

The Exhibitors' Guide to Social Media

The *Exhibitors' Guide to Social Media* will help you maximize your social impact at trade shows and face-to-face marketing events.

Inside you will find:

- Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn Tips
- Pre-, in- and post-event social media strategies
- Social media best practices
- Advice on calculating your social media ROI and more

Create your social media infrastructure

Learn how to engage your followers

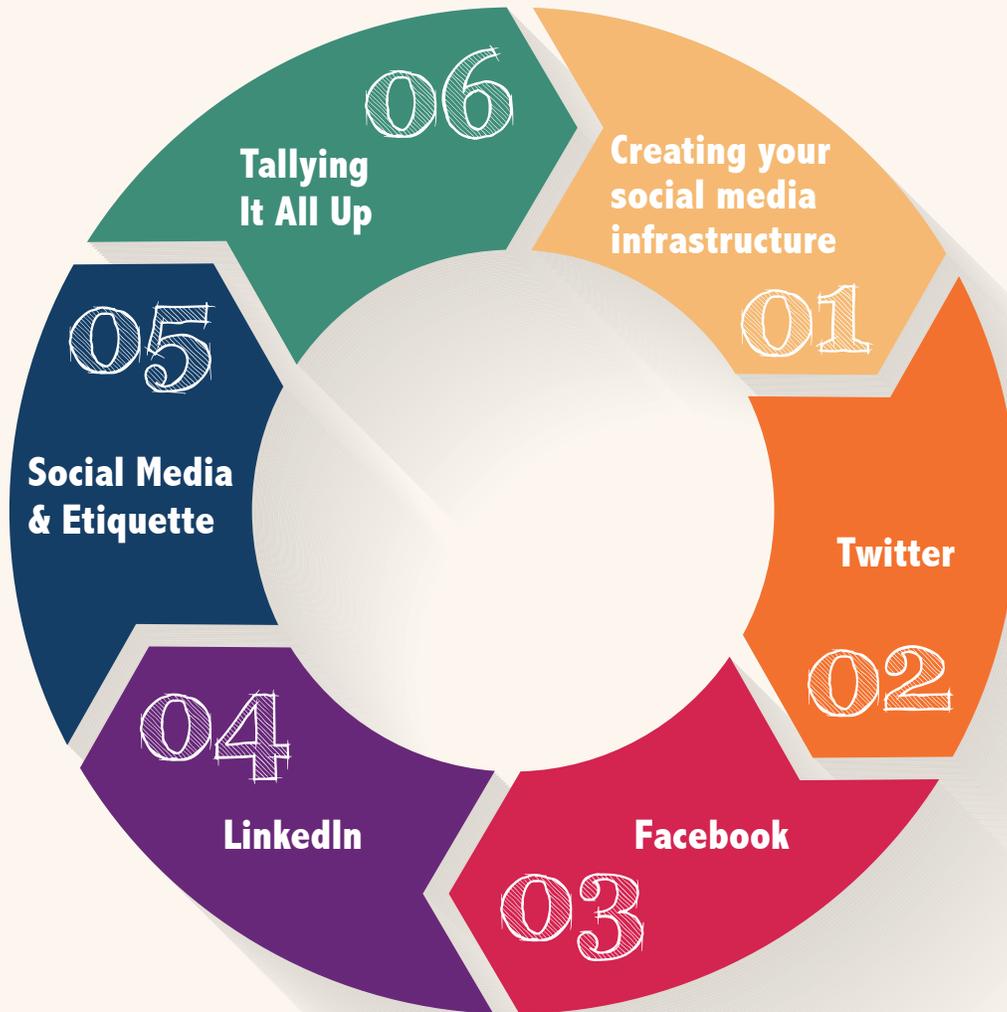
Quantify your social media efforts

And more



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From Gutenberg's movable press to radio to television, technology has long been one of the prime forces behind marketing innovation. The internet - like its predecessors - created a new landscape of mass communication through which marketers can reach their target audience.

Social media is one of the leading players in the internet's still burgeoning impact on the marketing world. Marketers who are able to harness the power of social messaging not only expand their reach, they also open a dialog with consumers. Before an event marketer can take advantage of social media's undeniable

impact, they must first set the groundwork for a well-planned social media infrastructure.

