

Social Media & Events Report 2011: How Is The Event Industry Using Social Networks?



amiando 
event registration & ticketing

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Executive Summary

Once planned as just a medium of information the internet has turned into an instrument of communication. People are connected via Facebook, Twitter & Co. Social Media has become an important topic of conversation. But how does the event industry use social media?

amiando, Europe’s leading tool for online registration and ticketing, has set itself the goal to figure out the latest trends, current problems and future expectations of event organizers regarding social media. Moreover, this report will provide you with useful tips and suggestions for an effective usage of social media instruments to promote your event.

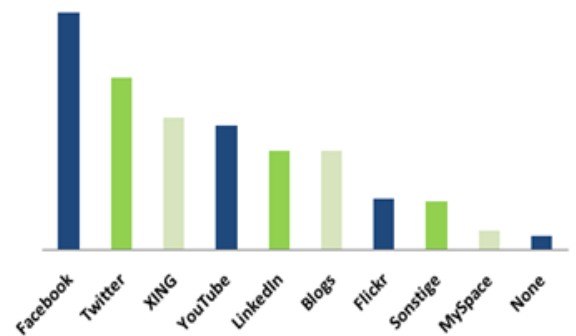
After the successful social media study “Twitter for Events” in 2010, here comes the Social Media & Events Report 2011. Almost 1,000 German and English speaking event hosts took part in the survey for the Social Media & Events Report 2011 and answered our questions.

The most important findings at a glance:

1. The most used social media channel

The survey results show that most event hosts are mainly using Facebook. Twitter is following on second place. In contrast, MySpace is far behind.

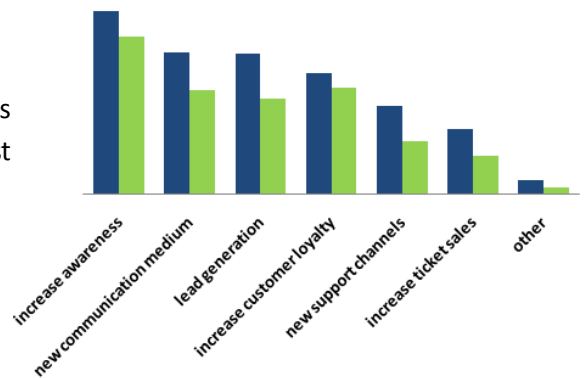
Result: Findings imply that Facebook and Twitter are the most important social media platforms for event organizers.



2. Defined and realized social media goals in comparison

Defined goals (blue) deviate slightly from the realized goals (green). Increasing the awareness for an event is the most common and implemented goal.

Result: The set social media goals of event hosts are realistic.



3. The utilization of monitoring tools

The majority of event hosts are not monitoring social media platforms. Only 37% of organizers are using monitoring tools.

Result: The majority of event organizers has not yet realized the importance of social media monitoring.



Besides these and other interesting poll ratings, we put together helpful tips and actionable tricks for your event promotion with social media.

Analysis

What we have asked

How important is social media as a marketing tool for event organizers?

