Experience
GRAND RAPIDS

Social Media for Events

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Social Media for Event Marketing and Planning

The world of event planning has entered a new era with the increasing use of social media to plan and promote events. You may have noticed at recent events, that you are seeing new ways event planners are reaching audiences before the event to encourage attendance, and during the event to engage the audience.

We know this new landscape is ever-changing and can appear confusing to those who are not entrenched in social media on a daily basis. This guide will give you a better understanding of the methods and strategies being used, and how your group or organization can take advantage of these new technologies to make a better experience for your audience.

Social media can be used to:

- Better organize the planning of an event
- Promote the event
- Build a community around an event
- Enhance the event experience
- Provide a channel for post-event feedback

As you read on, you will learn:

- Why you should be using social media with your next event
- How other organizations are using social media to organize, plan, promote and conduct events
- Several tools to choose from for your next event
- Specific strategies to follow when using these tools

Why Should We Use Social Media
To Market Our Event?

Social media has been shifting the way people gather and digest information for some time now. As a result, event planners can now take advantage of these new behaviors and tools in a myriad of ways when planning an event. In the "old days", event marketing consisted of simple methods of paid advertising and PR outreach to bring in registrants to the event. To earn media coverage, all you had to do was assign someone as the contact for media requests, craft engaging press releases, and newspapers would alert everyone in town. Add to that a few paid ads in industry publications, mail your invitations, and the registrations would start rolling in!

While all of these strategies are still important in promoting your event, media has changed. Instead of reading local newspapers, people now use search engines and social networks to find event information. When people register for an event, they want to hear what others have to say about the event, and find out who else is going to be there. This social aspect helps prospects decide whether to attend, and can enhance the experience once they are at the event.

In this guide, we will discuss many tools you can use to promote your event, and give you examples of real organizations who are effectively using these tools and strategies.

Successful event planners understand this shift in media, and have learned how to leverage the tools available to reach potential attendees in the places they go for information online.

The Four Phases of Event Planning

Social media can help with four different phases of event planning:

1. Planning the event

2. Promoting the event

3. Conducting the event

4. Following up after the event

Planning the Event

Before you begin even promoting your event, social media and online tools can be used to help you organize your team and gather information you need during the course of your event.

Some companies are using online collaboration tools, such as **wikis**, to provide a space where team members can share information and communicate during the planning process. Wikis can cut down on the jungle of emails that can grow out of control when members try to communicate using email. Wikis allow teams to easily see the information that is being shared and progress that is being made during the planning phase.
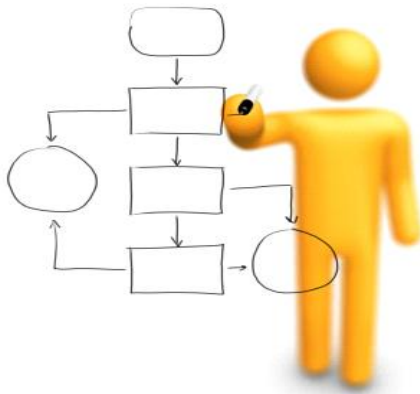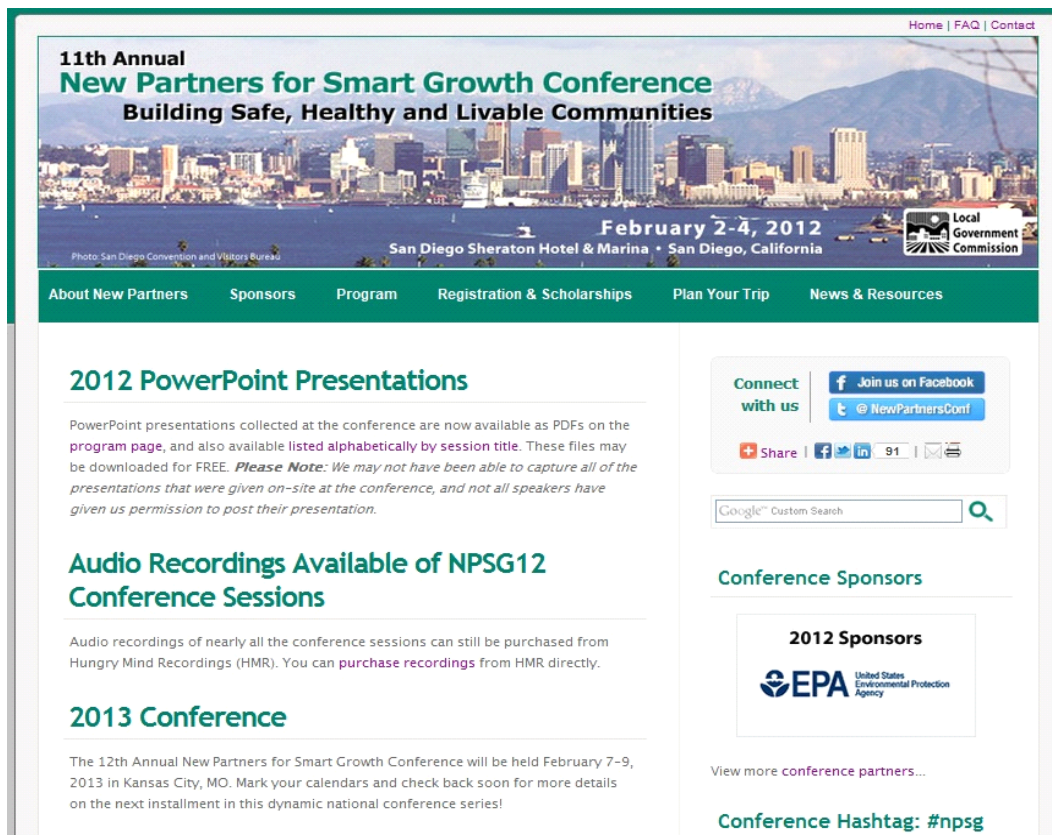
Facebook groups are being used with some teams as a place to easily communicate. These groups can be restricted for use only by team members and are a fast way to touch base and communicate new information as an event is being planned.

