

A budding tentpole takes root in Miami Beach



by Alison Weissbrot | *Added 2 hours ago* | [The Information](#)



Possible has all the makings of an annual advertising tentpole in an era of efficiency, but lacks a distinct theme.

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I stepped into the lobby of the famed Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach on Monday afternoon to attend the Possible conference.

Springing up out of seemingly nowhere, the event drew thousands of attendees from across the advertising, marketing, media and ad tech sectors in its second year, who flocked to the shores of South Florida to network, learn and most of all, sell.

The conference gained attention last year for attracting Elon Musk as a keynote speaker, interviewed on stage by Linda Yaccarino just before she took on the role of CEO at X.

The event is also organized by a group of advertising confab veterans and industry power brokers, including Christian Muche, founder of German ad tech conference DMEXCO, once hot amongst U.S. companies in the sector. It's backed by the MMA, an industry trade body that counts marketers including McDonald's, Uber and Mastercard among its members. Its investors include a list of well-known industry kingmakers, such as Michael Kassan and ad tech dealmaker Terry Kawaja.

Most people I spoke with at Possible were also there for the first time and unsure what to expect. The number of logos plastering the floors and hallways and the collection of familiar ad tech cabanas dotting the pool deck suggested a heavy-handed sales focus. Agencies were there in tentative numbers, testing the waters to see if adding Possible to the ever-growing list of industry events is worth their time and investment.

It very well might be, given that brand marketers can attend for free — although, like at most industry conferences, most were in and out for a stage appearance or there to attend the MMA board meeting on Monday, leaving on Tuesday before the bulk of the event kicked off.

An agenda that skewed high-level and mostly sponsored made it clear that the real value of Possible is found not in the dark conference ballroom or the breakout “masterclasses” upstairs, but at the giant rotund lobby bar, where a familiar cast of characters circulates, bumping into old friends and colleagues and making new connections.

Like Cannes and CES — but on a smaller scale and (thankfully for my feet) mostly confined to one hotel — the real action at Possible is at networking dinners and cocktail

parties happening around the periphery. While an explosion of ancillary panels hasn't yet taken over, and Spotify isn't yet bringing Dua Lipa to perform for a crowd of ad execs, networking dinners at Nobu and late night parties at clubs down in South Beach suggest that Possible could soon morph into a similarly extravagant affair.

While there was no Musk this year, Possible did create one newsy moment when Kassar took the stage for a fireside chat with the Forbes CMO Network's Seth Matlins, where he addressed his ongoing legal spat with UTA and made it clear he wasn't about to give up his throne as the industry's power broker. The ongoing drama peppered the conference with gossip that made the rounds at networking events and dinner parties.

Don't stop him now: Michael Kassar teases next venture

As I looked out over the white sand beaches and turquoise waters of the Atlantic while sipping a glass of rose on Wednesday afternoon on the 8th floor balcony of the Soho Beach House, before heading back to chilly and rainy New York, I almost felt like I was in Cannes.

But I wasn't. And that's the point.

Flying to Miami from New York in April — as my packed flights would suggest that nearly every attendee did — is a good several thousand dollars cheaper than a flight to Cannes and a solid chunk and change more economical than going to Vegas during CES. Hotel rates in Miami Beach at the tail end of high season look like a bargain compared to both.

In an era that's all about efficiency, Possible provides all the great taste of established industry events with none of the calories (hat tip to Scott Galloway for this great analogy). Its timing in April offers a precursor to set the groundwork for the deals that will be made on the Croisette just two months later.

Possible won't replace Cannes or other industry events. But my flight home to LaGuardia on Wednesday evening, packed with familiar faces, suggested that it might earn its place on a busy events calendar. I even heard some (wishful?) murmurs that it could potentially replace CES, but others argue its timing in early January crucially kickstarts the year.

Overall, Possible lacked a cohesive theme or reason for being that underlines other industry events. Cannes is about celebrating creativity. CES is about exploring emerging tech. As for hard-hitting, educational and thought-provoking content, as well as meaningful celebrations of your teams, creativity and work, leave that to the journalists, as attendees of **Campaign Convene**, our flagship conference in February, and our annual **Agency of the Year** gala can attest to.

That shapes the conversations people have at these events and gives them an organic reason for being there beyond the sales pitch. But at Possible, the sales pitch is shamelessly front and center. And maybe that's the point.

In an industry where pay to play is the name of the game, sales is literally the job and in-person interactions continue to drive business, despite tech innovation, Possible is brazenly what it is.

So perhaps I'll see you in Miami next year. Anything is possible.