Keep in mind, the expense in using social media is in the time investment, and the return is in brand awareness and engagement, not dollars. Be wise about how much time you allocate towards your efforts, and whenever possible use automation tools to minimize your man-hours. Once you have determined how much time you have to invest in social media marketing, evaluate social media outlets and select the ones that offer enough return to warrant the time investment.

01

Creating your social media infrastructure

A comprehensive and full-circle marketing mix program utilizes an array of mediums and vehicles working together to touch a target audience, generate awareness and engage consumers. Social media marketing within the event marketing space is no different. If you want to maximize your social impact at a tradeshow or event, you should set up a strong foundation of interlocking social channels to maximize your reach.

This setup and the development of your social profiles will take time. You can't expect to have a successful social campaign with a profile or page that was hastily created only days in advance of an event. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, and if it had been, its empire would have lasted about just as long.

The Pillars of Event Marketing Social Media

The social media landscape is a diverse space made up of hundreds of different networks all vying for users and prominence. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the most popular social media platforms, with Pinterest, G+, Tumblr and Instagram following closely behind.

Before selecting your preferred social media platforms, do your homework and research to determine the social networks your target audience is using first. Your answer will determine the social channels that are worth the time and resource investment. It's also important to note that you should have a healthy amount of followers on whichever social channels you select before you begin engagement; there's no need to sing to an empty audience. Building an audience can be an initiative in its own right, and it should be done carefully so as to not communicate your tailored messaging to unqualified or uninterested parties. As previously stated, time is the currency of social media engagement. If you are relatively new to social media marketing, try focusing on one to three social media platforms, as to avoid spreading yourself thin. For the sake of brevity, this guide will cover Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.



02

Twitter

Twitter allows its 288 million monthly users* to post 140 character messages similar to a standard length SMS message. These short messages are referred to as “tweets” and appear in chronological order on a user’s Twitter profile. A social savvy exhibitor can use Twitter as a megaphone to amplify their brand’s message across the digital space.

Pre-Event Tactics:

Get the ball rolling with automation:

For maximum impact, tweets revolving around your event should be sent out weekly, starting at three months in advance of your event. Twitter, with its speed and spontaneity, offers you a great platform to send these weekly updates. However, during the pre-event planning phase, you may be too busy to post real-time updates. Using automated social media tools such as Hootsuite and TweetDeck to pre-schedule Twitter posts can help you educate followers, heighten awareness and invite your loyal followers to visit you on the show floor. Automation allows you to build a consistent and valuable social presence without having to invest too much time.

Research event official hashtags:

If you exhibit at multiple shows or participate in a number of events each year you may be aware of the fact that most events have official hashtags attached to them. To get ahead of the game, consider researching the official event hashtags for each of your scheduled events and incorporate them into your automated twitter schedule. This is a good way of spreading your message as far in advance as you can, gaining social traction over your competitors. Consider using the official hashtag to invite your followers to your event as “special guest” offering free event admission, a personal tour of your space and first looks at new products and services.

Pay attention:

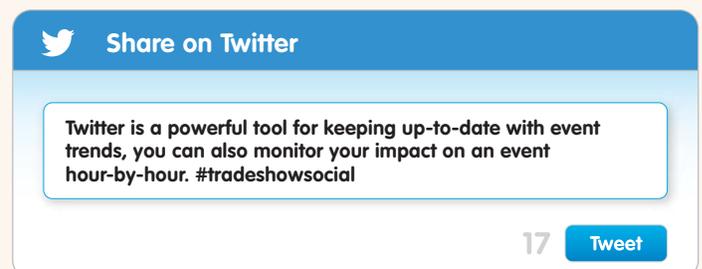
After researching and scheduling tweets for official event hashtags, make sure you keep your eyes on the official hashtags in the months leading up to your event. Staying up-to-date with the conversations taking place within the official event hashtags will better equip you in planning for your event. An added bonus to staying in-tune with official event hashtags is the ability to help steer the conversations taking place and emerge as a thought leader. This type of exposure will help create a strong buzz around your brand before the event even starts.

During-Event Tactics:

All antennas up:

As previously mentioned, tweeting with official event hashtags is a great way to get noticed in online social spaces. While on the tradeshow floor, you should observe the activity and trends happening within the official hashtag. Analyze this information to take the pulse of the event by following your competitors. You can also get live feedback on what attendees are thinking and invite them to visit with you at the show to engage face-to-face!