Your team can use **Facebook** and **Twitter** to ask questions of your potential attendees regarding which speakers and topics they would like to see at your event. This type of crowd-sourcing is valuable and allows you to find the hot topics that will bring in more registrations to your event.

Promoting Your Event

Many events will create a **website** dedicated entirely to the event.   This gives them a location on the internet to point people to when promoting the event. The New Partners for Smart Growth Conference creates a website specifically for the conference, and can be found at http://www.newpartners.org/.

The website contains all details about the event and how to register.   The website is also used to highlight information about speakers, vendors, sponsorship opportunities, travel arrangements, and program schedules as they become available.

And let's not forget about the mobile market. With so many people using **smart phones**, it's important that your website look good in a mobile version.   A mobile version of your website will organize the information so that it renders at a size that is easily read from a smart phone. Remember, the easier it is for attendees to get to your page and read information, the more likely it is they will register for your event.   Ask your web designer about creating a **mobile website** to accompany your full-version site.

By providing a website specifically for the event, your team is able to send potential attendees directly to the information about the event. Prospects will not need to hunt through your organization's website to find the event information. You will be sending them directly to the information they are seeking. The easier you make it for prospects to get information about the event, the more likely it is that they will make the decision to register to attend.

Keeping Your Audience Informed

To help your event promotions, a **blog** can be attached to the website for frequent updates on information as it becomes available, such as announcing important dates and new sponsors.

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators blog, found at scbwiconference.blogspot.com/, offers short articles and photos from their past event. The blog focuses on up-to-the-minute updates on the upcoming conference and reports from the conference floor when the conference is in progress.

Help Your Audience Make the Decision to Attend

A good use of your website is to include a page dedicated to helping your attendee demonstrate the return on investment to his or her employer. For attendees who must request funds from their employer to attend the event, this type of tool provided on your event website can make it easier for your attendees to justify the cost of attendance. Event attendance and travel to the event can be expensive. Helping attendees demonstrate the value in their attendance is a great use of your website.

The Center for Association Leadership offers an ROI calculator on its meeting website at http://www.asaeannualmeeting.org/toolkit_calculateroi.cfm. This page includes a calculation of average expenses of attending the annual meeting, followed by a spreadsheet to help attendees consider the value of the experience and information they will be gathering at the event. The page gives attendees tips on how to quantify the benefits and demonstrate these benefits to their employers when requesting to attend the event.

Creating Social Media Buzz

Creating buzz before the event is crucial to raising registrations. **Social media accounts** can be set up specifically for the event, in the same way a website can be used specifically for the event. These accounts become channels of communication you can use to start generating excitement and interest in your event.

The Social Media Tourism Symposium created a **Facebook page**, found at http://www.facebook.com/SoMeTourism. On the page, they ask members to vote on choices of venues for the next event, allowing their audience to be directly involved in the planning of the symposium.
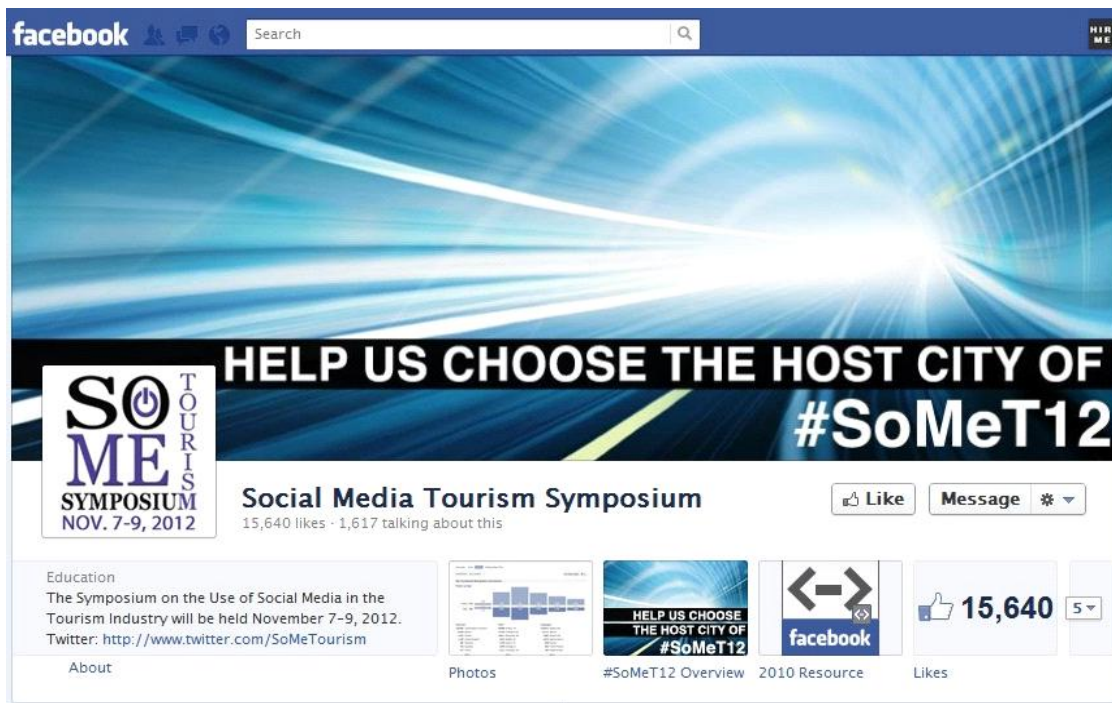
Social media accounts can also be used for general notices about the upcoming event. The American Institute of CPAs uses its **Twitter page**, found at https://twitter.com/#!/aicpaconfs, to post tweets about registration information, brochures that are available, and other information their audience needs to know about the upcoming event.