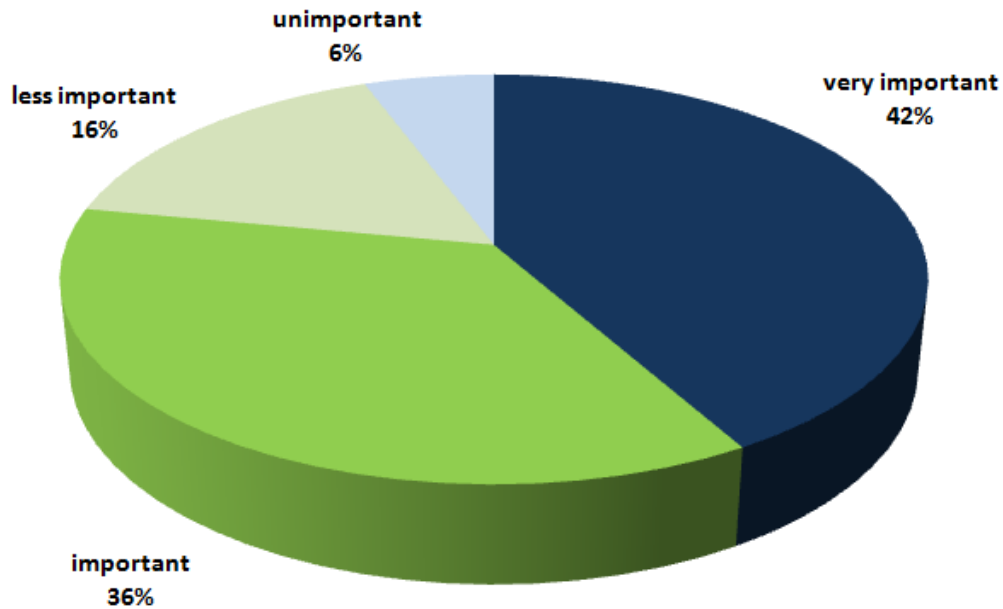


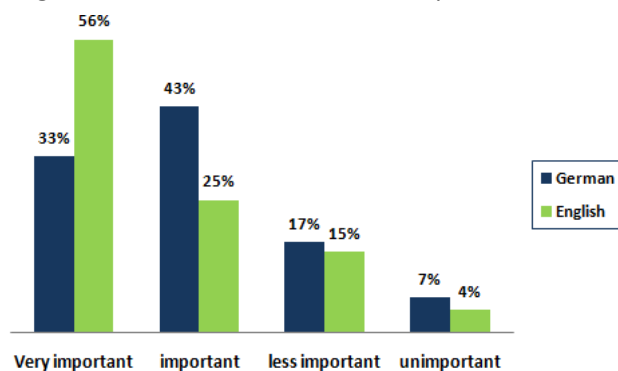
Figure 1.1: Importance of social media as a marketing tool

Within the Social Media & Events Report 2011 it was important to reveal the fundamental attitude of the survey participants towards social media.

The event organizers who took part in the survey were asked how important social media is as a marketing tool.

Social media as a very important instrument for the promotion of events

For 42% of the survey participants social media is a very important instrument for marketing their events. For another 36% social media is an important channel of marketing. Only 6% of the asked organizers said social media is unimportant.



Comparing the English and German answers, 56% (“very important”) of the English survey takers are convinced of the relevance of social media as an event marketing tool whereas only 33% of German survey takers see social media as a very important channel.

Figure 1.2: Compared: English vs. German survey takers

Which social media channels are used?

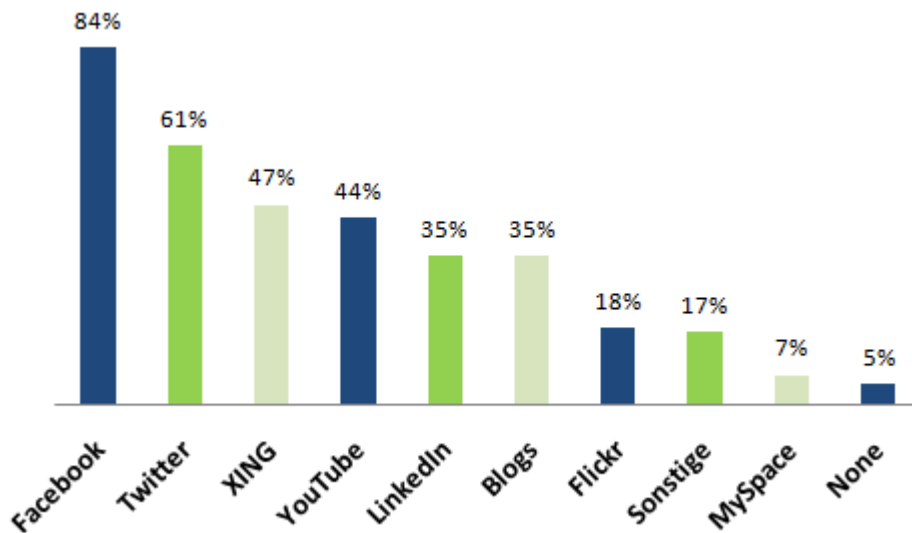


Figure 2: Use of different social media channels

Some now know that social media is important for at least 78% of the event hosts, but which networks are used? Multiple answers were possible.

More than 80% of event hosts are using Facebook

According to our survey respondents, Facebook is leading the ranking. 84% of the event organizers are using the largest social network for event promotion. Facebook is followed by the micro-blogging service Twitter with 61%, close behind the business network XING with 47%. Only 5% of all participants are not using any social media platform.



Tip: First find out where your target audience is and then choose the right platforms. Use the web analytics tools, like Google Analytics, to find out where your visitors came from. Furthermore, it is helpful to search for participants of your event in social networks and to analyze the accounts of your competitors.

Will the social media activities change in the future?

