with optional branches. Deliberately limit the content rather than showing every room.

PLAN THE VISITOR JOURNEY AND OPERATING CONDITIONS

01 Give XR a clear place in the booth: where visitors discover it, where they receive a briefing, where the experience takes place and where the conversation continues afterwards.

02 Allow room for people, not just virtual content. Visitors tend to walk around a virtual model rather than through it, so its apparent footprint does not represent the full space required.

03 Test the complete setup before departure, including content access, shared sessions and any external display.

BEFORE DOORS OPEN

2 Prepare the Team and Rehearse the Journey

TRAIN FOR FACILITATION AS WELL AS OPERATION

Every person supporting the experience should try it themselves.

Run a complete walkthrough and practical staff preparation. There is an important distinction between knowing how to launch the application and knowing how to guide an engaging presentation.

A REHEARSAL SHOULD COVER THE FULL VISITOR JOURNEY

01	02	03	04	05
Inviting someone to participate.	Explaining what will happen.	Helping them feel comfortable.	Delivering a relevant, concise story.	Ending the experience and introducing the next conversation.

Clarify responsibilities, particularly for shared tours. Someone must guide the experience, while the wider team remains ready to welcome waiting visitors and continue discussions afterwards.

ESTABLISH A COMFORTABLE, DEPENDABLE ENVIRONMENT

Before opening, run the experience under actual booth conditions.

Confirm that the content is available, the demonstration space is clear and the team knows how to respond if the experience is interrupted. Put a consistent cleaning routine in place as well as a daily readiness check.

Treat hygiene and visitor comfort as visible parts of the service. A calm explanation and an orderly setup help make an unfamiliar activity approachable. Positive audience feedback does not remove the need for precautions: Consider hygiene and motion sickness (with XR only very few people experience motion sickness) as concerns before deployment, even though we have seen little hesitation among participants.



DURING THE EVENT

3 Make Participation Easy and Personal

INVITE VISITORS WITH A REASON TO PARTICIPATE

Lead with what visitors will learn, rather than the fact that a headset is available.

An invitation to explore how equipment fits into a manufacturing suite gives a clearer purpose than simply offering a “VR demo.”

The first sessions deserve particular attention. Initial uncertainty typically eases quickly once people begin participating and others see their reactions. Many times visitors bring colleagues back to the booth or they arrive on a colleague’s recommendation. Visible participation and word of mouth can therefore help the experience gain momentum.

BRIEF FIRST, THEN TAILOR THE EXPERIENCE

Before starting, explain what visitors will see, approximately how long it will take and that they can stop at any time.

Ask one simple question about their interests, then use the answer to select the most relevant content. A process specialist, a facility designer and someone new to the industry may draw different value from the same model. One might be interested in process understanding, surrounding equipment whereas others in spatial relationships.

Keep interaction requirements proportionate to the audience. For an unfamiliar user, looking and listening may be enough.

STAY ENGAGED THROUGHOUT

The facilitator should connect the virtual content to the visitor's questions, rather than deliver an uninterrupted script.

Invite observations, adjust the level of detail and recognise when the experience has served its purpose.

Avoid presenting illustrative content as more authoritative than it is. A portfolio demonstration should therefore remain clearly distinct from validated process training or engineering review.



4

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Reset and Connect

A consistent reset protects the quality of the next session.

Clean shared equipment, return the application to its starting point and check readiness between visitors.

Equally important is the conversational transition. Instead of ending with a generic thank-you, reconnect to the visitor's interest: what did they notice, what would they like to explore further, and which colleague can help?

Typically, 30–40% of participants move into further booth discussions, which illustrates why the handover matters. XR creates the opening; the team must make productive use of it.

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AFTER EACH DAY AND AFTER THE EVENT

Learn Beyond the Demo Count

Record enough information to understand whether the experience served its objective.

We track tours, guest numbers, duration and subsequent substantive discussions. Also log issues and hold a short team debrief.

REVIEW BOTH ACTIVITY AND QUALITY

- Which audiences participated?
- Which stories prompted useful questions?
- Where did visitors hesitate or lose interest?
- How often did the experience lead to a meaningful next step?

Keep participation, engagement and commercial outcomes distinct.

Use these findings to refine the narrative, staffing and follow-up process. Ultimately you can move from adding XR opportunistically to making it a deliberate touchpoint in the customer journey.

That is the broader opportunity: an experience planned not merely to attract attention at an event, but to advance a relevant conversation beyond it.