Event invitations can be set up on **Facebook and LinkedIn** specifically inviting people to the event. These notices allow a viral aspect to the invitation in that they allow attendees to broadcast to their personal networks that they are attending. When receiving an invitation, recipients can see who has already committed to attending. This allows your audience to identify potential networking opportunities they may have with other attendees at the event, and allow them to see the great value your event holds for them. If your organization already has a Facebook Business Page or LinkedIn Company Page, you may want to create an event invitation in conjunction with your existing business pages, instead of creating a new Facebook or LinkedIn page specifically for the event.

Videotaping short interviews of speakers and posting them on the website and on **YouTube** gives your audience a sneak peek at the type of quality content they will receive at the event. Speakers can also be enlisted to promote the event to their social media channels as well, thereby reaching hundreds to thousands more potential registrants.

Other **bloggers** in the industry can also be enlisted to help promote your event. Many bloggers are happy to write a post on your event, and provide links to their readers. Again, enlisting the help of bloggers can allow you to reach thousands of readers, giving you great access to new pockets of potential registrants.

Conducting the Event

Social media is not just for promoting your event.   There are several clever strategies that can be employed during the event to better engage your audience.   Many events now offer large monitors at the event that broadcast live **Twitter** feeds.   Any tweets created using the event hashtag will be shown in real time on the screen.   Live tweets and **Facebook** updates allow attendees to share their thoughts on the event while they are experiencing it.   These messages reach other attendees who are monitoring the social media traffic, and reach those who chose not to attend this year.   For those who chose not to attend, they see the feedback from activity during the event, activities they are missing, and often begin making plans to attend the next year's event.

Mobile devices, because they are so widely used, allow attendees to share conversations and experiences during the event. Now more than ever, an event can benefit from giving attendees opportunities to participate.   **Texting** becomes another channel of communication which can be invaluable for broadcasting logistical messages, such as information on last-minute room changes or schedule changes.   Mobile devices also allow attendees to alert event planners to unforeseen glitches, such as AV equipment failure, problems with registration and sign-in, et cetera.

For those who do not use mobile devices, large screen monitors can be placed in strategic places in the event venue, and show a running list of **Twitter** messages about the event. Attendees who do not have mobile devices can keep up on the daily running conversation by checking these monitors, and stay apprised of announcements and last-minute schedule changes.

Video content can also be created during the event, and uploaded immediately to **YouTube** for viewing by attendees as well as folks off-site who were not able to attend in person.   Short interviews of speakers and event participants adds to the valuable content available as part of the day's experience.   This same content can be shared well after the event, and can be used in promoting the next year's event.

Following Up After the Event

Once your event has concluded, you can use these same social media channels to assist you in gathering feedback from attendees, and planning next year's event. You can send **surveys** by email to all attendees asking their opinions on topics, speakers and venue, and ask for suggestions for the next event. You can put out the same type of poll on **Facebook**, inviting members of the event's Facebook page to give comments and suggestions.

Understanding the new media landscape will help you find the best tools and strategies to use to promote and conduct your event. In the next section we will go into greater detail on each tool, how they are used, and offer strategy ideas on how to gain the most advantage from each.

Choosing the Right Tools:

Define Your Goals

When choosing the right tools for your event, first consider your goals. Is your goal to increase registrations? Is your goal to get the word out to a broader audience? Is your goal to provide new and interesting social media access during the event?

Define Your Target Market

Next, define your target market. Who do you want to reach with your marketing? For some events, the answer is obvious, (i.e. sales directors, dentists, etc.). If your target market is not so obvious, think about their demographic groups. Also consider what types of social media your target market already uses.

Be Selective

When getting started with social media tools, it's best to be selective. Avoid tackling too many channels at once. Select one or two networks you think will make the most impact on your event, and start to build a "social infrastructure" for your event on these networks.

THE TOOLS

As you can see, there are many online tools and social media sites that can be used by event planners to organize, plan, promote, conduct and follow up an event.   We have gathered a list of popular tools that you may wish to use.   We will provide information on each tool, its use, and suggest strategies that you may enlist in your own event planning and coordination.

I. The Event Website

Many events are now creating a website dedicated solely to the event itself .The advantage of having a site strictly dedicated to your event is you have a clear place to send people when you are promoting the event. A website becomes a tool to use in distributing information as it becomes available about the upcoming event.

An event website can contain all details about the event and how to register. The website can also be used to highlight information on speakers and vendors who will be participating in the event. A blog can be attached to the website for frequent updates on information as it is determined, such as important dates and new sponsors.

Phase I: Planning the Event

Your website should be a full site with a blog. You should also develop a mobile version as well, or use responsive technology that will resize when viewed on smaller devices.

You may want to include some of the following information:

Registration Information: Make it easy for your attendees to find the registration page to sign up for the event.

Program Information and Schedule: Be sure to include the presentation titles, descriptions and where each presentation falls in a schedule of events.   A simple table can be used to organize this information.

Benefits Information: Provide a list of benefits attendees will receive.   Assist them in their assessment of their return on the investment of the price of attending the event. Show them the value their attendance will have for them and their company.

Travel Information: Maps to the event, transportation, hotel and restaurant information make it easy for your attendees to plan their trip.

Speaker Information: A call-for-speakers page can be included while you are building your list of speakers.

Once speakers have been chosen, provide your attendees with a list of speakers, their biographic information, photos, and the name and description of the topic they will be presenting.

Media Information: Provide a press kit, including press release, pdf brochures, fliers, logos and images associated with the event. Make it easy for media outlets and online publishers to pass along your information.

Sponsorship Information: Include a page of information about sponsorship packages for those potential sponsors who are thinking of participating.

Also include a page listing participating sponsors. Include their logos and a description of the business or company that is sponsoring the event.

Blog: A blog page will allow you to add blog posts on a regular basis while you are promoting the event. Be sure to include a blog in the website.

Email Opt-in Form: Ask visitors to sign up to receive updates about the event.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Media Page: Publish media mentions your event receives them throughout the promotion phase.

Blog Posts: Publish blog posts regularly. Post information about location, speakers, special events, etc., as the information becomes available.

