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POSSIBLE 2024—KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE GROWING CONFERENCE AND ITS PLACE IN THE AD INDUSTRY

Attendance soars 40% at MMA-backed event featuring unbridled schmoozing and X still taking about brand safety

By [Jack Neff](#), Published on April 19, 2024.

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The Basis Oasis open bar operated non-stop day and night in the Fontainebleau lobby during Possible. Credit: Larry Marano/Shutterstock for POSSIBLE

Does the marketing industry need another tent pole event lodged between CES and the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity? The 3,500 plus attendees at Possible this week, up more than 40% from the conference's 2023 debut, suggests the answer is yes.

Attendees encountered a dizzying array of more than 150 conference sessions and an even greater opportunity to pitch or be pitched at a non-stop open bar in the middle of the Fontainebleau in Miami Beach, Florida, a nighttime drone show and yoga on the beach.

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Here are some of the key takeaways from this year's Possible.

Why Possible is unusual

Possible is a rare hybrid among marketing conferences that has a touch of all the others mixed in. Some are run by for-profit enterprises ([Cannes](#) by Ascential); others by non-profit trade groups (CES, the Association of National Advertisers, 4A's, IAB, etc.) Possible is headlined as "an MMA Global Event," but the MMA is a partner with the for-profit company that owns the show, Beyond Ordinary.

Possible isn't profitable yet, though investors have been assured it's on track to profitability, according to people familiar with the matter (Beyond Ordinary declined to comment on the financials). Investors include Christian Muche, Beyond Ordinary's CEO and co-founder, who was a co-founder of the global Dmexco conference before launching Possible last year.

MMA builds its image

Possible gives the MMA something it long lacked—a big event. MMA originally stood for Mobile Marketing Association. The group now goes just by the initials and is clearly about more than mobile. Its board has a mix of buy-side (marketer and agency) and sell-side (media and ad tech) [members](#). Arguably, it's the only group that represents the entire industry.

Before the pandemic, MMA primarily held symbiotic events piggybacked on, but not affiliated with, other tent pole events such as Cannes or New York Advertising Week. Now, Possible has become its big show.

"Modern Marketing Association" might be a candidate to become what MMA stands for, and Possible buttresses that claim. MMA Global CEO Greg Stuart has pointed to its location in a cooler part of Florida (Miami Beach) vs. Orlando, home of the [ANA Masters of Marketing](#) each fall.

While Possible is comparable to the ANA event in size, content and attendee mix, it's markedly different. In place of sessions primarily focused on show-and-tell case studies by marketers, Possible has a busier, multi-faceted agenda, including a mix of Cannes-style celebrity Q&As (including Ashanti and Janelle Monáe), sessions on AI, marketing strategy and digital measurement, plus mini master classes, such as how to make YouTube Shorts successfully.

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While the ANA has tennis and golf, Possible has yoga and a drone show on the beach. Every conference has schmoozing, but Possible takes it to new heights with a non-stop open bar in the middle of the venue, going all in on day drinking a la Cannes, but in a more concentrated setting. And it draws some small and mid-size marketers who might never make it to Cannes or join the ANA.

Registration for Possible this year was free for brand marketers for a basic pass, with other options ranging from \$799 to \$5,999 for a VIP pass. By comparison, the ANA is quoting \$3,299 to attend the Masters of Marketing this year. Cannes is by far the priciest option, starting (based on current exchange rates) above \$1,000 for a student pass up to \$6,400 for a classic pass and over \$11,000 for the highest VIP pass.



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Welcome to Vendorland

While every marketing conference is a selling opportunity, Possible may be the most deal-oriented event in the industry.

Several attendees said the ratio of vendors to marketers seemed higher than other events, all of which generally have more sellers than buyers on hand. A Possible spokeswoman said the percentage of marketers among attendees was 27% in 2024, up from 21% last year.

Despite the plethora of scheduled sessions, often overlapping with one another and with scheduled networking breaks, at times the whole event seemed like a networking break. No one is out ringing chimes to get people back in the ballrooms. Even during arguably the most anticipated session at Possible, [Michael Kassan's fireside chat](#), there were plenty of empty chairs in the main hall.

Two attendees noted that, outside of sessions they were on the agenda for, they'd spent all their time in client meetings, which they deemed highly productive.

The drama that wasn't

Among Beyond Ordinary's investors is Kassan. While he still ran MediaLink, he was scheduled at one point to make "an announcement" at Possible's April 17 morning keynote, then later to appear alongside Walmart U.S. Chief Revenue Officer Seth Dallaire. After Kassan's [messy departure](#) last month, MediaLink kept the keynote slot, and Kassan was slotted in ahead with his own keynote fireside chat.

It set up potential for drama that wasn't realized. Kassan was restrained in describing his "[Hollywood style divorce](#)" from MediaLink and hinting only in broad terms about what his next step may be, tied up as it is in an ongoing legal dispute that includes MediaLink's effort to enforce a non-compete clause. MediaLink Managing Director Mark Wagman made no mention at all of Kassan while on stage with Dallaire [to discuss retail media](#).

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X marks the spot

Possible was a testament to what a difference a year makes, especially for X, then Twitter.

A year ago, according to people familiar with the matter, Possible registrations were lacking in the weeks ahead of the show. Then Beyond Ordinary scheduled a [fireside chat with Elon Musk](#) and then NBCU Chairman of Global Advertising and Partnerships Linda Yaccarino. They drew a big crowd and talked, among other things, about brand safety and advertisers leaving Twitter.

A year later, Yaccarino is CEO of X and the platform returned to continue talking about brand safety and advertisers leaving. This time, X came armed with a mea culpa from DoubleVerify, which acknowledged that for 140 days ending in March it mistakenly co-mingled brand suitability and brand safety scores in a dashboard reporting for X. That meant DV often showed X's average 99.9% brand safety score considerably lower. According to an X spokesman, DV's reporting graphic showed scores as low as 70% in some cases that should have been 99.9%, potentially affecting decisions of more than two dozen advertisers.

Monique Pintarelli, head of the Americas at X, addressed the DV issue and brand safety directly with MMA board members in a private meeting on Monday.

But it's not clear how much difference that will make given other issues for X. In November, Musk colorfully [told off advertisers](#) who'd recently left X and last month it lost its Trustworthy Accountability Group brand safety certification as it works to put in place a remediation plan in response to a complaint and a TAG audit. A Media Rating Council brand safety accreditation process that began prior to Musk buying Twitter in 2022 never went forward, and Check My Ads, a group that brought a complaint against X to TAG, in a statement last week cast doubt on the revision by DV, which is paid by X.

The X spokesman said there was no pressure on DV because of payment. "There was pressure because it was wrong," he said. The spokesman added that X is engaged with both TAG and the MRC about restoring certification or getting accreditation. In all, 90% of X's brand safety capabilities and partnerships were put in place post acquisition and started when Yaccarino arrived, the spokesman said.

As for whether the DV revision is changing advertisers' minds, he said, "We're actively in meetings now" and cited "promising signs."

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