The Tweeting Meeting
Social Media & Social Networks
For Meetings & Events
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#TWEETINGMEETING
The Meeting Support Institute

background

The Meeting Support Institute is a not for profit entity that aims at improving meeting effectiveness. It does so by helping tools and services, techniques and knowledge in exposure, development and education towards the meeting planners and organisers. The Meeting Support Institute in a way represents the Meeting Architect’s toolbox. The Meeting Support Institute has members that are individuals or companies with tools improving meeting effectiveness.

It was founded in 2006 based on the MPI CMM business plan of Maarten Vanneste. The main activities are a website, publication of articles and books like this one, managing a knowledge base on www.meetingsupport.org, presentations, MSI stands sponsored by meeting industry tradeshows like EIBTM and IMEX and networking events like the dinners around these trade shows. Our main project until now was a group of 11 member stands at IMEX Frankfurt. This has been possible thanks to the support and sponsoring of IMEX. Thanks to this IMEX project, the Meeting Support Institute has been able to develop several other projects. And the FRESH conference 2012 in Copenhagen Denmark is the latest and biggest project organised by the Meeting Support Institute.
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Twee it 3meetings, most of us didn’t see it coming, some of us still don’t.

Social media and social networks (SM/SN) are all around us. In just a few years they have taken a place that seems to gain more influence, faster than anything ever before. Also in meetings, conferences, events and exhibitions... Things evolve at high speed and who knows what will be next.

What influence does it all have on you? Can you just ignore it and wait until it’s over? Or should you start looking for a fulltime SM/SN manager? The truth probably lies somewhere in between these two extremes. I’m sure that after reading this book you will have a better idea of where social media can lead you and how it may help your projects. And despite the title, we are not only talking about Twitter.

Besides the history of social media, - yes, HIS TO RY - we also address groups, communication, marketing, generations, risk, regulating, research and some cases.

Throughout this book there are dozens of tips, tricks and apps you can investigate and apply right away. As I was reading this book for the first time, I constantly grabbed for my Android smartphone, my Apple iPad or typed away on my laptop PC.

I am still using these apps and techniques that help me in co-organising my next conference, managing my own tweets, groups, etc.

Hyper

While reading this book I also started to wonder: do conferences now also attract the ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), ADD and hyperactive people that didn’t come to presentations in the past because they were expected to sit still and they got bored to death?

Do conferences now start to benefit from these many people’s skills of, for example, constantly reporting to the outside world what is happening inside a congress?

I for one am somewhat hyperactive, but I can’t type a tweet and listen at the same time. Maybe I type too slow so that I miss half the presentation I’m trying to tweet about. I’d love to do some reporting via ping.fm: that may be good for the conference, but it’s not good for me. So what should I do? You probably think: follow a speed-typing course.
Another question that is being discussed is about how we build relations as people? A test with Martin Sirk at an ICCA (The Netherlands) educational session showed that in associations the meeting planner unanimously sees this relation building / networking as the number one reason why people come to conferences. First you get to know someone, then you may like them and only later you will trust them enough to move into an action, a result. How far can we go with social media in building relations?

In a long and late call with Bänz Ledin (USA, Switzerland) he introduced this issue and later I sent him a summary of our thinking in one slide, naming it Banzwidth: the same as the well-known Internet Bandwidth but based on his first name Bänz.

Social media has a low Banzwidth and face to face the highest possible Banzwidth.

If face to face is 100Bzw and ‘not communicating at all’ to someone is 0Bzw, how much Bzw do social media have?

In the above drawing, under technique, place ‘social networks’ where you think it fits.

These and many other questions will be discussed over the coming years and as always ‘Change will land, and look as if it always was’.

Before that happens, some chaos and confusion will be inevitable. That is okay. Don’t worry, you are not alone. You don’t have to know everything and certainly not master everything.

Starting with this book is however a good plan to create at least a beginning of a plan or an SM/SN strategy. I dare to say this book is a good foundation for meeting design with SM/SN.
So it is appropriate to thank all the authors of this book. Without them this book would not exist. The creation of a book is a slow process in times of fast media but our authors have been instrumental in getting things done on time. And still, when the ink of the printer is dry, we will probably start working on the update.

### The next version of this book

Social media will keep evolving and changing so every few years this book will need an update. If you feel ready to contribute to the ‘Tweeting Meeting version II’ send me your chapter idea in an email at maarten.vanneste@meetingsupport.org and we will add it to our list.

