

# BIZ Stories

**Ben Javed Peerbux**  
*Founder & CEO IKES CONCEPT LTD*

## THE LONG ROAD TO

# NOW

Before there was NOW, there was radio. Before there were events, there was technology. For more than two decades, Ben Javed Peerbux has navigated between microphones, computer screens and concert stages, guided by two constants: curiosity and passion. Today, those experiences converge in NOW, a new events brand born from a simple conviction—that audiences have changed, and the industry must change with them.

# Editorial

## Why **Stories** Matter

When I met Ben Javed Peerbux for this inaugural issue of **Biz Stories**, one idea surfaced repeatedly throughout our conversation: people have changed.

It is a simple observation, yet one with profound implications.

For Ben, entrepreneur, technologist, former radio presenter and founder of IKES Concept Ltd, the pandemic did not merely interrupt the events industry. It transformed the audience itself. People emerged with different priorities, different expectations and different ways of engaging with the world around them. The challenge, he argues, is not to recreate what existed before, but to design experiences that reflect who people are today.

That observation extends far beyond the events industry.

Across the global economy, value is increasingly shifting from products to experiences. Consumers are no longer looking simply for transactions. They are searching for connection, authenticity and moments that resonate. Businesses are adapting accordingly. Brands now compete not only on what they sell, but on how they make people feel.

The events sector sits at the centre of this transformation.

Too often, events are viewed merely as entertainment or social gatherings. In reality, they represent a dynamic ecosystem that combines entrepreneurship, creativity, technology, marketing, hospitality and culture. Behind every conference, concert, exhibition or festival lies an entire value chain of professionals whose expertise transforms ideas into experiences.

For Mauritius, this is particularly significant.

As the country seeks new avenues for growth, innovation and diversification, the creative and experience economies deserve greater attention. Events create employment, stimulate tourism, strengthen brands, generate economic activity and provide platforms for talent to emerge. They contribute to the vibrancy that makes a destination attractive not only to visitors, but also to investors, professionals and entrepreneurs.

Yet the evolution we are witnessing is not limited to audiences attending events. Readers have changed too.

The way people consume information today bears little resemblance to the habits of a decade ago. Time has become one of the most valuable commodities. Professionals,

entrepreneurs and decision-makers navigate increasingly demanding schedules. Information is often consumed on the move, between meetings, during commutes or in the brief moments available throughout the day.

That reality has shaped the editorial philosophy of **Biz Stories**.

Just as event organisers are rethinking how people gather, we are rethinking how people read. We believe that insight does not have to come at the expense of accessibility. Our ambition is to offer concise, engaging and easy-to-read stories that deliver value while respecting our readers' time. Content that informs, inspires and sparks ideas without demanding hours of attention.

In many ways, this publication reflects the very transformation taking place within the events industry itself: a move towards experiences that are more focused, more relevant and more attuned to the realities of modern life.

That is why we are launching **Biz Stories**.

This publication is dedicated to the people, ideas and businesses shaping the experience economy. We will explore emerging trends, profile entrepreneurs and creators, examine innovations and highlight the opportunities that lie at the intersection of business, culture and human connection.

Our cover story on Ben Javed Peerbux is a fitting place to begin. His journey—from radio and technology to event creation—illustrates how different worlds increasingly converge. It is a story about adaptation, creativity and the willingness to challenge assumptions about what audiences want and what events can become.

In many respects, it is also a story about Mauritius itself: a country that continues to reinvent itself, finding new ways to create value through talent, imagination and enterprise.

Because events are about more than what happens on stage.

They are about bringing people together, creating memories, building communities and creating experiences that endure long after the lights have gone out.

Welcome to the first issue of **Biz Stories**.

Rudy Veeramundar  
Editor-in-Chief

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**Founder and Editor-in-Chief:** Rama Krishna (Rudy) Veeramundar

**Biz Stories** is published by **Bizweek**  
**Address:** 5th Floor | ICONEBENE -Zendö | Rue de L'institut, Ebène | Mauritius  
**Email:** [bizweekmu@gmail.com](mailto:bizweekmu@gmail.com) | WhatsApp: (+230) 52 53 45 75

**Issue 01 | Tuesday, 23 June 2026**

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From radio studios and IT systems to large-scale events, the founder of NOW argues that Mauritius' creative economy can no longer rely on pre-pandemic assumptions. His answer is a brand built around audience insight, curated experiences and a belief that technology should empower creativity rather than replace it.