Video and Audio: Create video and audio interviews of speakers. Post the interviews to the blog.

Email Marketing: Continue sending emails with event updates to the email list subscribers.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Blog: Publish posts to the blog throughout the event. Include news, announcements, photos and videos.

Phase IV: Following Up After the Event

Blog: Publish posts to the blog about feedback from the event. Begin posting about next year's event.

2. Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site that has more than 845 million active users. Users must register before using the site, after which they may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages and photos.

Many events now create a Facebook page solely dedicated to the event. This gives people who are interested in the upcoming event, a place to find out more information about the event as it approaches. As updates are added to the Facebook page, they will automatically appear in front of all viewers who "Liked" the page.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create Page: Sign up for a Facebook Business Page. Use the event name as the title.

Add Photos: Add photos of last year's event.

Include Event Information: In the "information" section of the page, be sure to include the description of event, and links to the registration page and the main landing page of the event website.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Facebook Event Page: Create a Facebook "event" to send to all fans. An "event" page is a place to create a simple invitation to the event, and easily share it with friends. Attendees can see who is attending and allow them to identify good networking opportunities. If your organization already has a Facebook Business Page, you can use the event in conjunction with your existing page, rather than create a new page for the event.

Frequent Updates: Post updates announcing and thanking speakers, sponsors, and volunteers. Be sure to let potential sponsors know they will receive a mention on your Facebook page. Post updates asking your audience what they would like to see and hear at the event. This type of crowd-sourcing allows you to be sure to include the hottest topics at your event.

Encourage Conversation: In your updates, ask questions that require short answers. People are more likely to respond if they can do so quickly.   Let your social media managers share personal stories and anecdotes.   Social media is about being social.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Facebook Updates: Post updates during the event. Include announcements the attendees may want to be apprised of during the show. Tell your Facebook audience when you have a new blog post, and include a link to the website.

Phase IV: Following Up After the Event

Facebook Updates: Ask for feedback from attendees. Begin posting about next year's event.

3. Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets". Simply find the accounts you find interesting, and follow the conversation.

Many events now create Twitter accounts solely for use in marketing the event. This allows an event planning team to reach out to potential attendees who spend time on Twitter. This too can be a place to distribute information about the event, and engage prospective attendees in conversation.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create a Twitter Account: Sign up for an account using the name of the event.

Develop a Hashtag: Develop a hashtag that will be used to identify tweets about the event. For instance, an event called the Construction Industry Forum could use #CIF as their hashtag.

Encourage Conversation: Post articles from other websites that your audience will like. Your audience will see you as a trusted resource. Ask people to share your tweets with others.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Promote the hashtag: Write about the hashtag and how to use it on the blog. Tell your email subscribers how to use the hashtag. Find ways to let everyone know how to use the hashtag.

Begin Sending Tweets: Send tweets about speakers, sponsors, and thanking volunteers. Send tweets about the latest news leading up to the event. Send reminders on how to sign up for the event. Tweet your blog posts with a link back to the blog.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Tweet During Event: Send tweets about happenings at the event, announcements, special updates.

Encourage Attendees to Tweet: Let everyone know it's acceptable, and not considered rude, if they are using their mobile devices to tweet during presentations.

Display Live Twitter Feeds: Use large monitors placed around the venue to display a live Twitter feed that includes all messages that use the event hashtag.

Phase IV: Following Up After the Event

Ask For Feedback: Tweet questions about your attendees' experience while at the event. Collect feedback to be used to plan next year's event

Tweet About Next Year's Event: Now is the time to start promoting next year's event. Tweet about time and place of the next event.

4. LinkedIn

Often described as the social network for professionals, LinkedIn lets users connect with friends, colleagues, and other people they've worked or done business with.   A profile on the network is akin to an online resume.

LinkedIn offers a place to create an invitation for your event. Also, using LinkedIn Groups, you can communicate with thousands of people in your target audience.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create a LinkedIn Event: A LinkedIn Event is a special invitation created within LinkedIn. Invitations can be sent to other LinkedIn users. This "event" feature allows attendees to see who else has said they will be attending, so they can plan for networking opportunities.

Join Groups: Team members should join LinkedIn Groups that your potential attendees might frequent.   This will allow them to promote the event to these groups of people.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Promote in Groups: Team members should begin sending notices out in LinkedIn Groups about the upcoming event and where to register. By posting in LinkedIn Groups, you can reach thousands of potential attendees.

Invite through InMail: Team members can invite their connections by using the LinkedIn InMail. Similar to your personal email, InMail is the place where you can send personal messages that are seen only by you and the person you are sending to.

Share the Event in Your Status: Team members can share the event in their status updates. Each team member will reach a different set of connections, thus allowing you to put your event in front of thousands of people.   Include a link to the event website.

Encourage Engagement: Comment on discussions in groups. Ask questions in your updates. Some of your connections will answer. Start discussions in various groups where attendees can be found.

Phase III: Conducing the Event

Status Updates: Team members can continue to update their status during the event with announcements, and comments about the event.

Phase IV: Following Up After the Event

Status Updates: Post updates about the date and location of next year's event.

5. YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing site owned by Google. Users can freely upload their own video content to the site. YouTube makes it easy for people to embed videos to their own site or blog.

For marketing your event, YouTube can be a great tool. You can create video content relating to the upcoming event, and post it on YouTube to help create buzz for your event. Video of the event itself can also be shared using YouTube to promote future events.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Set Up a YouTube Channel: Opening a YouTube channel gives you a place to post videos as they become available.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Create Videos: Create videos interviewing speakers and meeting planners. Create a video invitation to the event and include registration information.

Upload Videos: Upload videos to YouTube and place them on your website or post them in your blog.

Promote Videos: Email your email subscribers and tell them where they can find the videos on your website and on YouTube.   Encourage them to tell their friends.

Upload Videos to Social Media: Videos can easily be shared via social media. This is a good way to increase the reach of your videos and spark more interest in your event.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Upload Videos Taken at the Event: Take videos during the event, and upload them. Let attendees know where they can go to see the videos.