### The Meeting Support Institute

The MSI is an organisation / association that aims at increasing the size of your toolbox as a Meeting Architect, meeting planner, meeting facilitator and even meeting owner. If you want to increase the effectiveness of your meetings, you start with the identification of objectives and then you go into the design: the more tools you have in your toolbox, the better your design will be. All sorts of things are in our toolbox today, like meeting formats, facilitation, design and colour, audio visual and technology.

Based on the taxonomy laid out in the book ‘Meeting Architecture, a Manifesto’ we classify tools in our toolbox in five categories summarized in one word: CHATTY.

- C stands for Conceptual which means formats, concepts, techniques.
- H is for Human as in actors, facilitators, etc.
- A for ART is about music, theme, show, artists, colour, set design, theme, etc.
- T stands for Technical as in space, furniture, stage, AV, etc.
- TY is TechnologY like on line and hands one technology including, voting systems, online networking tools, RFID, etc.

Social media is a whole new drawer in the technology section of our toolbox so the MSI had to invest in it, hence this book.

I am very proud of the result and sure it will contribute to the MSI’s mission: helping you to design more effective meetings. As things evolve we now all have an on-going project in updating the information available, to keep your toolbox up to date. Make sure you register on [www.meetingsupport.org](http://www.meetingsupport.org) for regular updates. And ask the questions or join discussions in the LinkedIn group Meeting Architecture.

Also keep your eyes open for many of our authors as speakers. The industry associations, global ones like MPI or PCMA, and regional national organisations spend a lot of effort in organising education at their international conferences and local chapter meetings. If you have the chance, become a member go there to learn more and stay up to speed.

For now, enjoy the rest of this book and get that meeting tweeting!
Thank you

I need to thank a lot of people for their contribution and support. First of all Nisan Bartov who started this book with an idea in the summer of 2010. Than the hard work of Rosa Garriga Mora (Spain) editing the different contributions and making everything fall into place in time and on budget. She was seconded to the project by Event ROI Institute. We thank also Managing Partner Dr. Elling Hamso for his coaching and support as well as managing with only a part time Marketing and Media Manager for the duration of the project.

Secondly all the authors:
• Corbin Ball, Corbin Ball Associates, USA
• Terrance Barkan, Socialstrat, USA
• Nisan Bartov, CongressMed, Israel
• Shuli Golovinski, Newtonstrand, UK
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• Jennifer Jones, IALD (International Association of Lighting Designers), USA
• Jessica Levin, Seven Degrees Communications, USA
• Miguel Neves, IMEX Group, UK
• Jeff Rasco, Attendee Management Inc., USA
• Jan Vermeiren, Networking Coach, Belgium
• Dennis von Ferenczy, amiando, Germany

Each of them has invested time in this project and shared their knowledge. All of them realize their work is merely a time stamp so I hope to keep them on board for the next version...

By then we probably will have new authors joining in to fill the blank spots we have in our index. Leave your comments, suggestions and ideas on http://www.meetingsupport.org/TweetingMeeting
We thank our pre-readers: Peter Haigh (UK), Stefania Conti-Vecchi (Italy) and Miguel Neves (UK).

A big thank you for an extremely fast service from the design/layout team at Nadruk with a special mention of Teun, Gunther and Gert. And of course the printing support by Brigitte and Stephan at Vestagraphics.

A few practical things

We have tried to produce a book with a grammar that will be appreciated by readers from all over the world. For a niche market like this, we do not expect a lot of translation will happen, although we are open to it. We tried to use simple English, for the many non-native English-speaking readers we expect will want to read this book.
Some of our authors have written with association congresses in their mind. Others are more focussed on corporate meetings. These are two very different worlds, but each can learn from the other, and social media don’t know any real borders anyway.

Use a pen, a marker or post it notes, and mark the 3 or 5 most important ideas you feel you need to apply. Unless you are a full time SM/SN manager for conferences, it will be impossible to apply all the ideas and suggestions from this book. Be ready to select what is valuable for you, so you can take action after (or even during) reading this book.

This is why this book may take longer than expected. Make sure you have your smartphone, iPad or Computer handy while you read: many of the tips can be tested or applied right away.

