



Special report for event planners

Events + social media = success

There was a time when printed brochures, news releases and ads in trade publications were the main tools we used to promote events. Now, in addition to these traditional media, along with Web sites and email, we can add social media to the mix.

Increasingly, organizations are using blogs, podcasts, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to publicize an event, and then keep the conversation going during and afterward. In some cases, organizers succeed at creating a community that thrives long after the conference or trade show is over. Let's take a quick look at some of these tools.

Blogs

Think of a blog as a publishing platform. They're no longer considered "online diaries." Use your blog to publish content that builds excitement about the event by showcasing key speakers and sponsors. Encourage questions and comments on the blog.

Twitter

As a micro-blogging platform, Twitter can work nicely with your blog, allowing you to publish 140-character bursts of information. Many event organizers create a hashtag in advance, so that everyone on Twitter who is talking about the event uses common terminology. For example, the popular South by Southwest conference is #sxsw.

Podcasts

I've worked with many clients who've used podcast interviews before and during their conferences, with great results. At Autodesk University, for example, we ran in-depth interviews with organizers, speakers and other experts before the event, to build interest. During the conference, we conducted more interviews and also grabbed quick sound bites with attendees. These were used as part of the marketing campaign to promote the event during the following year.

Video

If your story has a visual element, then use video. Keep them short, though, because editing time will eat up much of your budget otherwise.

Facebook

Have you thought of using a Facebook page or group to drum up interest in your event? Note: There are differences between the two that you need to be aware of.

LinkedIn

Don't forget about LinkedIn, which you can also use to promote your events. In addition, you can post articles to stimulate discussions.

Social media can help you to **create buzz, boost registration numbers, foster a sense of community among attendees, entice exhibitors and create relevant content** for your Web site and marketing efforts. Remember: Conversations about your organization and your event are happening, whether you're listening to them or not. Be a part of them. Doing nothing is not a viable tactic.

Checklist: Is your event social-media friendly?

- Is there an event blog and podcast?
- Have you produced audio and video content before the event, to build excitement? Do these include interviews with key speakers?
- Are you posting updates on Twitter before, during and after the event? Are you encouraging registrants to do so as well?
- Are you creating audio podcasts and shooting video at your event? This can enhance the experience of those who are at the event, and help you to create marketing materials for next time.
- Have you considered using a tool like [CoverItLive](#) to encourage live blogging?
- Did you create a unique hashtag so that bloggers and Twitterers can use a uniform tag to refer to your event?
- Does your venue have strong, freely available wifi?
- Are there electrical outlets where attendees can recharge their laptops and other devices?

For more information about using social media and podcasts at events, contact:

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