Social savvy exhibitors can take this live feed of event intelligence and tailor their event strategies on the fly. If attendees are using the official hashtag to inquire about certain products or services or are looking to connect, you should follow up with them and offer assistance. You can also check for negative tweets about your brand and booth and immediately respond to address the situation and offer to meet an attendee off-line and in person.



*(source: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>)

Twitter

Calling all followers:

Humans are instinctively drawn to crowds, light and movement. Playing on this psychology can help you generate new prospects at a tradeshow who are not currently following you on social media. Send out tweets using the official hashtag and encourage attendees to stop by your booth at a designated time for promotions, product demonstrations or to speak with your sales representatives. Basically, you are making sure you get to the attendees you may have missed during pre-event outreach. Creating a mass convergence at your booth will give the impression to your non-followers that your brand and company are important; that their peers are obviously drawn to you, so they should see what the fuss is about. By drawing your

followers to you, you are killing two birds with one stone: building a stronger relationship with your loyal base and creating an incentive for new prospects to check out your booth space.

Amplify your reach:

While using your corporate Twitter account for social outreach is important, encourage your booth staffers to use their personal Twitter profiles to engage with attendees. Booth staffers can act as a significant social signal amplifier by retweeting your corporate account tweets, responding to attendees' inquests individually (giving your brand greater problem-solving ability) and – most importantly – unifying the brand image and message.



Twitter

Video streaming:

Twitter's Periscope app is a great tool for live video streaming, and if you use it strategically, it can pay huge social dividends at a tradeshow or event. You can live stream in-booth activities such as contest, presentations and product demos to your followers, which can help generate interest and social sharing opportunities. As an added bonus, followers who are unable to attend your event will be able to remotely participate with your exhibition, extending your reach far beyond the event venue.



Post-Event Tactics:

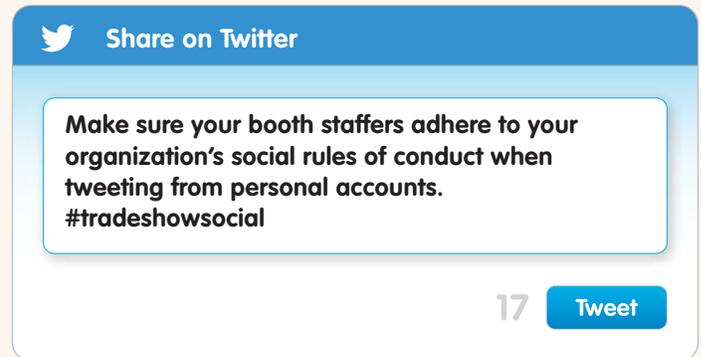
Thank you & goodbye:

After the lights have dimmed and the booth is packed up, it's time for you to thank your visitors. Recognizing your visitors personally – even if done through social media – goes a long way in keeping your brand and the event experience top-of-mind. Jump on the official event hashtag and thank everyone for stopping by your booth and for making the experience a great success. Also, use the corporate Twitter account to tweet thanks to your followers and send personal notes of thanks to those with whom you established a strong connection.

Example:



Remember, your booth staffers are great force multipliers, recruit them to tweet visitors personally or generally via the event hashtag, as this can be more meaningful and memorable.



Recap:

After the event, many attendees will still follow the event related hashtags to see what they missed or to get additional information on exhibitors. During this post-event review, you can give a recap of your contribution to the event by posting links to videos, pictures and to your online event-related resources.

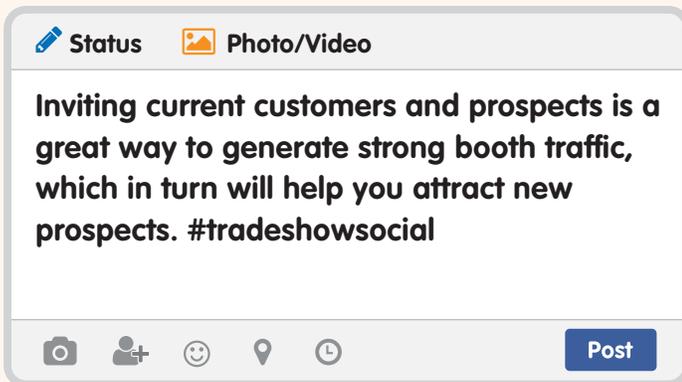
Consolidate your past with the present:

If you created a unique event hashtag for your brand you can use a service like Tweetwally to group together all of the tweets collected under your hashtag into one feed. You can take these consolidated tweets and use them as an overview of what attendees, other brands and you had to say about your exhibit. Also, it's a good idea to maintain the same event hashtag year-after-year and combine as many tweets as possible, creating a living history feed of your brands participation at an event.