Maarten Vanneste started his own company at the age of 18. He successfully grew a one man video production company into a professional AV company with a team of 12 full time. In the 90’s he started to focus on meetings and conferences, expanding services specifically for this international market. Based in Belgian Maarten became an international supplier and global player. As a member of MPI he became chapter president, moved into international leadership and attained his CMM. The Business plan from his CMM project became reality as the Meeting Support Institute (2006); an association for companies with services and products on the content side off meetings. In 2007 Vanneste wrote his first book “Meeting Architecture, a manifesto” (MSI 2008). This became an industry bestseller and lead to a movement and an international not-for-profit ‘Project Meeting Architecture’ For his work and influence on the Meetings industry, Maarten Received the IMEX Academy Award in 2005 and the MPI RISE Industry Leadership Award in 2011.
1. The Past, Present and Future of Social Media

by Corbin Ball, CMP, CSP

Social media have seen the fastest adoption rates of any technology trend in history. The ramifications for events and trade shows are huge as these industries depend so thoroughly on social interaction. In a way, events can be considered the original social media and associations have been the original social networking tools serving similar purposes long before the web was invented.

This chapter will cover the history of social media development as it pertains to events and trade shows, the hot areas of development, and ideas about how this will change events in the future.

Social media definition

Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multidirectional conversations in or around the content.

- Social media can be divided into at least four broad categories:
  - Social publishing (blogs, YouTube, Flickr, SlideShare, Twitter, Google Docs)
  - Social collaboration (wikis, instant messaging, crowd sourcing)
  - Social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn)
  - Social feedback (TripAdvisor, Yelp)

All these categories involve user-generated content and all hold great potential for meetings and events.

In the beginning....

The earliest roots of social media for the events industry started in 1993 with MPINet, an online bulletin board started by Meeting Professionals International on CompuServe. Although archaic by today’s standards using dial-up modems, MPINet grew to over 2,500 users in the next three years, with many of the participants experiencing email for the first time through this network. The success of MPINet was the ability to establish a community, to share ideas, to ask questions from your peers. These qualities are still keys in the success of many of today’s social media tools.

These online forums/bulletin boards evolved to web-based tools. The MIMList (Meeting Industry Mall) became popular in the late 1990’s and, still today, there are active meeting industry forums using Google Groups, including MeCo – The Meetings Community (http://www.meetingscommunity.org/) and the MiForum (http://groups.google.com/group/miforum).
2. How to Properly Use Social Media to Enhance and Promote Your Event

By IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions and Events)

Introduction

Social networking, with its by-product social media, has arguably been the most rapid innovation to overtake the exhibitions and events industry ever. What began as a few disparate tools for sharing information has quickly evolved into a philosophy that has profoundly changed the way that companies listen, share, learn and engage. Social media represents a tremendous opportunity for companies to enhance and promote events. This chapter provides industry professionals with a roadmap for implementing, maintaining and measuring social media initiatives.

Research

An open, opt-in survey distributed by the International Association of Exhibitions and Events™ (IAEE) in May 2010 revealed some important findings from 59 show organizers. The majority of respondents were exhibition organizers, aged 36 to 55, in senior management positions (senior executive, director), in the sales and show operations departments, and plan light to moderate use of social media. Survey findings included:

- The top three platforms being utilized by respondents were Facebook (85 percent), LinkedIn (81 percent), and Twitter (78 percent) with blogs a distant fourth (42 percent).
- Respondents cited light to moderate participation in social media among their members, competitors and professionals within their industries.
- The top three strategic objectives of the majority of respondents engaged in or were planning to engage in social media included:
  - Increase brand awareness and visibility
  - Grow/develop an online community
  - Supplement existing marketing efforts
- The majority of respondents used Google Analytics or did nothing to measure social media marketing results.
- Respondents revealed that most do not have a documented social media strategy or policy, even though the majority indicated that they have a staff or team designated to work on social media.
- The largest percentage of respondents indicated that only 2 to 10 percent of their marketing budgets were allocated to social media in 2009, while the majority has allocated 11 to 25 percent of the budget to social media for 2010.
3. Social Media and its Marketing Aspect for the Meeting Industry: Evolution or Revolution?

