

Christian 00:00:01 I didn't build events. I build rooms where decisions happen, and that requires to bring the right people in the room.

Matt 00:00:10 To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move in an ever-increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up.

Welcome to the Speed of Culture. Up to date on the Speed of Culture podcast, we are thrilled to welcome Christian Muche, the Global President and cofounder of POSSIBLE. Christian is a visionary business leader operating at the intersection of marketing, technology, and culture, known for building industry-defining platforms like DMEXCO and now POSSIBLE, where the world's top marketers and innovators come together to explore what's next. Christian, so great to see you. Thanks so much for joining today.

Christian 00:00:53 Thanks for having me. It's a pleasure.

Matt 00:00:55 Absolutely. So for those that are listening that, I guess, have been living under a rock and haven't heard of the POSSIBLE conference, which has really taken the industry by storm over the last couple years, it'd be great to maybe hear about the conference and how it came to be.

Christian 00:01:09 So the POSSIBLE idea came up during COVID. I was approached by a lot of people, especially in the US market. I was told that, you know, we would need something new, something fresh because we were all used to those events we are going for a long time and for many years.

And then I saw for myself, okay, what could be the differentiator between, you know, existing events? Because at the same time, I was told, you know, we have enough events in our landscape. And I agreed to this. There are a lot, uh, copycats where you see, uh, same speakers, same contents all the time. So I try to combine my experiences with DMEXCO from previous years, which I created more as a trade show, less than a conference. Conference was added at some stage, but it was designed as a trade show.

I don't believe into this concept anymore. It's not about the size and the pure quantity anymore. It's all about quality. So that all came into my mind immediately. And I looked into the US landscape and said, "We have boutique events—small events with 100, 200 people, intimate gatherings—which makes highly sense. We have mass events. For example, something like CES with tens of thousands of people—"

Matt 00:02:16 Yes. There's South by Southwest.

Christian 00:02:18 Those—

Matt 00:02:18 —are two that come to mind.

Christian 00:02:19 Exactly. South by Southwest, etcetera. But first, they're too big to get the most benefits out of this, as I can see it. And second, these are not marketing events. So I would want to create something for the marketing world as it is today. And it's broader and more complex than ever, as we all know. More parties, more companies belong to this industry. And that was all the base for my vision for POSSIBLE.

And then I started to share it with a bunch of people and they were all in from the beginning on, which was obviously a great commitment and also proof for myself that we might head into the right direction. And POSSIBLE is now a combination of a massive activation space, a very innovative conference format in different ways, which allows one-to-many conversations but also intimate peer-to-peer conversations. We are creating a very targeted meeting opportunities which goes beyond just content and networking, creates business opportunities, and it happens indoor-outdoor.

That was one of the reason why I've chosen Miami Beach as a not-so-common venue for this for our industry. We normally go to New York or to Vegas, where I'm right now. You know? I'm at the Shoptalk event in Vegas right now, and we all know this place very well. So I thought about a more interesting place which allows more creative execution.

Matt 00:03:35 Yeah. You took the words out of me off. There's two questions I was gonna ask you. Obviously, before you even get to the content of the event and you decide to kinda plant your flag, so to speak, you—you need to figure out the venue where it's gonna be and then the time of year.

And just one last point on it being in South Beach is, obviously, Miami has become a—a hotbed for tech, media, and advertising. You see people like Mark Zuckerberg and Sergey Brin and people like that moving down to Miami. And, obviously, the big crypto wave really took off in Miami, and it seems to be a really emerging spot for the advertising industry. So just any other thoughts on how has it been to work with the local municipalities in South Beach, and do you think that it's a place that you're gonna continue to expand the event?

Christian 00:04:19 Yeah. First of all, I believe that everybody will appreciate to be there because of this environment. It's a great spot to be there, maybe arrive a day earlier or maybe stay a day longer, which provides additional benefits. Then as you said, over the time, especially during the pandemic, a lot of executives in the industry—tech industry—moved to Miami as well, to Florida.

Miami itself—it's a great spot, very liberal, open-minded. They host events like Art Basel, massive events across the entire city. So I felt this is the right spot for us. It brings fresh ideas. April—or sometimes being there in April every year—it provides fantastic weather conditions. It's internationally well-connected. So all the pros, all the boxes could be ticked for Miami.

And then I realized that they have a strong local community. I mean, there are a lot of startups based there, which I wasn't completely aware at the very beginning. And a lot of celebrities, talents have their home there or their second home. So these are additional benefits for us to make it happen and to bring the entire community, but also beyond that, to POSSIBLE.