03

Facebook

Facebook is the world's largest social networking site with a reported 1.23 billion monthly users*. Facebook enables its users to stay connected with family, friends, work colleagues, public figures and brands. Brands primarily use Facebook as an instrument of public relations and will often update their following with product launches, news, educational content, articles and updates within their respective industries.



Pre-Event Tactics:

Attract new followers:

One of the keys to event marketing success lies in a brand's ability to generate pre-event interest in attendees and prospects. This crucial piece of the event marketing also extends to the event marketing social sphere as well. If you want your social efforts to have a large impact then it is important to create new followers before you hit the show floor. Consider emailing prospects and attendees inviting them to "like" or "follow" your organization's Facebook page. You may also want to encourage followers to participate in a pre-event contest, which generates awareness of the event, your participation and your in-booth activities.

*(source: <http://thenextweb.com/facebook/2014/01/29/facebook-passes-1-23-billion-monthly-active-users-945-million-mobile-users-757-million-daily-users/>)

Make yourself buzzworthy:

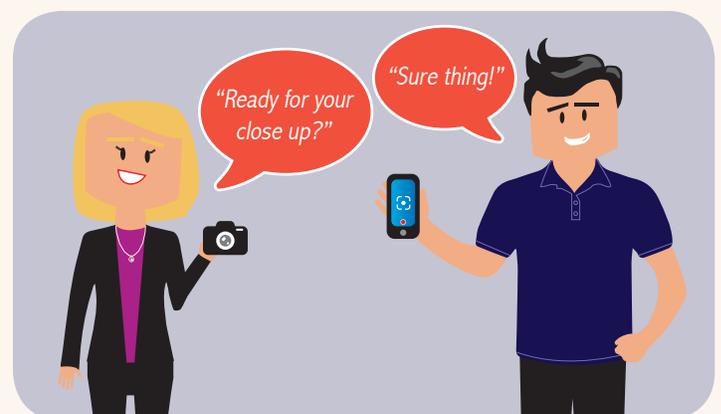
Generating interest is great, but you want to make your organization worthy of all the buzz you create. Use your organization's Facebook page as an educational resource on the new products, special offers and giveaways you plan on showcasing at the event along with digital resources and photos. You can place links with tracking variables in the comment section of each pre-event related photo. These links should direct people to resources such as white papers, brochures and product catalogs. By providing valuable resources and information, you will generate measurable pre-event awareness and buzz.

During-Event Tactics:

Promote your promotions & focus on the people:

Keeping your booth buzzworthy is a never-ending job. In-booth promotions are great for drawing attendees into your space, but without proper exposure they are fairly innocuous marketing instruments. To help incentivize event-goers, post pictures of those that visit your booth and your prizes and giveaways to your Facebook wall with a strong call-to-action. Facebook users want to see people, not products, so the goal is to creatively couple both and get visitors excited to share their own experiences as well.

Example:



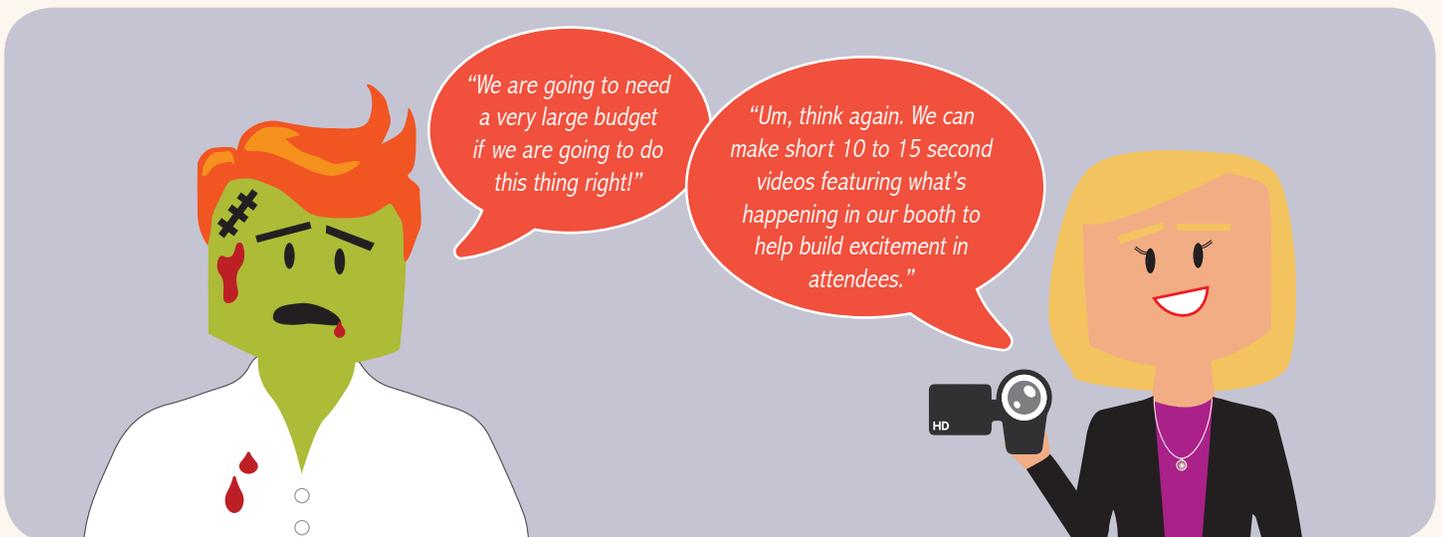
Facebook

Another way to generate visually-strong Facebook content is to set up a photo-booth or backdrop within your exhibit space. You can encourage your visitors to take and share pictures on their profiles for a chance to enter into a contest, thus getting visitors to use Facebook on your behalf. Also, make sure to cross promote your giveaways and promotions across all of your social media platforms for maximum impact.

A video is worth a thousand views:

Facebook allows users to upload and embed videos onto their page. Like photos, videos can have a great engagement factor with your event-goers. Many marketers - for the sake of

ease - will use Youtube or other external video hosts to post videos to their account. While a smart practice in theory (combining multiple social accounts and saving time), using Facebook's internal video app will allow you a more comprehensive look into the performance metrics of your video. Posting quick 10 to 15 second videos of what's happening on the show floor, contest teasers, attendee testimonials, contest/ game winners and staff antics are all great video content. To make sure you are getting the most from your videos, keep an eye on metrics such as average view duration and most viewed or popular topics.



Facebook

Post-Event Tactics:

Don't forget to be a friend:

After your event has ended, it's time to take social inventory. Encourage booth staffers to compile business cards they have collected on the tradeshow floor, filter through the collection and sort out cards with social contact information. Booth staffers can use this information to friend prospects on Facebook from their personal accounts, or "like" the contact's corporate page. Tag your newly acquired "friends" in pictures, videos or other content that you think they would enjoy. Send private thank you messages and share your digital resources.

Nimlok's *Smart Marketers Guide* is filled with helpful tips on pre-, during- and post-event marketing tactics. Visit www.nimlok.com/learning-center to download this and other helpful tools.



Here are some of the key social media insights from the *Smart Marketers Guide*:

TIPS FROM THE LIBRARY:

- Update all of your social media accounts with information on your event six weeks, three weeks and one week before your event



- Listen to what attendees want



- Promote your landing page socially if it contains content covering important event-related topics



- Post expert insights and observations about the event



- Post "best of" notes, quotes & stats from educational sessions



Encourage post-show engagement:

Sharing your organization's experiences at an event on your Facebook page is great, but you should also ask your follower to share what they loved about the event. Try posting a question to your page:

Example:

“We gave out three \$500 prizes to our visitors. How should they spend their winnings?”

“We revealed three new colors of widgets at Trade Show X. Which do you think was the best?”

You can also call on your followers to tag you in funny, inspiring or cool event-related post on their respective Facebook pages.