By Nisan Bartov

How it all started

Towards the end of the 20th century, the Internet revolutionized the entire world. In the conference industry, companies started to handle registration and abstract management online and advertise their conferences via the Internet (either with electronic ads or with newsletters). Most of the PCOs, however, are still not completely aware of all the new options the Internet offers, and accordingly do not reach their potential. The Internet is not only a major promotional tool, it is also a major source of measurement of your promotion. How many people visit your website every day? How do the newsletters affect your web traffic? Are you reaching your target audience? Compared to the previous conference, do you have the same traffic or were you able to increase it (i.e. public awareness)? How do the Internet users find your website? How long did they stay, and what were they looking at on your website?

This list could be endless. It is essential to ask those questions as they not only deliver important information about whether your marketing strategies hit, but also gives you an estimation as to what to expect from your event six months prior to the conference or even before. A new conference in the field of Gynecology held in Montreal in June 2011 had more invited speakers than participants; actually it did not deserve the name “International Conference”, but perhaps “International Workshop”. I doubt that the speakers would have attended this event under this description. By understanding the statistics and the information gathered from the Internet, this project could have been stopped and cancelled months before avoiding a flop and a massive financial loss.

According to "Internet World Stats", in the year 2000 there were 361 million Internet users. Today, in the year 2011, almost 2 billion people are connected. This is an increase of 445% in a little more than 10 years. In Europe and Australia, around 60% of the population is connected to the Internet, in North America even more than 77%. In the beginning of the century there was no discussion anymore as to whether the Internet was essential or not. It was! The question was only whether the Internet was the main marketing tool, or whether “old fashion” promotion was still more efficient.

A recent statistic considering several conferences, showed that 28% of the participants hear about conferences for the first time via an Internet related source (e-newsletter, link, Google, etc.). Is this result reflecting the real picture, or does this show that there is still much more to get out of the Internet? The fact is, we did not use or advertise in any social Media and we did not use any paid adverts
There’s A Reason it’s Called Social Networking

By Jessica Levin, MBA, CMP

Eye contact. Face time. Shaking hands. All are the raison d’être of events and conferences. While even the most tech-savvy networkers and event planners know that nothing can surpass face-to-face meetings, social networking technology has made strides not only by enhancing in-person meetings, but also in furthering the level of interaction between participants. At meetings and conferences - people learn from each other, form relationships, and share ideas. The introduction of social networking into such events enables attendees, speakers, sponsors and conference organizers to interact, thereby getting to know each other, before during and afterwards. This chapter discusses the added value that technology can provide to networking activities.

Before broaching the topic of social networking, it’s essential to first address the fundamentals of the “best practices” of traditional networking. One of the most effective practices is the “paying it forward” technique coined “net weaving” by Bob Littell [8]. The premise of net weaving is positioning oneself as a resource by connecting others without expecting anything in return. When meeting new people, the first priority for netweavers is to determine how they can be of assistance, by listening to what others have to say and what is important to them. Netweavers then connect their new acquaintances to others such as potential clients or employers. Those who apply this practice and philosophy are often the first people who others turn to when they need help finding a consultant, doctor, lawyer, accountant, etc. The pay-off is that a netweaver stays “top of mind” when the services that he or she offers are needed; it’s a win-win situation both in terms of good karma and good connecting.


Social networking has leveled the playing field for alpha and beta networkers. One of the most challenging tasks for an attendee at a meeting is walk into a ballroom and meet new people. Even though others are in the same situation and hoping to be approached, it is still intimidating. At face-to-face meetings, effective, savvy networkers make the “first move” which gives them somewhat
5. How to REALLY use LinkedIn to boost visibility and attendance

By Jan Vermeiren

Over 120 million people (and this number is growing at one new member per second) have a profile on LinkedIn and also a few connections. However, the question that most people ask is: what does this website have that I can use to my own advantage? Another question that keeps popping up is: how to use LinkedIn to give more visibility to my own events or those of my customers? And last but not least: how to use LinkedIn to attract more participants?

The single most important benefit of LinkedIn

For me, the most powerful concept behind LinkedIn is that it finds the right people AND the connections you have with them. It makes the networks of the people we know visible. LinkedIn shows us our second and third degree networks and the paths towards them. This has tremendous value.

Why? Many people already have difficulty keeping track of their own (first degree) network. It is impossible to know whom our network knows. LinkedIn makes this visible. This is extremely powerful especially if you start with the end or goal in mind. Many people make the “mistake” to only look at their own network when they are looking for someone to help them, to find a new job or new customers. In this way they are limiting themselves tremendously.

But what if we start with defining the best person, discover who they are and then find out via whom we can get introduced to them?

