# Stagwell postpones flagship event amid scrutiny over Israeli government work and ongoing industry initiatives



Stagwell, the US-based holding company known for owning agencies such as Assembly, Forsman & Bodenfors, Goodstuff, and 72andSunny, has postponed its annual Festival of Stagwell event, originally scheduled for September 10 at its London headquarters. The decision comes amid safety concerns highlighted by James Townsend, chief executive of Stagwell EMEA, who emphasised in a statement to Campaign Asia that the safety of attendees was the company's top priority. He added that the prevailing environment would not have supported the productive and collaborative atmosphere intended for the event, which was set to include networking opportunities, keynote sessions, and workshops.

This postponement follows recent scrutiny of Stagwell's work with the Israeli government. Earlier this week, details emerged of a major research and messaging programme conducted by a small team within the company, aiming to "create message and campaign paradigms for how to improve the position of Israel about the conflict." A leaked July 2025 presentation referenced this work, prompting questions about the company's client relationships. In response, a Stagwell spokesperson stated that its agencies operate autonomously when selecting and managing client engagements, and that this particular project did not indicate any change in the company’s broader client work approach.

Stagwell has been increasingly active in thought leadership and industry engagement, focusing heavily on the intersection of news media, advertising, and societal impact. Their recently published 'Future of News' study highlighted how 90% of CEOs and board directors consume news regularly, with strong majorities recognising news media’s role in raising awareness of critical issues, influencing society positively, and upholding democratic values. The study also revealed a prevalent belief among executives that advertising in news media is a strategic tool, though many caution that brand safety protocols might be excessively applied, potentially harming both advertisers and media outlets.

The company has demonstrated its commitment to industry discussions by sponsoring high-profile events such as the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. At Cannes in 2022, Stagwell served as the official sponsor of the Speakers' Lounge, producing content and hosting conversations with industry leaders. More recently, during Cannes Lions 2024, Stagwell furthered its 'Future of News' initiative by convening panels that addressed the value of advertising in news media and sought to dispel misconceptions about brand safety in controversial or polarising news contexts. This initiative included groundbreaking research based on a survey of 50,000 US consumers, illustrating that placing ads adjacent to provocative news content did not negatively affect brand favourability or purchase intent.