By any conventional measure, Ben Javed Peerbux's professional journey is an unusual one. He built a career in information technology. He spent part of the golden era of private radio behind the microphone as an animator. He experienced the rise of youth-centred cultural phenomena such as the Jump Around concerts and the inter-college events that shaped a generation. And today, he operates in an industry that sits at the intersection of business, culture, entertainment and human experience: events.

Yet Ben sees a common thread connecting these seemingly different worlds. "Radio was a passion. Information technology was a passion," he says. "Today, I live from my passions."

Those passions have culminated in NOW, a new events brand whose first public expression, NOW 80s & 90s, is less about nostalgia than it is about understanding how audiences have changed in the years since the pandemic. The concept is designed around a simple premise: the events industry cannot continue operating as though Covid-19 never happened.

### The mistake of returning to "normal"

Ben speaks about the pandemic not simply as a crisis but as a turning point. Like many event operators, he experienced severe disruption during lockdowns. The sector was



among the hardest hit, with concerts, conferences, corporate gatherings and cultural activities abruptly suspended. But the more significant impact, he argues, occurred afterwards.

As restrictions disappeared and economic activity resumed, much of the industry attempted to return to familiar models. Event formats, business practices and audience assumptions often remained unchanged.

For the founder of NOW, that response overlooked a deeper transformation. "Many operators treated Covid as a passage and then wanted to go back to normal," he says. "I think that is a mistake."

His argument is that the pandemic altered not only consumer behaviour but also people's priorities and aspirations. Individuals changed careers. New entrepreneurs emerged. Families reassessed how they spent their time. Expectations evolved. "People have different objectives today. Different visions. Different demands," he says. "The old life no longer exists."

That reality is visible even in the mechanics of event planning. Contracts now routinely include clauses dealing with lockdowns, force majeure events and weather-related disruptions such as flash floods—risks that were rarely considered a decade ago.

What was once exceptional has become part of standard planning.

"We take what was best from the past to build what comes next," he says. "But we cannot do things exactly as before."

### A brand before an event

This philosophy explains why Ben insists that NOW should not be viewed merely as an event.

"It is a brand," he says. "A brand designed around specific objectives and different audiences."

NOW 80s & 90s is simply the first manifestation of that broader vision.

Future iterations will target different demographics while retaining the same overarching identity. The intention is to create a family of experiences adapted to distinct communities rather than a single recurring event.

That strategic positioning reflects a broader evolution in the events industry, where audience segmentation is becoming increasingly important.

Instead of pursuing mass appeal, organisers are increasingly focusing on clearly defined groups with identifiable preferences and expectations.

For Ben, understanding those audiences is the starting point of every successful project.

### The enduring appeal of the 1980s

The decision to launch with an 80s and 90s concept was neither accidental nor opportunistic.

**"People changed during Covid. Their objectives changed. Their vision changed. The old life no longer exists."**

It emerged from observations dating back more than fifteen years.

At the time, Ben and his partners were looking for events dedicated to 1980s music. What they discovered was a recurring frustration. Many so-called "80s nights" would feature a brief opening sequence before reverting to contemporary playlists.

The market lacked authenticity.

That insight led to a successful series of themed events that ran for approximately a decade. Yet the passage of time created a new challenge.

The audience itself had evolved.

The people who attended those events fifteen years ago are no longer in the same phase of life. Their professional responsibilities, lifestyles and expectations have changed.

"The age group evolves. Their desires evolve," he says. "You have to take that into consideration."

Rather than simply relaunching an old concept, the team consulted participants and asked what they would like from a contemporary experience.



The result is a format that preserves the music at its core while placing greater emphasis on comfort, networking, conversation and social interaction.

Ben repeatedly returns to the notion of curation.

The event is intended to be carefully calibrated—from its schedule and venue layout to the balance between dancing, socialising and simply enjoying the atmosphere.

*"We wanted to create the kind of event that we ourselves would like to attend,"* he says.

### The golden age of musicianship

For Ben, the attraction of the 1980s extends beyond nostalgia.

He views the decade as a period when musicianship, songwriting and creativity occupied a more central place in popular music.

*"I think the artists of that period were creating music to communicate something,"* he says. *"There were messages, there was creativity, there was craftsmanship."*

**"A successful event is very scientific. If you understand the audience and the objective, the event becomes viable."**

His admiration extends to artists as diverse as Sting and The Police, whose collective musicianship he believes helped define the era.

The same principle applies to electronic pioneers such as Jean-Michel Jarre.

Ben describes Jarre not simply as a performer but as an innovator who created entirely new sonic landscapes through experimentation with emerging technologies.

