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**branding your
event: develop a
marketing
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BRANDING YOUR EVENT: DEVELOP A MARKETING STRATEGY

A good marketing strategy gives purpose to your event, outlining your messaging tactics for communicating with your audience and stakeholders, such as sponsors, exhibitors and the media. The event branding must be consistent: pre- post- and throughout the event. The design should be distinctive, positioning the event consistently in marketing materials and on location, while inspiring attendees and partners.

Your event needs a marketing strategy of its own and should include at least the following elements:

- Objectives
- Audience and stakeholders
- Sponsors
- Event theme
- Communications plan

OBJECTIVES

Your objectives reflect the business goals and the outcomes you are looking for from the event. They can range from demonstrating an appropriate level of recognition for high achievers, to educating your team about a new product to generate qualified leads or sales at the event.

You can review the process of setting objectives in Chapter One.

AUDIENCE AND STAKEHOLDERS

Your target audience will differ according to the event – they could be staff, suppliers, channel partners, media, prospects, clients of a mixture of these. The style, tone and length of the event will also differ along the same lines.

Stakeholders can play an influential role too. These include Board members or senior management who may not attend the event, but influence budget or objectives. You'll need different messaging for each segment.

SPONSORS

An event is an opportunity to demonstrate sponsor alignment of your brand. However, it creates much more opportunity throughout the year that should also be considered. Involve your key sponsors in an advisory capacity to get great program feedback and collaborations. Create a whole-year approach with a marketing mix of social media, **On Air updates**, content development and other tactics. This keeps the partnership alive throughout the year and delivers your attendees a complementary alignment for business solutions that delivers ROI for all.

EVENT THEME

One of the most important parts of your marketing execution will be the event theme. The theme is the DNA of the event, woven throughout invitations, signage, speaker presentations, website, apps, collateral, delegate kits, staff uniforms, delegate attire, meeting spaces, merchandise, gala dinners, award functions, gifts, leisure activities and all messaging, pre- and post-event to set the underlying intention for the event.

Establishing a theme and supporting brand imagery is essential to positioning your event and making a strong impact. It should inspire the attendees, while embracing the business purpose and where necessary, reflect the destination if location is a key element. You can bring the theme to life in numerous ways such as; animation and video messaging on-stage or throughout the location on information screens, through mascots or promotional staff roaming the event, or a call-to-action by the MC to start each session, or tie it back at the conclusion of each session.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Communications start with your invitation and continue throughout the event, to post-event research and supply of further information. If your event occurs annually, your marketing messaging becomes circular. The messaging continues throughout the year; pre-event, throughout the event, post-event, which includes pre-event promotion of the next event.

Firstly, review existing channels used by the company to see how you can leverage these for messaging opportunities. If your event is for an internal audience, messages will vary widely from external event communications.

For internal groups it's important to have authentic messages from the leaders of the organisation regarding the objectives, values and what they really want people to think and feel from attending the event. The key in this instance is to build on previous experiences that will motivate your people and create a buzz in the community.

For example, knowing that their conference is taking place in a desirable travel destination – in a resort with exploration options, exciting destination specific activities, great dinner events, the opportunity to take their families, all the while with the added bonus of learning and celebrating with their industry colleagues - will turn it into a must-attend calendar item for your people each year.

For a leading, industry-wide event, where new technology or product developments will be featured, professional keynote speakers with the latest learnings drawn from industry will require a broader communications and advertising focus. This includes ads in industry publications, online sites and LinkedIn posts to boost intrigue and commitment, in association with email messaging and in person relationship connection. Attendees all welcome opportunities for getting hands-on access with new technologies, seeing how case studies demonstrate successful implementation, and speaking with specialists first-hand.

Divide your plan into pre-event, on site and post-event marketing.

Pre-event activity is divided into three streams:

1. Development of all marketing materials essential for the event
2. Advertising messages designed to promote the event
3. Automatic messages for attendees once they've registered – emails, texts, program announcements etc

A communications calendar integrated with the overall event calendar is essential. Track marketing performance alongside registrations progress and sales interactions so messages and media channels can be revised along the way based on results. The sooner you can get people interacting with your messages, registration and social channels, the sooner you create excitement about the event.