I feel it now, also looking to the fourth year now, that we have seen so much interest from people who are not necessarily working in the core industry of marketing but a bit more connected to marketing in terms of celebrities, talents with their media companies, for example, agencies who are based there. We're lucky to have now more also creative agencies on-site and being involved also on stage. Things like this. And this is because of the environment being in Miami.

Matt 00:05:48 And the second question: obviously, when you're initially planning the event is what time of year to have that. And we talked about these big tentpole events in the industry. You know? And CES is a big gathering spot in January. You obviously have Cannes that happens in June, but I find that when—where this event is placed is sort of perfect in between the other tentpoles. And in the US and—kind of—the industry needed an event during this time of year. Were there other times a year that you were looking at to plan this event? Or did you always know that this is the right spot for you guys?

Christian 00:06:20 No. I mean, at the very beginning, we looked into the entire year, but then we realized immediately that due to the climate conditions, due to the event calendar, there are only a few spots available. And April made absolute sense for us. Ideally, it could be maybe more one or two months earlier than that to be really at the beginning of the year.

But, honestly, a lot of partners and customers told me CES is not so much on their agenda in terms of—yes, we all go there to participate and get a sense of what's happening on the tech side. And there are a lot of gatherings happening for marketeers. Not for marketeers, but for the ad-tech, mar-tech industry more. So therefore, the event makes sense, but it's not as much an event for marketeers to learn, to connect with their peers, to really get the outcome for their daily work, you know, when they go back to the office tomorrow. This is therefore not a competition for us. And therefore, I believe that POSSIBLE became the event for the first quarter. And that means for the rest of the year—when you plan your year, when you plan your budgets well ahead of Cannes—for us, it's a perfect timing.

Matt 00:07:26 Yeah. For sure. So let's talk about the event itself. And you, obviously, as I mentioned during the intro, are also behind DMEXCO, which I spoke at once before, and it's an incredible event as well. Many people try to create kind of franchises like this and fail, and you're now two for two. And just curious, like: what goes into the anatomy of an event like this? What has to be true for it to be something that people are gonna wanna come to year in and year out?

Christian 00:07:53 Let me say in general, also, if it was a—a different timing and a different approach with DMEXCO. I mean, think about it: I've launched DMEXCO in 2008. So it's a long

time ago. Uh—but at the end, what stays is: I didn't build events. I build rooms where decisions happen, and that requires to bring the right people in the room. And therefore, what I've said at the beginning is: it's no longer about the numbers. My goal is not to build the biggest event in the world.

If you look around also outside of our industry, what are the most influential events? Like Davos, for example, the World Economic Forum. It's not the biggest event in the world, but they bring the biggest or the most important people for their agenda: politicians and scientists and all these. So this is what I had in mind from the beginning on. Yes, it has to be meaningful. It has to bring a number of people to make it meaningful, to make it—make it—relevant.

You cannot do this with, let's say, a hundred people in the room. This is great to have peer-to-peer conversations with a very targeted audience. But if you embrace the entire marketing world—which includes media, advertising, tech, culture—then you have to go into the thousands, but not necessarily tens of thousands. So again, the goal is not to end up with 50,000 attendees in two years' time. That would be the wrong approach. Again, it's not pushing for numbers; having the right people in the room. And then you grow automatically. That happened automatically. And this is what we've seen so far in the last three years.

Matt 00:09:17 In terms of the—the—programming and format of the conference itself, where do you kind of get your inspiration from or your ideas to understand how to editorialize the conference so people do get value from that content?

Christian 00:09:30 It is as simple as it sounds, Matt. You have to spend all year round and be with your network and sit down and listen. I spent most of my time when I'm on the road—well, with my team on one hand, to think about execution and creative ideas based on these informations coming from the market. Otherwise, myself and my team, we are spreading out and sit down with our customers, with our network, and listen.

They tell us—we cannot be the expert in every single area and every single topic. Our job is to take the most relevant information, put this together into a framework, and make it understandable, make it visible enough, make it workable enough by choosing the right brands and by choosing the right speakers who are able to provide information nobody heard so far or have seen so far on another stage.