Phase IV: Following the Event

Promote the Videos of the Event: Promote your videos through your email list and social media. Let everyone know where they can go to see all of the videos in one place on your YouTube channel. Attendees will want to share with friends. Those that didn't attend this year will want to see what they missed, and plan their attendance to next years' event.

6. Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based social networking website for mobile devices, such as smart phones.   Users check in at venues using a mobile website, text message, or smart phone app by selecting from a list of venues that the application shows are nearby.   Location is based on GPS hardware in the mobile device. Each check-in awards the user points and sometimes "badges."

Setting up your event as a "location" in Foursquare allows you to harness this social media network and use it to enhance your attendee's experience. With Foursquare, you can award badges and prizes for participation.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Set Up an Account: After setting up an account, set up a Foursquare location for your event. Attendees will be able to check in. You can also set up check-in locations at various vendor booths. Your vendors can then encourage attendees to visit their booth and check in.

Badges and Rewards: To encourage participation, attendees who check in can receive badges and rewards.   Decide what badges and rewards you would like to offer.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Promote Participation: Include instructions on your website letting attendees know how they can participate with Foursquare. Write a blog post describing badges and prizes attendees could win when participating. Promote participation through updates on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.   Make a video showing attendees how to use Foursquare.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Encourage Participation: During the event, as attendees win badges and prizes, announce the winners, and continue to encourage participation.   Encourage users to add tips about the event for other attendees to see.

Create Tips: Input tips about the event that users will see once they check in.

7. SMS Texting

SMS stands for Short Message Service.   SMS is also referred to as texting, sending text messages.   The service allows for short text messages to be sent from one cell phone to another cell phone or from the Web to another cell phone.

Because so many people now carry smart phones and mobile devices, sending text messages is cost effective and can reach your audience immediately.   Messages can be used to promote attendance, send show announcements to attendees, and to promote specific booths or workshops during the event.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Set Up Texting: Choose a texting service to provide the ability to text attendees.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Encourage Participation: Include instructions on the website for attendees who wish to receive text notification. Write a blog post about the benefits of receiving text notifications. Use social media to encourage attendees to sign up for text messaging.

Send Text Notifications: Send short regular text notifications when news becomes available about the event, such as speakers, vendors, and presentation topics.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Send Special Notifications: Offer coupons and limited time specials through text notifications. Use special offers to promote specific booths or workshops during the event.

Broadcast Announcements: Send notifications of announcements, such as schedule changes and room changes to attendees using text messaging.

8. Slideshare

Slideshare is a website that offers business media, such as documents, pdfs and slide presentations. Media is uploaded by professionals in various industries. People can register and upload their business content. Other individuals can come and comment on the media that has been uploaded.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Sign Up for Slideshare: Open an account so it will be ready and available to add presentations as you receive them.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Upload Presentations: Ask speakers to send you their presentation slides before the event. Upload the slides to Slideshare.   Let speakers know how attendees can access Slideshare presentation slides.   In the presentations, add clickable links to speakers' websites or to your event website.

Encourage Use: Provide instructions on the website to attendees who would like to use Slideshare. Let them know what presentations will be available and when they will be uploaded.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Encourage Use: Announce to attendees how they can access the presentation slides on Slideshare. Attendees can access the slides through their mobile device and follow along as the presentation is given.

Phase IV: Following Up the Event

Embed Slides on Website: After the event, embed all presentation slides in a special section of the website. Encourage attendees to access the slides at your website or at Slideshare. Make presentation slides available to the public.   Those who did not attend this year will be able to see what they missed, and will be encouraged to attend the event next year.

9. Eventbrite

Eventbrite is a website that allows event organizers to plan, set up ticket sales, promote events of any size and publicize them across Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites directly from the Eventbrite interface.

Inviting registrants to share the news on Facebook that they have just registered for your event using Eventbrite allows you to reach the entire social network of each attendee who shares the message. Eventbrite makes it easy for the registrant to share just by clicking a button. If attendees share the news of their registration, you can potentially reach thousands of people in their networks.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create Event Registration: Consider whether you will be offering an early-bird price, or coupon codes for special groups. Link to your registration from your website.

Set Up a Mobile App: Eventbrite offers a mobile app for your iPhone. Event planners can access their registration process at any time with the mobile app.

Phase II: Promoting Your Event

Promote Registration With Social Media: Post updates to social media accounts that encourage registration. Include links to the Eventbrite registration page.

Print Name Tags: Eventbrite gives you the ability to easily print name tags of attendees to be used at the event.

Phase III: Conducting Your Event

Sell At The Door: Eventbrite has an iPad app that allows you to use Eventbrite to sell tickets at the door. Attendees can pay by credit card, and Eventbrite continues to track your sales.

10. Google Alerts

Google alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results from websites and news sites about any word or phrase you wish to monitor. If you want to see the latest mentions of a subject or phrase on the web, Google alerts will bring notifications to your email inbox. This allows you to monitor how well you are doing at distributing information about your event on the internet, and monitor what is being said about your event.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Set Up Google Alerts: Sign up for a Gmail account and set up an alert tracking the name of your event. This way, when it gets mentioned anywhere on the internet, Google will find it and show you where it was mentioned.

Phase II: Promoting Your Event

Tracking Media Mentions: As your event is mentioned on the internet, through press releases or industry bloggers who are working with you, Google will see these mentions and email them to you. You can then include them on your media page of the website.

Phase III: Conducting Your Event

Track Mentions: Continue to monitor your Google Alert. It will show you when people mention your event on social media and on blogs.

Phase IV: Following Up After the Event

Acknowledge those that helped you promote: Go back through your alerts. Contact anyone who did provide mentions, and thank them. This will allow you to start a relationship with those who can help you promote the next event.

11. Wikis

A wiki is a website whose users can add, modify, or delete content via a web browser. Wikis are often created collaboratively by multiple users. Examples include community websites and corporate intranets.