Your event plan will have to include all marketing on site during the event – both personal messages and public ones. It ranges from signage and event branding and also includes notifications to mobile devices via SMS or apps, email messages, personal delegate messages on signage or in-room - anything that helps deliver an outstanding delegate experience.

If you are keen to promote the event publically, create hashtags for the event and specific sessions within it. Encourage attendees to post images and comments using the hashtags – even provide daily prizes for best posts as an incentive.

If media are in attendance, develop a plan to ensure they get the right access to the right people and are not left to their own devices. You may have to allocate an experienced media liaison officer to partner with the journalists.

Post-event activity starts before the closing sessions of the event, for example capturing video testimonials from attendees for use in future promotion. You can also include a short session where attendees complete an online survey to rate the event and provide feedback. If you don't capture this data at the event, an immediate follow-up via email or within the event app is essential. You need to capture delegate data as close to the end of an event as possible for the best insights and to evaluate ROI from all angles.

In addition to a feedback survey, you may also choose to send further information to all attendees, such as speaker's slides or videos of their presentations. Plan this in advance, don't make it an afterthought. You can make the content available on the event website and promote your next event at the same time. Track usage of post-event material using your site analytics, as it can provide insight as to the most popular content.

Social media or an event app offer numerous channels to keep the event alive. Scheduling regular posts of images/videos of speakers, attendees, testimonials, exhibition floors, functions and activities can continue for weeks after the event has wrapped up as well as ongoing educational updates.

Design a series of mail and email communications that are automatically delivered once a delegate registers to attend the event.

If privacy rules allow, promote the delegate or their brand on the website as attending, to provide social proof and credibility.

EXPERT TIPS

Here are some proven ideas that will work with your event marketing. Don't forget to include a personalised touch point of engagement to bring your technology-led messages to life:

- Use short videos of your speakers to invite attendees. Post on the event website and send in emails or social posts. Add personal insights or stories of relevance, such as KOL highlights or things to look forward to, to make them more personal.
- Postal mail has far more impact than email. A personalised Welcome Kit mailed to a delegate adds enormous credence to the event.
- Countdown clocks on your event home page and in promotional emails.
- Personal VIP meeting opportunities with keynote speakers or high profile clients/leadership team as incentive such as for Early-Bird bookings.
- Offer books or videos from keynote speakers as incentives, gifts or part of the ticket price.
- Encourage interaction with teasers on your event apps for storing content, session and speaker information, notifications and use for in-session interaction.
- Re-marketing to visitors to the site reminding them of Early-Bird offers and other incentives to register.
- Live social feeds displayed on event screens 24/7.
- Social media manager to respond to all posts and share/promote them through different networks in each channel.
- Event hashtags to encourage engagement during and post-event – prizes for 'best' posts.
- Record attendees on video after each session for use as testimonial, in social media, as feedback to stakeholders and promotion of future events.
- High-definition live-streaming for international speakers who cannot physically attend the event.
- Personalised gifts with delegate name and event branding – you can manufacture a large range of personalised products for attendees or look for augmented reality engagement to bring products to life.
- Leverage destinations for local gifts or theming ideas.
- Event-themed cocktail/mocktail or taste sensation at dinner functions.
- Hand-written thank you cards with turn-down items.

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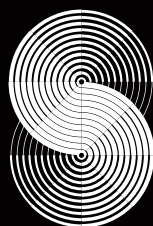
- Personalised thank you letter for attending, inviting feedback through an online survey or direct to the executive who signs the letter.
- Customised picture book with images and quotes from the event mailed post-event as a thank you gift.
- Highlight videos available on the website or app post-event. Use short versions to promote on social channels.



**we create events that awaken, ignite
and motivate your people, building a
renewed sense of connection and
commitment to your organisation.**

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SPEAKING TO YOU!

PLEASE CALL +61 2 9977 5546 PLEASE EMAIL RUTH@SYNERGYEFFECT.COM.AU



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