Looking ahead, Stagwell continues to foster industry innovation through events like SPORT BEACH 2025, which will reunite leaders from diverse sectors, including major brand partners and cultural influencers, to explore the future of sports and entertainment marketing. This ongoing focus underscores Stagwell’s strategic positioning at the nexus of creativity, media, and client engagement, even as it navigates complex client relationships and the current postponement of its flagship Festival of Stagwell event.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.campaignasia.com/article/festival-of-stagwell-postponed-following-holdcos-defence-of-work-with-israeli-go/504697), [[2]](https://www.campaignasia.com/article/festival-of-stagwell-postponed-following-holdcos-defence-of-work-with-israeli-go/504697)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.campaignasia.com/article/festival-of-stagwell-postponed-following-holdcos-defence-of-work-with-israeli-go/504697), [[2]](https://www.campaignasia.com/article/festival-of-stagwell-postponed-following-holdcos-defence-of-work-with-israeli-go/504697)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.stagwellglobal.com/ceos-and-board-directors-view-news-media-as-powerful-advertising-tool-to-influence-key-stakeholders-and-say-brand-safety-is-overapplied-reveals-stagwell-future-of-news-stgw-study/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cannes-lions-international-festival-of-creativity-2022-works-with-stagwell-stgw-as-speakers-lounge-partner-301558244.html), [[5]](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/stagwells-stgw-future-of-news-initiative-heads-to-cannes-lions-international-festival-of-creativity-with-panels-highlighting-the-power-of-news-to-drive-business-results-for-marketers-302174921.html), [[6]](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/stagwell-announces-future-of-news-summit-on-may-15-featuring-trailblazing-panelist-discussions-and-50-000-respondent-study-revealing-the-importance-of-investing-in-news-302131765.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.nasdaq.com/press-release/its-almost-game-time-stagwell-stgw-gears-sport-beach-2025-2025-06-03)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaignasia.com/article/festival-of-stagwell-postponed-following-holdcos-defence-of-work-with-israeli-go/504697> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.campaignasia.com/article/festival-of-stagwell-postponed-following-holdcos-defence-of-work-with-israeli-go/504697> - Stagwell, a US-based holding company, has postponed its annual 'Festival of Stagwell' event, originally scheduled for September 10 at their London headquarters, citing safety concerns. James Townsend, CEO of Stagwell EMEA, stated that the safety of attendees is their top priority and that the environment would not have been conducive to a productive afternoon as intended. The event was planned to include networking opportunities, keynote sessions, and workshops. This decision follows Stagwell's recent defence of its work with the Israeli government, after details of a major research and messaging programme emerged. A leaked presentation from July 2025 referred to 'creating message and campaign paradigms for how to improve the position of Israel about the conflict'. In response to inquiries about their work for the Israeli government, a company spokesperson stated that Stagwell's agencies operate with autonomy to select and manage their own client relationships, and that this project does not reflect a shift in their approach.
3. <https://www.stagwellglobal.com/ceos-and-board-directors-view-news-media-as-powerful-advertising-tool-to-influence-key-stakeholders-and-say-brand-safety-is-overapplied-reveals-stagwell-future-of-news-stgw-study/> - Stagwell's 'Future of News' study reveals that 90% of CEOs and Board Directors closely follow the news, reading an average of six articles per day. A strong majority believe news media raises awareness of critical issues (83%), can positively influence society (81%), and is critical to democracy (79%). The executives view advertising in news media as a strategic tool, with 86% saying companies should advertise on news media and 87% calling it a sound investment to reach and influence stakeholders. However, 57% think it is a mistake to apply brand safety protocols across all news outlets and types of news content, and 69% say brand safety protocols are overapplied to the point of hurting media outlets and advertisers. The study was conducted among more than 1,000 CEOs and Board Directors across 14 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany.
4. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cannes-lions-international-festival-of-creativity-2022-works-with-stagwell-stgw-as-speakers-lounge-partner-301558244.html> - Stagwell served as the official sponsor of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity 2022 Speakers' Lounge. As the title sponsor, Stagwell welcomed and hosted guests participating in live conversations on the Cannes Lions stages. The company also had a content studio within the Speakers' Lounge, producing a range of recorded interviews with key talent offering their most compelling insights, distributed across various online channels. This partnership marked Stagwell's involvement in the prestigious event, highlighting its commitment to the creative industry.
5. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/stagwells-stgw-future-of-news-initiative-heads-to-cannes-lions-international-festival-of-creativity-with-panels-highlighting-the-power-of-news-to-drive-business-results-for-marketers-302174921.html> - Stagwell's 'Future of News' initiative continued at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, the world's largest advertising, marketing, and creativity event. The company convened two panels to encourage advertisers to reinvest in the news industry. The panels discussed Stagwell's groundbreaking News Advertising Study, a survey of 50,000 U.S. consumers, which revealed that ads placed in quality news sources adjacent to articles on provocative and polarizing topics had no negative impact on brand favorability or purchase intent among other brand health metrics. This research aimed to challenge misconceptions about brand safety in news contexts and promote investment in quality journalism.
6. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/stagwell-announces-future-of-news-summit-on-may-15-featuring-trailblazing-panelist-discussions-and-50-000-respondent-study-revealing-the-importance-of-investing-in-news-302131765.html> - Stagwell announced its inaugural 'Future of News' summit on May 15, 2024, at its global headquarters in New York. During the event, Stagwell unveiled groundbreaking research conducted by HarrisX, debunking misconceptions about brand safety in news contexts and challenging advertisers to reassess investment in news publishers. The summit featured two panel discussions: 'Stories from the Field' and 'Why News Works for Brands', with participants from major media and advertising companies. The event aimed to reframe the conversation around news advertising and highlight the power of news audiences to drive business results.
7. <https://www.nasdaq.com/press-release/its-almost-game-time-stagwell-stgw-gears-sport-beach-2025-2025-06-03> - Stagwell is gearing up for SPORT BEACH 2025, a prominent event during the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. The event will feature a roster of leaders, innovators, and cultural influencers, including brand partners such as Ad Results Media, Adobe, The Athletic, Business Insider, Channel Factory, The Chicago Bulls, Clio Sports, Diageo, Dirt is Good, DoubleVerify, e.l.f. Beauty, Epidemic Sound, Fanatics, La Fete Wine Company, Fortune, InMobi, Jeff Hamilton, LG Ad Solutions, LOVB, Meta, Microsoft Advertising, Movember, NBCUniversal, New York Life Insurance Company, Nexxen, NFL Players Inc., NGLmitú, NHL, NHLPA, Nielsen, Official AI, Overtime, Page Six, PayPal, Peloton, Premion, Qualcomm Technologies Inc., Scripps Sports, Sephora, Snap Inc., STAPLE, Strava, TransUnion, TripleLift, Unrivaled, Vacation Inc., VII(N) The Seventh Estate, Wilson Sporting Goods Co., and Zillow Group Inc. The event aims to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to celebrate and discuss the future of sports and entertainment marketing.