Using a wiki for your event's team is an excellent way to organize the flow of information and collaboration as you plan your event. Using a wiki to deposit information and communication cuts down on the endless round of emails and "reply all" emails that can clog your email inbox when planning an event.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Set Up Wiki: Create a wiki with Google.   Give instructions to your team on how to access and use the wiki.   Share documents and communication using the wiki.

Subscribe to RSS: Show your team how to subscribe to the RSS feed. They will then receive notification when there has been new material added to the wiki.

Phase II: Promoting Your Event

Coordinate Social Media Notices: A wiki can be the place you give instructions to team members on how to use their personal social media accounts to promote the event. Each time you put out a new update on social media, let your team know. They can then share that same message with their social media audiences.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Use as Team Communication Channel: Use the wiki during the event as your team communication channel.   It's an easy way to give everyone   the announcements and messages in one place that you need them to see.

Phase IV: Following Up the Event

Share Wrap Up and Lessons Learned: The wiki is a great place to share wrap-up messages, and to collect lessons learned from all team members. These can be very valuable to share with next year's team.

12. Google Maps

Google Maps is a web mapping service application and technology provided by Google. It offers street maps and a route planner for traveling by foot or car.

With Google maps, you can create customized maps for the convenience of your attendees.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create Maps: Use Google Maps to create maps of parking, local restaurants, hotels, local attractions, routes to the venue, layout of vendor booths and classrooms.
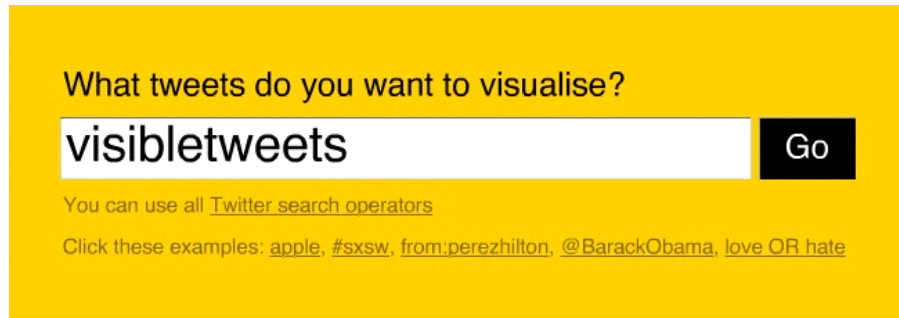
Phase II: Promoting Your Event

Share Maps: Share your maps on your website, in blog posts and on social media. Email your subscribers to tell them where they can download and print maps to bring with them.

Phase III: Conducing Your Event

Share Maps: Print maps and have them available with registration packets and at information tables at various locations around the venue.

13. Visible Tweets

Visible Tweets is a visualization of Twitter messages designed for display in public spaces. Choose a hashtag, and Visible Tweets will find Tweets with that hashtag and display them, one at a time.

Visible Tweets is a really fun way to show your audience the messages being added to Twitter about your event. Encourage users, when tweeting, to use the hashtag you designate, so they can be displayed using this tool.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Set up Visible Tweets: Go to http://visibletweets.com. Type in your event hashtag. Visible Tweets will start showing you tweets from anyone who has used the hashtag.

Display at Event: Place large monitors in conspicuous areas around the venue so attendees can see the tweets displayed.

Promote Visible Tweets: Send emails, text messages and social media updates letting attendees know they too can follow along with live tweets put out at the event.

14. Flickr

Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application.   Its primary goals are to help people make photos available to others, and to enable new ways of organizing pictures. You can join Flickr for free and begin sharing images immediately.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create an account: Sign up for a Flickr account that will be designated as the event account.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Share photos: If you have photos from last year's event, begin to upload them to Flickr. This will help attendees see what the event was like in the past. Post speakers' photos.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Share photos: Take photos during the event. Upload the photos as soon as possible to the Flickr account.

Promote Flickr: Send emails, text messages and social media updates informing attendees of the availability of photos on the Flickr page. Be sure to share the link so attendees can go directly to the Flickr account.

Phase IV: Follow Up After the Event

Promote Next Year's Event: Let others who were not able to attend know that they can go to the account and see the event photos. This will allow you to talk about the next year's event and begin to pique the interest of next year's attendees.

15. Industry Bloggers

A blog is a journal published online consisting of posts typically displayed in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first. Blogs can be the work of a single individual or a group of writers, and often are themed on a single subject.

Every industry has bloggers who are writing on topics related to the industry. Each blog has an audience of readers. Reaching out to industry bloggers and asking them to write about your event will allow you to reach new pockets of interested readers.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Identify Industry Bloggers: Find those bloggers who write about your industry or topic. If you don't know of any, simply search with Google. For instance, the Construction Industry Forum might search for "construction law blog". You will find several bloggers who write for your audience on a regular basis.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Organize Bloggers: Communicate with bloggers and ask them to promote your event at key times, such as, when registration opens. Ask if they are willing to write more than one post throughout the promotional phase. Give them any graphics, such as logos, that they might want to use in their blog posts.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Ask Bloggers to Write at the Event: If your bloggers are attending the event, ask them to write and publish blog posts while at the event. Offer content ideas to assist the bloggers, such as interviewing event speakers or attendees.

Phase IV: Follow Up After the Event

Ask bloggers to write about the event: Some bloggers may want to write a feedback blog post. Others might write a review of happenings at the event.   Offer content ideas to assist the bloggers.

16. Email Marketing Software

Email marketing software is a package of software that offers tools for capturing email addresses of interested readers. Packages often include the ability to set up autoresponder messages that are automatically sent to subscribers.

Email marketing software allows you to ask readers to sign up for more information from you. Periodic email messages sent about your event to interested readers will allow you to stay on your reader's radar screen as they consider whether to register for your event.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Choose email list management software: Choose an email list manager, such as Constant Contact, Aweber or Mail Chimp.