For example let’s suppose you are an independent meeting planner looking for new customers. Let’s assume you want to work for Coca Cola in the Los Angeles area.

What most people then do is think of whom they might know at Coca Cola. Then they can’t think of anyone and give up. Or they call the front desk, ask for the Marketing Manager and are stalled by the receptionist. Or the Marketing Manager says she is going to call back, but never does. Frustration!

Let’s now start with the goal in mind. You define the Marketing Manager as the person who can help you best reaching your goal: organizing a meeting for Coca Cola. Then you use LinkedIn and do an “advanced search” with “Marketing Manager, Coca Cola, Los Angeles”. The result is that you don’t only find the exact name of the person, but also the connections you share with this person.

When you then look at the mutual connections you have, you might discover that this person is connected with your neighbour. You didn’t know this because Coca Cola never has come up in your
6. The Best Ways to use Twitter to make Your Event A Success

By Dennis von Ferenczy

With the knowledge of more than 100,000 events worldwide that use amiando.com for online event registration, ticketing and social media marketing we thought it was about time to dig deeper into how social media is being used around events. Therefore we conducted a study focusing on the actual use of Twitter and giving recommendations on how you can apply the findings to make your event a success.

Why You Should Observe Your Audience

Did you ever wonder how attendees behave and what they are thinking before, during, and after your event? Today’s social media tools allow you to find out exactly that while getting valuable feedback from the people you care most about, your customers.

“Social media is, at its most basic sense, a shift in how people discover, read, and share news and information and content. It is a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologue (one to many) into dialogue (many to many).” Brian Solis’ (9) definition points out the dialogue that is enabled by the variety of communication channels available to users through social media. For the first time, conversation between consumer and provider is possible – and this conversation can be systematically evaluated.

Therefore we developed this study. In particular, we focused on the conversation of event attendees on Twitter, which we considered as the medium that offers the highest and most dynamic level of activity needed for such an endeavor. In the following we present an analysis of participant feedback and take a look at variations over ten events. With this data about the behavior of event attendees we provide future event organizers with a reference so that they can evaluate themselves and their social media strategy.

(9) Thought leader and author in new media.

The Data Source: Twitter and Ten Events

Twitter

To collect data for our analysis we chose the micro blogging site Twitter together with an application that creates a database of all conversation around an event. Apart from the great tool support, another reason for us to choose Twitter is the fact that active Twitter users are so-called power users,
7. RT “Cloud computing vs cloud commuting”; the social media [r]evolution

Crisis Management & Technologies That Enable You To Save Your Event

by Ruud Janssen, CMM

Introduction
Good news travels fast...bad news even faster

Have you experienced that sometimes cloud computing is getting easier than cloud commuting? In this chapter you will have the opportunity to explore and be tempted to test new ways of collaborating and communicating with those involved in your event and more specifically when your event is being disrupted by a crisis.

Technology itself can be disruptive but maybe not to the same extent as a crisis. This chapter will provide insights and tips for using social media during emergencies and crisis. The content is based on successful “Plan B’s” for emergency situations and events when confronted with a crisis.

This chapter will enable you to discover new communication channels and technology tools to manage your unexpected event interruptions.

When your event is troubled by interruptions of any kind (volcano eruptions, power outage, strikes, etc.) knowing what technology to use to create backup plans and being prepared is key. A crisis is certainly not the time to stop and start at the beginning of the learning curve.

After reading this chapter you will be able to:

- Identify the why, what and how of crisis communication
- Know how social media can keep you informed of the activities and location of your audience
- Discover how social media has assisted in extreme emergencies and how that applies for events and meetings.

When worlds collide; the social media [r]evolution

Event disruptions; not if, but when...

What happens when worlds collide? The least we can conclude is that unparalleled streams of energy are freed. Giving that energy the right channels and direction is the task at hand for anyone involved in a crisis situation. Many have experienced disruptions at their events. Be it the volcanic eruptions in
8. Culture, Control and Communication: Going beyond ‘classical’ Social Media

Structured crowdsourcing helps to conduct more effective physical meetings

By Frank Martin Hein

For most employees their computer screen defines how they see their company. Tasks are being assigned to them via the computer. They assign tasks the same way. They are informed, controlled, penalized and rewarded online, experience interaction and identity. The culture of modern corporations is strongly reflected in all electronic media, processes and tools deployed. Social media can be used to monitor the culture and to advance it. In knowledge-based organizations or among employees who are widely distributed geographically, physical meetings are mostly reserved for special events. Even more important is their alignment with other platforms. It should be deliberate and well planned. Structured crowdsourcing offers an effective approach to bridge both worlds.