This is our job. And then put it into different formats which our audience is required in terms of: CMOs need to be treated differently than the ad-tech world, for example. We have both, plus agencies, plus consultancies, etcetera, on-site. And you can put them into the same room for a great keynote, for example. But when it comes to follow-up sessions, when it comes to meeting opportunities, when it comes to peer-to-peer conversations, that requires a more custom approach, which is exactly why I'm saying you can grow to a dedicated size, but you still have to be able to work with your audience to make things customized and to create things in some way where—honestly, you can't do this with 80,000 people anymore. You can't. Simply can't. But with a couple thousand, you can still do it.

Matt 00:11:06 And what are some of the things that your audience you believe is gonna be excited to hear about here in 2026? Obviously, AI is a topic du jour, and AI touches everything. But I guess within that, what are some of the areas that you find there to be emerging attention towards?

Christian 00:11:23 I would say, I really hope—and this is our brief to our speakers and everybody on stage—it will be discussed more as an infrastructure than a tech tool. You know? I think this is what we already passed now for some time. Our audience wants to know—marketers want to know—how they can use it, how they can use the outcome of all these things we've done so far with AI in their daily work.

That's important. It's all about Gen Z, creator economy, for sure. These are definitely topics which you can see across all stages. But also the term "creativity"—our goal was to bring so interesting speakers and people on-site who will help us to define creativity and put this into the modern framework. Creativity—we have a sense of understanding what creative could mean. But in today's world, especially with AI involved, creativity gets to another level.

In the same way that for some time now, we talk about creator economy as well. And when you have creators on stage talk about their work and their productions and what kind of content they create, this all involves creativity, right? This is part of the term. So our goal is also to, in a positive way, push a lot on what really creativity means in today's world. Is it a next layer of what we worked on or what understanding was in the last ten, twenty years?

I think that's a great opportunity for us as well to embrace even broader community involving the influencers and the creator economy more than in previous years. And if I think about these brands and companies being involved in personalities, that itself creates so many creative outcomes that the challenge is to channel this in some way, to create this for our audience, because otherwise you will be overwhelmed. But coming back to my previous point: this is our job.

This is where we spend most of our time when we're out there, listen to everybody who's telling us what they believe and how they see the future of marketing. Then we focus on the right things, hopefully, and to make it a surprising outcome for most of the people coming to Miami every year.

Matt 00:13:25 Yeah. I know a big part of your job isn't just pluses on-site, but to make sure that you're continuing to amplify the event year-round through content. And just wondering, like: what your strategy has been to allow you to successfully build the brand through a lot of the content that you're actually able to gather during the event itself?

Christian 00:13:44 That's correct. And building the brand—I mean, for our own, I think I'm interested in your opinion as well whether you believe POSSIBLE is a good name. We thought a lot about that at the very beginning a couple of years ago. And I also do not believe into

themes, you know, when an event comes up with a theme every year—because I personally, when I go to an event, I forgot it already when I'm on-site. And it's replaceable too quickly.

And we believe POSSIBLE is a theme. You know, we came up with that name. It not just provides positivity and optimism, which I think we need a bit more despite all the challenges we have to solve as an industry—no doubt—but let's go out with the belief, you know, we can make things possible, or the impossible possible. And this is exactly what we had in mind. And we believe, you know, this is a theme as well, which can stay forever at the end. You know? We don't need to replace this year by year.

Matt 00:14:34 We'll be right back with the Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors.

Another thing I think POSSIBLE has done a good job at is just really investing in community. I know that you have events year-round where you get sponsors and VIPs, etcetera, together, and you're very active on social media. How has that been a big contributor to continued momentum and success of the event?

Christian 00:14:56 Yeah. So I'm saying more and more that we are not building just an event, it's more a platform. And what does it mean? Yes. Our goal is to be in touch with the industry all year round. That doesn't mean that we have to become a media platform, because there are plenty out there. We don't need another one. But it means that in terms of the outcomes, that this allows us to follow up with our audience more regularly around the year.

And this could end up in some smaller formats around the year. This could end up in also getting feedback, working on projects for next year's event, things like this. This is what we have in mind, also in terms of relationships. Building that kind of trustful relationship is something very special we had in mind from the beginning on. I believe in today's world in general, to be honest, trust is the highest ranked value in today's time. I think everybody appreciates very much if you can trust somebody. Trust what you propose when you deliver it finally.

And this is what we are seeing as a massive benefit. We do a lot with more passion maybe than others, and people see the difference. People see the difference despite all the professional approaches and the framework we are setting up. I mean, we are event experts. But execution is relatively easy. It's more that you add passion, that you add trust, and how to build trust.