Add an opt-in form: An opt-in form will allow readers to join your email list by entering their name and email address.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Send regular emails: Keep your email subscribers informed of what's happening as you plan your event. These are people who have raised their hand and said, "I want to hear more." Write emails promoting the event website, registration, and all social media accounts. You can also mention sponsors and volunteers, and announce speakers.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Continue sending emails: Many attendees will be using smart phones and will be picking up email during the event. Your email subscribers list is one more channel of communication directly to your attendees.

Phase IV: Follow Up After the Event

Send wrap-up emails: If there are any post-event wrap-up announcements, send these through your email list. You can begin promoting next year's event right away.

17. Online Survey Software

Online survey software allows you to design and send questionnaires, polls and surveys to your audience. Survey results will allow you to make better decisions when planning your event.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Choose survey software: Setting up your survey software now allows you to send surveys throughout your entire event process.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Send surveys for input on planning: Asking your attendees about personal preferences, such as location choices, meal plans, et cetera, will allow you to customize your event to suit the audience.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Send surveys during the event: A simple survey asking questions about attendees' experiences while the event is still in progress allows you to make adjustments as necessary.

Phase IV: Follow Up After the Event

Send Surveys requesting feedback: Asking your attendees what they thought about different aspects of the event will give you valuable information to incorporate into the next event you plan.

18. Pinterest

Pinterest is quickly becoming a very powerful social network that lots of people are adopting and using to share information. This network is a pinboard-style photo-sharing website that allows you to create and manage image collections surrounding a theme, such as events, interests, hobbies, and more. Users can browse other pinboards for inspiration, re-pin photos to their own collections, and "like" photos. As an organizational tool, Pinterest can have many benefits for events.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create an account: Setting up an account will allow you to communicate to your Pinterest audience from the very beginning of planning.

Phase II: Promoting the event

Create collections of images: Create collections, such as photos of speakers, venue images, infographics, and even videos.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Continue to post photos: As you take photos during the event, be sure to post them. You can start a board that is specifically for these event photos.

19. Instagram

Instagram is a free photo-sharing program that allows users to take a photo, apply a digital filter to it, and then share it on a variety of social networking services.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create Account: Once your account is created, it won't take long to become familiar with the features Instagram offers.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Create Event Channel: You can create a collection of photos specifically about your event. Instagram makes it easy to share these photos on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

Create a Photo Contest: Attendees can join the contest by submitting photos. Award prizes to winners. Contests often create buzz, which is helpful during your event promotion phase.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Share Photos at the Event: Assign a specific hashtag, and invite attendees to take photos and upload them using Instagram. This allows attendees to see and share photos from several people at the event.

20. Event App for Smart Phones and iPads

Create an app that allows attendees to find information, presentation materials, and more, in one app that they can download to their smart phone or iPad.

Phase I: Planning Phase

Create App: You can create your own app complete with event branding for your attendees to download. In the app, you can include event information, ability to push updates to social media accounts, provide presentation materials, and much more. One provider of event apps is Double Dutch found at http://doubledutch.me/flock.aspx.

Phase II: Promoting the Event

Promote the app: Let your attendees know in advance that they can download your event app. Many will download it, and be ready to access all of the great information you will be providing, such as blog posts, social media updates, videos, audios, event schedule, local venue information and more.

Phase III: Conducting the Event

Add live information: Continue to promote the app, letting attendees know how to download it and use it. Provide content that is current and up-to-the-minute information.

Phase IV: Follow Up After the Event

Continue to add content: Add any content you have created since the event, such as blog posts about next year's events, photos, contest winners, social media mentions, et cetera.

Implementing the Social Media and Technology Plan

Once you have decided which tools you will use to promote your event, then you can begin planning the implementation of the plan.   Here are some considerations:

- Time line of all activities
- Established goals and objectives
- Budget
- Roles of team members

A Note About Bandwidth

Now that so many of us use all sorts of devices to access the internet while attending events, it is important to consider bandwidth capabilities so that you don't get caught with angry attendees who can't get a good signal or experience slow access.   As an event planner, your facility will need to answer all of your questions about bandwidth.   Here is some information to get you started asking the right questions.

The first thing you need is a general understanding of what bandwidth is. Bandwidth can be defined as the overall Internet speed within a given facility. How much bandwidth you need depends on what your attendees want to be able to do online. You need to be able to answer some simple questions:

How many people will need access to the Internet?
Will they need to be connected through a wired or wireless connection?
Will you or your attendees need to use the Internet for:
        Checking e-mail?
        Downloading files?
        Uploading files?
   Video conferencing?
        Web streaming?
        Web based applications?

As a meeting planner, you do need to understand that a positive answer to any of these questions will likely require an action on the part of your venue. Enlist the help of an IT professional if you are uncertain about what your bandwidth needs might be.

Outsourcing Your Social Media & Technology Plan

Outsourcing the social media plan can often be the best solution for organizations that have limited time and social media expertise.   If you decide to outsource some or all of your social media and technology plan, here are some key indicators you should look for in a marketing agency.

- What does their social media reputation look like?   Do they have a Facebook and Twitter page that are active and up to date?   A YouTube channel and LinkedIn Profile?   Looking into their online presence will give you a good indication of whether they understand social media or not.

- A social media expert will be able to present you with a social media marketing plan and a list of strategies they will enlist.

- Your social media expert should be willing to sit down with you and discuss goals, help you set them as well as help you set expectations and provide you with information on how they will be monitoring the results of their social media marketing efforts.