04

LinkedIn

Known throughout the business world for its ability to connect job seekers with potential employers and help professionals network, LinkedIn has over 300 million users to date*. LinkedIn operates similar to “Six Degrees of Separation” whereby professionals can leverage their established business relationships to create new ones. LinkedIn offers both free and paid accounts that users can use to network with other professionals in their company, industry or interest.

Pre-Event Tactics:

Beef up your company page:

LinkedIn corporate accounts are often neglected because so much of the average marketer’s social focus is geared towards Twitter and Facebook, but a strong company page can be a huge asset to social savvy event marketers. To strengthen your company’s LinkedIn page, you should give the public an accurate and attractive snapshot of your organization. Highlight your products and services, educate page viewers on upcoming projects and, most important, give people a peek into the inner workings of your organization. Allowing visitors a closer look helps foster a more intimate feeling between you and the public, thus sparking interest in your brand.

Productive product pages:

LinkedIn allows users the opportunity to create pages for products and services. You can leverage this feature to your advantage by creating product pages for the assets you hope to showcase at your event. One of the best features of LinkedIn’s product page includes a “recommendations” tool to help you generate buzz around your organization’s offerings. Visitors can also view testimonials from satisfied customers, read reviews, browse discussions and more. With strong product pages your brand will have built up social capital surrounding its products.

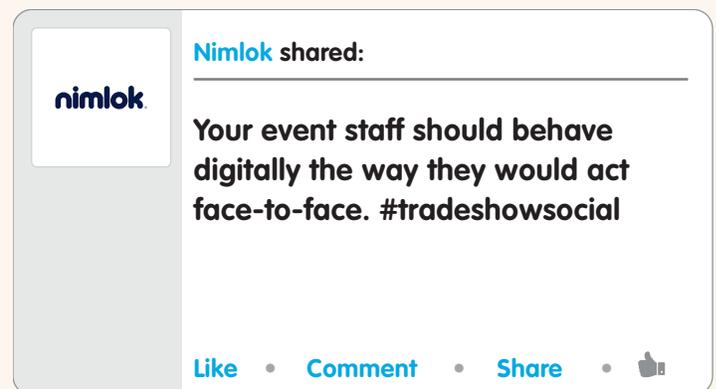
Join the pack:

Tradeshows often have a LinkedIn group associated with their event. Joining an event’s LinkedIn group will help give you an insider’s view on the topics surrounding the event, keynote speakers, session topics and overall narrative surrounding the show. You can also share these insights with your followers on Twitter and on Facebook.

Post-Event Tactics:

Thanks for the memories:

As with Twitter, using LinkedIn to send out thank you and farewell messages is a quick and efficient way to reach out to your connections. While saying your goodbyes, you can also use the opportunity to share your product page links and ask for your loyal followers as well as newly acquired ones to recommend your product or service. You will likely receive recommendations around this time because attendees and prospects have just recently viewed or used your product.



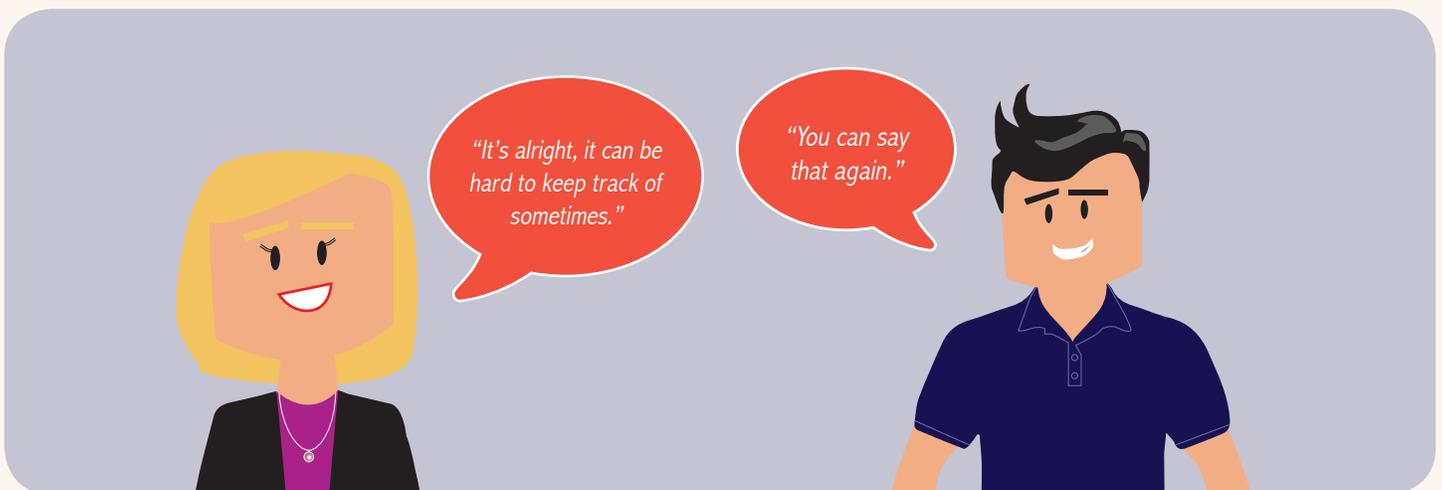
*(source: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/274050/quarterly-numbers-of-linkedin-members/>)