This allows you to connect with your audience several times a year with your brand and not just focusing on one event over three days once a year. And this is what we have in mind. And it could include a lot of ideas—you know, launching other events, running smaller events all year round, but most importantly, being in touch and also—and then the circle closes—getting the information you want for the next approach, for the next event approach. And this gives you—always brings you also in a better position to know even better what's happening in the market and how you do need to things to present at the next event.

Matt 00:16:53 And for companies that are on the sell side, like sponsors that come to your event, that wanna break through, that want to stand out and have it be a successful ROI-driven activation—what are some things throughout all your experience in your career that you've seen be consistent with companies who really activate at events the right way?

Christian 00:17:13 I think everybody's far more sensitive on that and focused on that than before. I remember back at the DMEXCO time, we talked about ROIs and some were joining without knowing what the ROI could be. But that was at the very beginning of, you know, when our industry started with these kind of events' activations. In today's time, it's more focused than ever. This is why we are focusing so much on the meeting opportunities, because you should show up as a partner and have your own meetings set up.

You should bring your clients. You should come up with some great activation to target new opportunities. But I totally understand that because of timing, because of resources, sometimes you need some help here. And this is why we launched last year the host-a-meeting program; it's called POSSIBLE Connect. And what we're doing here is we are pre-scheduling and confirming meetings between brand marketers and vendors and solution providers.

So both sides will be in touch, will know about each other. They confirm that they're going to meet on-site, and we are running up to 3,000 meetings this year at POSSIBLE. It will be on the beach in a big pavilion. It's a very nice environment. By the way, not in a windowless trade hall. And this provides, again, a positive energy for completely new relationships you can create. And this is an option. You know, we provide an additional option. And this is how we secure ROI from our end, providing this additional opportunity for our companies and those ones who are activating.

Matt 00:18:37 So you're almost playing a role of, like, matchmaker. Right? You're trying to connect buyer and seller or companies that you think could have some type of potential together. So what goes into something like that?

Christian 00:18:48 Absolutely. It's highly curated. You know exactly who you're reaching out to. You need to double-confirm from both sides. If one side is not keen, then, of course, it won't happen. It's performance-based. Companies only pay if this meeting happens, but we have, I think, more than 95% fulfilling rate. So this is good, very good, I would say. And, again, it's optional. There's no obligation, but more and more companies and partners are taking advantage of this.

Matt 00:19:11 So there's a huge amount of innovation that's happened in just event-tech overall—different types of technologies that make the participant have a better experience at large events like yours. Just curious, in terms of the production events and the experience that you're able to give your attendees: what are some areas that you have your eyes on? Like, are we gonna have robots walking the hallways in the years ahead? And what are some other things that you're interested in from a production standpoint?

Christian 00:19:38 Yes.

Christian 00:19:38 Yeah. We started with the idea to invest more than maybe usual events in design, in—in on-site signage, in stage design, and things like this. We wanted to make it different than most of the kind of conferences or event show events like this in the US. Second—yes, I would say—we talk about technology. I think we also have to use technology in a way that—what's proved, what can provide value for marketers and the marketing world as well, we should use.

And, of course, it's a lot of AI. It's face recognition. It's matchmaking technology and things like this, what we already do. You've mentioned robots. Yes. I mean, as we look around, you will see them as a demo at other events as well. I can absolutely imagine that this is part of a standard event very shortly. Things like this, for sure. But we're coming together. And please don't forget, we're coming together as a community, as an industry in person, because this provides still some value.

And I believe today's events—especially newly designed events like us—our job is to combine all the tech opportunities with the human touch. And I still see—and this won't change; this hasn't changed because of the pandemic, and it won't change in the future—that we appreciate in-person conversations and communities coming together from time to time. Yes, people are more selective—especially executives. Top executives are more selective in terms of their time—their time spent and money spent—where to go.

You have to be in that range. They're not going to so many events anymore like ten years ago, which I totally understand. But the benefit [of] being with somebody in the same room—going into a meeting, you know who are you going to meet but you don't know each other yet—this can only happen and create this trustful relationship on-site in an in-person event. And that's the reason why we as an industry—as an event industry—exist even stronger than before. This is what I deeply believe despite all the technology, but this comes on top.

And that makes—not just fun—that hopefully provides a lot of benefits to make our life easier, to prepare a visit for an event, to be on-site and have a good combination of both.

Matt 00:21:53 Yeah. I think relationships are gonna matter even more as we enter this AI age. And I think deciphering what's real and what's not and really leaning into authenticity is gonna have continued importance. So I think that you guys are in a great spot moving forward, and I think people [are] putting more priority on events for that reason.