*"He was a precursor,"* he says. *"He created a style that did not exist."*

The distinction matters because Ben sees a difference between innovation and imitation. Technology can make production easier, but originality remains difficult to replicate.

That belief also informs his views on contemporary music and the emergence of younger Mauritian artists such as Bidigan, whom he sees as part of a new generation reconnecting with live instrumentation, songwriting and performance authenticity.

### The science behind creativity

The romantic image of event creation often centres on inspiration and spontaneity.

Ben offers a more disciplined perspective.

*"A successful event is very scientific,"* he says.

Every project begins with a clear understanding of objectives, target audiences and market demand. Research, consultation and feasibility analysis form part of the process before any creative decisions are made.

*"It is business-oriented before it is simply an event,"* he explains.

This methodology applies across both major segments of the industry.

Corporate events include conferences, product launches, staff celebrations, team-building activities and increasingly popular panel discussions. Each requires different formats and environments depending on the audience and objectives.

Public events encompass concerts, cultural festivals, art exhibitions, literary programmes and cinema-related activities.

The common denominator is intentional design. *"Too many people decide to organise an event without thinking through all the elements behind it,"* Ben says. *"If you understand your audience and your objectives, the event becomes viable."*

### Creativity in the age of artificial intelligence

Few subjects generate as much debate within creative industries as artificial intelligence.

Ben approaches the topic with characteristic optimism.

Rather than seeing AI as a threat, he views it as a tool capable of enhancing productivity and accelerating research.

A task that once required weeks of investigation can now be completed in hours. Market surveys, trend analyses and benchmarking exercises become significantly easier.

*"It opens enormous opportunities,"* he says.

Yet he rejects the idea that AI can replace genuine artistic creation.

Using the example of Mauritian artist Blackayo, whose work he has followed for years, Ben argues that technology can analyse patterns but cannot replicate lived experience.

A song emerges from personal journeys, emotions and observations accumulated over time.

*"AI can gather information and suggest directions,"* he says. *"But what an artist feels and experiences remains uniquely human."*

That distinction becomes increasingly important as audiences search for authenticity.

Whether it is a guitarist's touch, a singer's interpretation or a songwriter's perspective, Ben believes certain aspects of artistic expression remain irreducibly human.

*"The purists will always look for that feeling,"* he says.

### Rethinking sponsorship and partnerships

Ben also questions traditional approaches to sponsorship within the creative economy.

Too often, he argues, event organisers focus exclusively on securing funding while neglecting the value proposition for potential partners.

The more sustainable model is one based on genuine alignment.

A company should not simply place its logo on an event. It should connect with the event's message, audience or values.

*"There has to be a synergy,"* he says. *"It has to be a win-win situation."*

This philosophy mirrors broader trends in brand partnerships, where authenticity and shared purpose increasingly matter as much as visibility.





**“AI can gather information and suggest directions. But what an artist feels and experiences remains uniquely human.”**

### **Creating a space for teenagers**

Perhaps the clearest illustration of NOW's long-term ambitions lies in what comes next.

During the upcoming launch event, Ben plans to unveil NOW Teens, a concept aimed at young people aged roughly 14 to 19.

The inspiration came from a personal question.

As the father of teenagers aged 13 and 16, he struggled to identify safe, structured entertainment environments where young people could gather, discover music and express themselves creatively.

*“I asked myself where I could let my children go out safely,”* he says.

The answer was to create such a space.

The project will be alcohol-free and smoke-free. It will involve educators, parents and professionals in its governance. Young participants themselves will contribute to the organisation and programming.

Emerging DJs, performers and artists will be given a platform.

The objective is not merely entertainment but exposure to creativity, responsibility and event management.

For Ben, it is also an investment in the

future of the creative economy.

*“If we can inspire young people to become organisers, performers or creators, then we are helping build the next generation of the industry,”* he says.

### **An experience, not a party**

Throughout the conversation, Ben returns repeatedly to one word: experience.

The term has become ubiquitous in modern marketing, yet he uses it with unusual precision.

NOW is designed as the product of two decades of learning, experimentation and observation. It combines audience research,

operational expertise, creative thinking and cultural understanding.

It seeks to accommodate different motivations within the same event: dancing, networking, conversation, relaxation and shared memories.

In a sector often associated with entertainment alone, Ben sees something more strategic at work.

The future of events, he argues, will belong to those who understand that people are no longer looking merely for a ticket.

They are looking for a carefully crafted experience that reflects who they are today—and perhaps who they aspire to become tomorrow.

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