05

Social Media & Etiquette

An event marketer's journey into the world of social media begins with a readjustment in marketing philosophy. Social media is by definition social, so the rules and social protocols we observe in our everyday lives are still applicable in the online social spaces. As an event marketer, you must strive to cultivate a culture within your team that values listening and responding to your audience. Just as they would engage with a person face-to-face, it's not to be used primarily as a sales tool or lead generator, but more a conversation starter and relationship

builder in the marketing mix program. Think about it. No one likes the ego-entrenched partygoer who talks only of himself. The same is true of companies on social media. This realignment in thinking can be difficult because event marketers are often adept at broadcasting and educating the public on their message. Maintaining a continual two-sided conversation presents a new and challenging relationship for the social media marketers engaging with the public.



Social Media & Etiquette

Rules of Event Marketing Social Engagement:

01

Friendliness begets friendliness – If you are monitoring your events Twitter feed, you will likely run across an attendee asking a question to which you have an answer. In this situation, you can answer their question and encourage them to connect again if they need more help in the future. This same rule of friendliness and helpfulness applies to Facebook and LinkedIn as well.

02

Beggars lose, winners choose – Neediness is synonymous with desperation, and desperation is a huge social turn-off. Avoid begging for event attendees to “retweet,” “repost” or “like” your event content. You can mask your motives by using clever tactics, such as letting attendees know that “word is spreading” about a post you made. Or you can simply share insights and content that is inherently valuable.

03

Diversify your message – Repeatedly sharing the same social media post over and over again is an easy way for you to spread the word about your brand and your event promotions and activities, but attendees are savvy and will notice repeated posts they will eventually either ignore or stop following altogether. If you have nothing new to share, then share nothing.

04

Think before you post – It can be easy to get wrapped up in your own hype at an event. You may think that every witty, insightful and cool idea in your head is worth sharing. Before you hit the “post” button, think to yourself, “is this really something of value? Is anyone interested in this information besides me?” If the answer is no, then find something else of value to share or don’t share at all.

05

Tweet unto others as you would have them tweet unto you – This goes beyond Twitter and can apply to all of the social media platforms you are using. Think about all of the annoying and bothersome social media post that you ignore on your personal profiles and try to avoid similar post while engaging event attendees.

Tallying It All Up

Social media marketing is one of the most cost-friendly methods of consumer outreach. However, your cost in creating an effective social media infrastructure is in your **time investment**. To make sure you are getting the most out of your time investment, it is important to measure the effectiveness of your social media strategy and know in advance, how much time you can allocate to it.

Rethinking your return:

Return on investment is a key metric in determining the effectiveness of a tradeshow marketing campaign, but quantifying dollars and cents can be difficult when it comes to social media marketing. Instead of judging social media efforts by their return on investment, you should evaluate them by a new standard: return on engagement. Return on **engagement** is a metric that combines all of your social media posts across all of your company's social accounts during your event marketing campaign and then tallies up the amount of social media engagements such as likes, shares and reposts your social media accounts have garnered.

Creating your points system:

Implementing a point system to calculate your return on engagement is a great way to set and measure your social media goals. Your first step in creating a point system is assigning a value to each social engagement.