Christian 00:22:10 And I talked about trust, and I think—call it old-fashioned. I don't believe it's old-style, old-fashioned. I think it's an ongoing thing we humans appreciate. You create a different level of trust if you've met at least once in person. And this is [what it is] all about.

Matt 00:22:25 Yep. So as we wrap up here, we'd love to hear a little bit about your career journey. Obviously, you have a very exciting role and you've been a very successful

entrepreneur. And just wondering: when you look back on your career journey, what are some of the things that you think you've done right along the way—either skillsets you've picked up or areas that you focused on—that set you up to be in a position that you are today?

Christian 00:22:48 Well, looking back, I've worked for AOL and Yahoo long time ago, so I know the corp world.

Matt 00:22:53 I remember them.

Christian 00:22:54 Exactly. Maybe some of the listeners as well. And, you know, I worked in the advertising and sales business for a long time. Then I believed into—that—this industry, at this time, [the] relatively new industry needs a platform. This is why I created DMEXCO. [It] was one of the first of its kind as a big event for such an industry which has no hardware, right, no products to show, but ended up in a trade hall, which was a bit weird to explain to people at this time.

Now it's a common thing. I believe I was always stepping through the door or walking through the door which just opened, you know, not knowing exactly what's behind that. But I could—well, I could see an opportunity there. So what I'm saying is: I never chased opportunities, but I could see something which potentially gives me a chance to develop something new, relatively new, which was my motivation then in the last twenty years.

Building environments where opportunities come to you. In this case, platforms where people appreciate that you provide something with opportunities for them and then they come back to you. And this, of course—every single conversation with partners, with individuals provides new opportunities. This is what I mean. You cannot wait for everything coming to you. You have to step forward and, of course, do also sometimes some risky steps forward. But this is what I did for now for the last twenty, twenty-five years, and I feel very good with that because, obviously, it just turned out that it was the right decision for myself being an entrepreneur, but this would be also—

Matt 00:24:24 —some kind of advice for others. Yeah. I mean, I think part of it is just: you have to be brave. You put yourself out there. Like, POSSIBLE was a big, audacious decision, and there was a ton of events when you came into the fold. And when I first heard of it, I didn't really understand why this event was happening, but now I can't see there being a year in our industry without it. And I think that doesn't happen unless the person behind it has vision. So you have to kind of see it come to life long before it does and then have a level of conviction to dive in and have an understanding of what it could become. And I'm sure there are a lot of times along the journey where maybe you weren't as sure, but you have to obviously persevere over time.

Christian 00:25:04 At the end, your individual talent has to be—I think that's the biggest requirement. You have to count one-on-one in some way together where others won't see that opportunity. And then take the risk, of course. Yes, it should be well-planned. And, of course,

you need supporters and all these things. But at the end, it's, first of all, it's your own decision. And I think that's the beauty in today's world even more. There are so many opportunities, but they're not designed for individuals. So you have to take it, and then you have to make it your own.

Matt 00:25:30 Absolutely. So we always ask our guests as we wrap up the podcast if there's a saying or mantra that has helped kind of encapsulate their career journey. So what comes to mind for you?

Christian 00:25:39 It's a good—it's a tough question. Maybe following up what I've said: "Possibility is not something you wait for; it's something you design." I think that's a mantra I could sign off with. There are plenty out there, but sometimes—and also in my early career—you think, "Okay, it has to be exactly the right fit for me." Right? And you wait for that. I believe that's not the case. It's plenty of them out there. But, of course, how could it be designed already for you—exactly for you? Right? We have seven billion people on Earth.

Matt 00:26:09 You have to shape it somewhat. Right?

Christian 00:26:10 Exactly. You have to shake it up. And sometimes with the help from others—which is not a bad thing at all—you should ask for help if you need or if you feel like this. But I think that's the mantra I think I lived for myself for the last couple of decades.

Matt 00:26:24 Awesome. Well, this has been a fantastic chat, and I'm looking forward to seeing you at the POSSIBLE event next month. And, again, it's one of my favorite times of the year, and thanks to you and the whole team for putting this great event together for the industry.

Christian 00:26:37 Awesome. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed the conversation, Matt, and see you soon then in Miami.

Matt 00:26:41 Absolutely. On behalf of Suzy and Adweek, thanks again to Christian Muche, the Global President and cofounder of POSSIBLE, for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and review the Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Till next time, see you soon. Take care. Bye-bye.

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