

Social Media Planning: Pre-Show

One year out

Create a Facebook® page, Twitter™ hash tag, YouTube™ Channel and LinkedIn® Group for your event. Do not brand the channels with a year, annual events have too short a life span to expect adoption over and over again. Tweets expire, so there is no need to waste precious characters putting “2011” on the end! If you continue to use the same group year after year, you will keep your inherent audience and add to it each year.

1. Advertise your channels at the current year's event:
 - In the onsite program, use a QR code ([see QR article](#)).
 - Advertise on the reverse side of your entrance units so that attendees will see it when leaving the hall.
 - Make buttons or have ribbons printed for registration staff to wear.
 - In your evaluation or thank you post-event emails.
2. On the social media channels, post links to your event website when it is available.
3. Post media coverage from the current year's event.
4. Walk your exhibit floor and take short videos of traffic, demonstrations, products, etc. Take a still photo of your exhibit floor setup every hour from the same spot and create a time lapse video showing the progression.
5. Solicit evaluation responses for name and organization and ask permission to share them in marketing materials. Use these as tweets, Facebook and LinkedIn posts as appropriate.
6. Post the social media channel icons on your association's home page with links to the join page for each.

Frequency: 2x week for the first 2 weeks post conference; 1x week for the next 2 weeks; 2x month for the next 3 months.

Eight months out

1. Begin to post calendar items such as “registration will open on _____” and “housing information will be available on _____”. If you don't have exact dates, you can use approximates like March 2012 or Spring 2012.
2. Post industry news and statistics that will engage your attendees.
3. Recycle some highlights from your show, they were only last quarter at this point so they won't be “old news”.

Frequency: 3x month for 2 months

Six months out

1. Start posting tactical items such as conference outline, program objectives, keynote speaker invites, special event or contest announcements.
2. Be sure to mention registration and housing dates again.
3. Post fun stuff about the host city to draw attention to the destination. Use the CVB for information about the city, venue or surrounding attractions.
4. Highlight specific anchor exhibitors (or high level members) and products they will be showcasing.
5. Put yourselves in the shoes of an attendee – what will they get out of your conference? Post from an ROI perspective.
6. Suggest tools to improve the attendee experience – My Expo Plan, Attendee Briefcase and Mobile Apps.

Frequency: 3x month for 2 months

Two months out – the planning really starts

From an attendee's perspective, the two months leading up to the show is when they start real preparations. They make sure they are registered, have housing, transportation, etc. They will probably try to find out who else is going from their network and set up some meetings.

1. Continue tactical postings about housing availability, registration links and venue information.
2. If your show is in a city which is covered by one of the plethora of coupon sites available (Groupon, Living Social, etc.), monitor that city's coupons and post good ones for your attendees to purchase.
3. Revisit some of the highlights from last year – use videos, event recaps, and testimonials
4. Encourage your exhibitors to submit a tweet and Retweet like mad!
5. Post some questions on Facebook and LinkedIn. The questions should be designed to spark conversation among the group.
6. Run a contest on Facebook – everyone who likes a status update gets registered to win a \$200 AMEX gift card.

Frequency: 3-5x week until the conference

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