Physical meetings happen for good reasons. Meetings and events serve as social glue, which helps to build strong teams and refresh ties amongst coworkers. Once people are together in one room, most of the exchange assumes a non-intellectual character: spatial proximity, gesture, mimics, tone of voice and smell matter much more than pure verbal information, which dominates conversations online. Two consequences result: first, as the capacity of reunions to convey factual information is very limited, physical meetings should be prepared in the best possible way. They should carry only the most adequate content and nothing else. Second and equally important is the cultural fit. As much as the ‘form follows function’ in good design, the agenda and setting of a meeting should reflect the most important issues a group of people has to deal with and match its cultural needs. If it does not, inconsistencies or even contradictions emerge, which divert the attention of the participants.

Listening to all before a few are speaking

Meetings should not only mirror the priorities of the few who have access to the speaker’s podium. To make an event worthwhile for the participants, it should fit their interests too. To take full advantage of physical reunions requires capturing the insights of all those participating - which is a difficult task with large groups. As the center of knowledge moves away from traditional decision makers - those who usually decide the agenda top-down - smarter leaders appreciate that they fare better if they listen to their audience before they speak to it. Insight captured before the physical gathering is invaluable to shape the agenda and to accelerate the path to workable results during the meeting. At the same time, this greatly reduces the risks of a cultural clash. Some social media are well placed to do this job.
To begin, let us establish and clarify the different generations we will be talking about throughout this chapter. We will briefly touch on the Pre-Baby Boomer generation known as Traditionalists, then Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. The focus of this chapter will be on the Baby Boomers onwards.

The Baby Boomers began immediately following World War II (approximately 1946 to 1964), and their goal is to build a stellar career. Generation Xers were born between 1965 and 1980, and value having a portable set of skills within their career, regardless of where their current employment leads them. Generation Y (also known as the Millennials) were born between 1981 and 1999. While they are still new to the workforce, they value the idea of having multiple careers simultaneously, so as to minimize the possibility of becoming obsolete. The most recent generation (Generation Z) born since 2000, will most likely have a completely different set of goals than the previous generations.

Meetings, Conferences and Exhibitions today are a lot like they were a hundred years ago. Typically, they consist of a set of exhibitors showing their offerings and speakers presenting their ideas with slides. These slide shows tend to consist of roughly 30 slides, across a 45-minute presentation per speaker. Often, this would be coupled with vendor exhibits in the spaces adjacent to the speaking areas, where attendees could check out what is on offer.

These presentations are broken up by short networking sessions that are strictly informal. Traditionally, the attendees of these meetings and conferences have been completely satisfied with the overall nature of the meeting, which has brought them back again and again. However, there has been a sort of “changing of the guard” with regards to who are the most likely attendees today. And this is going to change once again, perhaps sooner than many of us would like to admit.

The issue at hand is not who we have been dealing with, nor who we are dealing with at the moment. The issue that we must begin to prepare for as soon as possible is who will be attending our meetings and conferences in the next ten years? And more importantly, what will the group be like, which will completely dominate the meetings in the future? This is a completely different group than the ones who have been attending meetings and events up until today.
10. Guidelines and Policies for Social Media and Meetings

By Terrance Barkan, CAE

Social media is a powerful tool to really enhance the meeting experience of your attendees as well as to help you and your team to more successfully manage your events. It is important to establish well-prepared guidelines and policies to help ensure you get the most out of your social media efforts.

Note: There are no “templates” or standards when it comes to social media use policies for organizations. It really depends on how risk averse or how risk tolerant your organization is and how you want to use social media for your event!