- Ask the social media expert lots of question and choose the company that makes you feel the most comfortable in answering your questions.
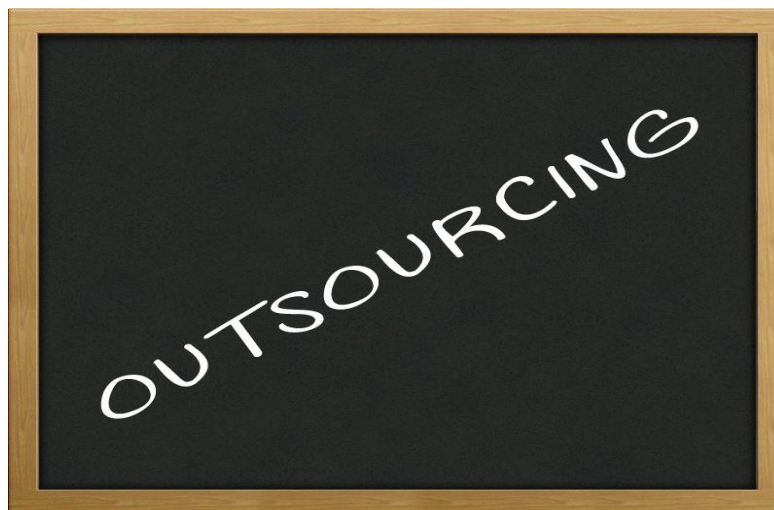
The ROI of Event Marketing

Question: If I'm going to take on some of these new technologies to promote and conduct my event, how do I know I'm getting a return on my investment?

To answer this one simple question, you need to be prepared to measure different aspects of your activities and their results.   Here are 7 steps to take to measure your social media ROI.

1. Establish clear marketing goals.

Define clearly what success looks like first. There should be a sales or marketing objective. Why are you holding the event in the first place?   Is it about sales?   Awareness?   Know the objective up front, then decide what specifically you define as success.

2. Decide what activities and behaviors you will measure to determine your success.

Here are a number of key performance indicators you may choose to measure:

Visitors to event website
Pages viewed
Sponsors involvement
Audience members joining your social media groups
Photos uploaded
Content shared
Google alerts
Contest participants
Text messages to list members
Members on email subscription list
Click-throughs from email list members to your call-to-action link
Downloads of offered information
Poll responses
Social media comments
Registered attendees

3. Set up measurement structure

Set up analytics and ways to measure each of the key performance indicators you choose. You will need the measured data in order to determine your return on the investment of resources.

4. Calculate your return

Once your event has concluded, revisit your marketing goals. Review the measured indicators. Determine if you have received the benefit and achieved the marketing goals you set forth.

Leveraging Social Media for Your Event

Now that you have a better understanding of some of the social media and technology tools you can use to promote your event online, you can now go through the list again, and make decisions on which tools you would like to implement with your next event.

While these tools are common for promoting events, there are countless other strategies that can be applied to boost awareness for your event and encourage attendance. You now have an understanding of how to monitor social media activity and develop a social media marketing strategy that can be specifically tailored to your event. As your audience learns of the different channels of communication you offer, they will begin using these channels to participate and will be ready next year to do the same.

Using the tools we've talked about in this guide give you a cost-effective way to enhance the buzz around your event. The end result: increased event attendance, deeper relationships with customers and members, and a greater return on investment from your event.

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Social Technology Matrix

Here are some strategies, at a glance, for you to consider when planning your social media strategy.

	Planning the Event	Promoting the Event	Conducting the Event	Following Up After the Event
Event Website		Create website specifically for the event with registration and information.	Publish blog posts during the event.	Publish blog posts recapping the event.
Facebook	Ask for suggestions on speakers, venue, etc.	Post updates of event information.	Publish blog posts during the event. Show live feed on large monitor.	Ask for feedback from attendees.
Twitter	Ask for suggestions on speakers, venue, etc.	Post updates of event information.	Publish tweets during the event. Show live feed on large monitor.	Ask for feedback from attendees.
LinkedIn	Ask for suggestions on speakers, venue, etc.	Post updates of event information in industry groups.		
YouTube		Post videos promoting the event and speakers.	Interview attendees, and post videos.	
Foursquare		Include information on website on how to use Foursquare during the event.	Create location for attendees to "check in" during event.	
SMS Texting		Send information periodically through text.	Send announcements during the event.	

	Planning the Event	Promoting the Event	Conducting the Event	Following Up After the Event
Slideshare			Post speakers' presentations for access during event.	
Eventbrite		Use for event registration.		
Google Alerts		Monitor alerts for mentions of your event in media and online.		
Wikis	Set up Wiki to share information with planning team.	Keep members apprised of plans during promotions.		Share wrap up information and lessons learned.
Google Maps		Share maps to event from common destinations.	Offer maps to local restaurants and shopping.	
Visible Tweets			Show tweets on monitor during event.	
Flickr		Share photos of last year's event.	Upload photos taken during event.	
Industry Bloggers		Invite bloggers to write about your event.	Invite bloggers to write during event.	
Email Marketing		Send promotional emails.	Send last minute announcements.	Send follow-up information.
Online Surveys	Ask for suggestions from last year's attendees.			Ask for specific feedback about the event.

The following is a sample time line of steps to take to implement a social media and online marketing strategy for an event.

6 months	Set up wiki for collaboration with team.
	Create event website.
	Set up Eventbrite registration.
	Set up texting program.
	Begin sending text messages, twice a month.
	Create social media accounts.
	Begin publishing regular updates to social media accounts, twice a month.
	Begin publishing regular posts to blog, twice a month.
	Begin creating video interviews of speakers.
	Contact industry bloggers and invite them to write about the event.
	Begin collecting email addresses from website visitors. Send emails twice a month.
3 months before event	Make arrangements for large monitors for displaying social media on the day of the event.
	Publish blog posts, once a week.
	Publish social media updates, once a week.
	Send emails to email list once a week.
	Create and promote Facebook and LinkedIn Events.
	Begin creating video interviews of speakers.
1 month before event	Publish social media updates twice a week.
	Designate team members who will be updating social media and the blog during the event.
At the event	Finalize plan for setting up live tweets on large monitors at the event.
	Begin publishing periodic social media updates, text messages, and blog posts.
	Begin creating video and publishing to social media and the blog.
	Take photos during the event and post to social media.
After the Event	Email a poll to email list asking for feedback.
	Ask for feedback on social media sites.
	Post all photos to Flickr.
	Publish updates to blog and social media sites about feedback, and promote next year's event.