Twitter	Point Value	Facebook	Point Value	LinkedIn	Point Value
Favorites	1	Likes	1	Likes	1
Mentions	5	Comments	5	Comments	5
Retweet	10	Shares	10	Shares	10

Setting realistic and achievable goals is the next step. It can be difficult to gauge a realistic engagement numbers goal, but you can build an accurate estimation by looking at your non-event related social numbers and your number of followers on social media.

Twitter	Points Goal	Facebook	Points Goal	LinkedIn	Points Goal
Favorites	28	Likes	14	Likes	8
Mentions	40	Comments	30	Comments	15
Retweet	110	Shares	10	Shares	30
Point Total	178	Point Total	54	Point Total	53
EVENT POINTS TOTAL = 285					

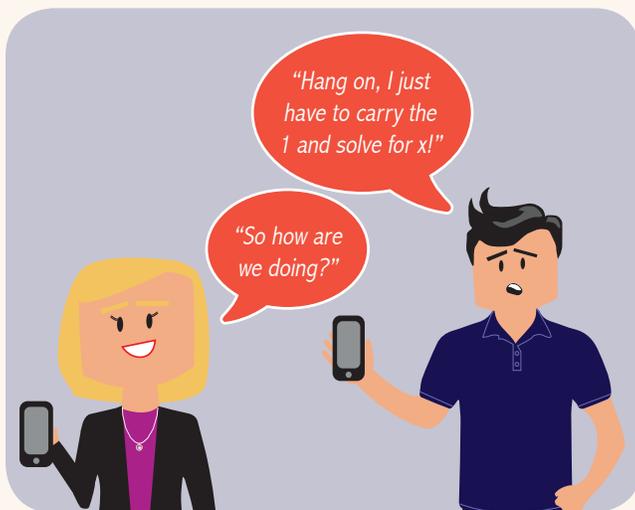
Tallying It All Up

After you set your goals and your campaign is drawing to a close, its time to tally up your numbers and see how your engagement totals fared against your pre-event expectations.

Twitter	Points	Facebook	Points	LinkedIn	Points
Favorites	27	Likes	47	Likes	12
Mentions	35	Comments	30	Comments	25
Retweet	50	Shares	20	Shares	40
Totals	112	Totals	97	Totals	77
EVENT POINTS TOTAL = 286					
EVENT POINTS GOAL = 285					

What Do Your Numbers Mean?:

If you fall short of your target, reevaluate your approach and adjust your plan for your next event. If you hit your number look at how you can further expand upon your success. If you hit well-above target, then evaluate whether you underestimated or out-performed your expectations and set loftier goals for the future. The numbers you generate via social media will inform you of the general interest the public has in your organization, which in turn can help you better adjust your overall event marketing strategy.



Tallying It All Up

Return on Engagement Worksheet

To help you keep track of your social engagement goals and targets we have provided you with an easy to complete worksheet that you can update throughout the social media marketing process.

Points Value:

Twitter	Point Value	Facebook	Point Value	LinkedIn	Point Value
Favorites		Likes		Likes	
Mentions		Comments		Comments	
Retweet		Shares		Shares	

Pre-Event Goals:

Twitter	Points Goal	Facebook	Points Goal	LinkedIn	Points Goal
Favorites		Likes		Likes	
Mentions		Comments		Comments	
Retweet		Shares		Shares	
Point Total		Point Total		Point Total	
EVENT POINTS TOTAL =					

During Event Totals:

Twitter	Points	Facebook	Points	LinkedIn	Points
Favorites		Likes		Likes	
Mentions		Comments		Comments	
Retweet		Shares		Shares	
Totals		Totals		Totals	
EVENT POINTS TOTAL =					
EVENT POINTS GOAL =					
POST EVENT POINTS TOTAL =					

Conclusion

Social media has had an undeniable impact on the way people interact with each other in our increasingly digitally-focused world. Given this new dynamic, it is important to keep in mind that, while social media can help organizations and individuals connect with clients and prospects, these connections are only as useful as a social practitioner's ability to translate digital connections into face-to-face realities. The tips and tactics outlined in this guide are designed to help you build the strongest social media foundation possible, which in turn will lead to you seeing increased return on your trade show investment.

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