Some organizations will want or need to maintain a tight control over the use of social media (for example, a medical meeting where the publication of certain content is sensitive), and others will be quite comfortable with very open and unstructured use of social media during the event. It is important when designing your social media strategy, guidelines and policies to think about how open or how controlled you feel you need to be for your meeting.
IMEX America 2011

By Miguel Neves

Personal Background
As a self-professed social media activist I am a regular user of social media, in particular Facebook and LinkedIn, where I manage a handful of pages and groups. I am also semi active on Twitter, but my usage of Twitter is quite different. I tend to dip into Twitter in my spare time both on a computer and on a mobile device, often while travelling, and I am certain to find useful information on events and social media. My regular usage of Twitter significantly ramps up when I am attending events. When participating at events, especially those with concurrent sessions or various options of activities, I become extremely active on Twitter, which by design or by attendee driven initiative becomes the online backchannel for the event. Informal research amongst my Twitter connections suggested this is common practice.

Twitter As Events Backchannel
The use of Twitter as an event backchannel is increasingly popular, a use which seems to suit the micro-blogging technology perfectly. The public nature of Twitter makes it inclusive and events are a great way to meet like-minded people to follow. The use of hash tags provides a simple way to aggregate user generated content and make it easy to filter the twitter barrage of information into a somewhat focused stream of content. When hash tags are clearly defined and communicated via an event’s marketing materials, signage and collateral this can go a long way to encourage Twitter uptake during the event. In my experience events are encouraging this usage of Twitter more and more. At events where the audience is quite technology savvy, the Twitter backchannel is used extensively and is largely attendee driven. When the audience is mixed, this is not as common and unless a critical mass is achieved the Twitter backchannel loses its significance.

IMEX America
IMEX America is new to the IMEX Group, but comes with 9 years of experience managing IMEX in Frankfurt. The unique mix of trade show with hosted buyer driven appointments and a varied educational offering makes this a complex and multi-faceted event. It also makes it an ideal event for a healthy Twitter backchannel, which will be at the core of the show’s social media activity during the 3 busy days of the show. Rather than putting the onus of managing the Twitter backchannel on the attendees, I have taken it upon myself to do everything in my power to make the backchannel a healthy and productive support and promoting tool of the show as well as offering a great online customer service.
Next steps:

If you wish to expand your knowledge or stay up to date in social Media and other tools for creating more effective meetings, here are a few things you can do:

Register yourself on www.meetingsupport.org, the website and knowledge base from the Meeting Support Institute. This will get you a regular digest of the latest tools and knowledge to be used on the content side of meetings and events.

Become a member of the LinkedIn group Meeting Architecture. In this group you can join discussions, share experiences and start discussions on Social media or any other topic around designing meetings based on objectives.

Join the FRESH conference at www.theFRESHconference.com. This is the conference on Designing Effective Meetings. Here you meet all kinds of participants with backgrounds in technology, production, facilitation, education, etc. Speakers address topics in Science, tools and formats applicable to meetings. Products, services and books are launched there.
“This is exactly what our industry needs – a roadmap for optimizing social media for meetings and events. It not only provides research and reasons to incorporate social media in meetings, but also offers practical ideas and strategies on how to take advantage of new media to create effective and engaging meetings.”

Claire Smith, VP, Sales & Marketing, Vancouver Convention Centre, Canada.

“This book represents a remarkable timestamp of our current ideas, collectively presented by an impressive list of meeting industry thought leaders on this matter. Use these models, real-life cases and very practical tips to build up your ‘creative energy’ and to get inspired.”

Gerrit Heijkoop, speaker & trainer, Triqle Event Intelligence, The Netherlands.

I strongly believe the use of Social Media is connected to the success of each event. The Tweeting Meeting, shares the experience and the know-how of brilliant minds. It responds to the big need to be skilled and ready to use these wonderful means effectively”.

Stefania Conti-Vecchi, CEO EVENTagist, Italy.

“Crammed full of good advice and ideas on how to best use social media and networks to promote, enhance and transform your events!”

Adrian Segar, author of Conferences That Work, Vermont, USA.

“The Tweeting Meeting is the most comprehensive and comprehensible ‘Social 101’ guide I have seen for the events industry. I think anyone in any business grappling with the complexity of Social should read this guide.”

Leonora Valvo, CEO etouches, Connecticut, USA.

“With various points of view by leading experts in social media and useful case studies, this book is an essential step for professionals who wish to make their meetings and events 2.0. It’s a no-brainer: we need 2.0 events, and therefore we all need to read this book.”

Eric Mottard, eventoplus, Barcelona, Spain.

“This is the first truly comprehensive look at social media in meetings and events. This work will prove extremely valuable for meeting and event planners globally and will become an important resource for those of us in higher education as well.”

Carl Winston, San Diego State University, California, USA.

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