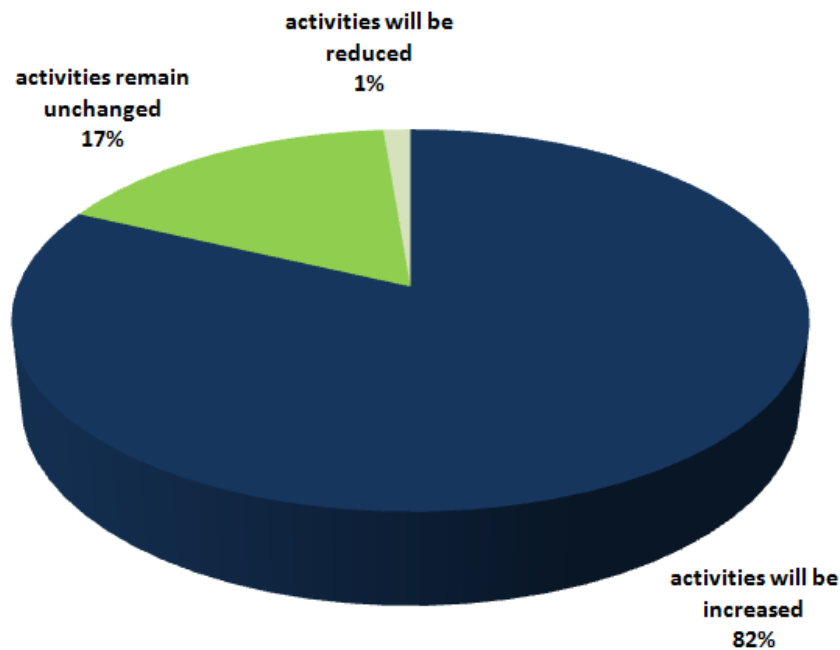


Figure 3: Change of social media activities in the future

Beside the actual usage of social media in the event industry, it is very interesting to see what the event organizers have planned for the future. Therefore, we asked the survey takers, if they will increase their social media activities, remain them unchanged or reduce them.

Over 80% of the hosts want to increase their social media activities

In the future, the clear majority of survey participants (82%) will increase their social media activities. Only 17% won't change their activities and only 1% of the survey participants will reduce it.



Tip: If you decide to use social media as a marketing instrument, then it should not be a half-hearted decision. Develop a concept and act accordingly. You will see that a well elaborated strategy will pay off!

How much content is produced every week for social media platforms?

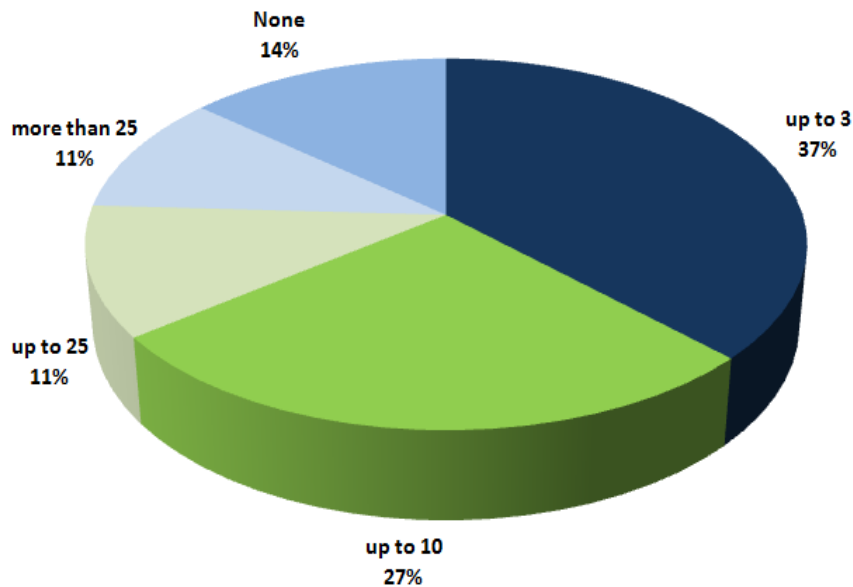


Figure 4: Weekly produced contents for social media platforms

If you want to increase your social media activities, you have to produce more content for social media platforms. Therefore, we wanted to know from the event hosts, how much content they are producing every week.

37% of the interviewed hosts said they are producing “up to 3” contributions every week. Further 27% produce “up to 10” contributions for social media platforms every week.

Over 20% of the hosts produce “up to 25 and more” social media contributions weekly

11% of the survey participants produce “up to 25” and another 11% produce even “more than 25” contents for social networks and blogs. Against our expectations this is a very high number of weekly produced content.

Again, 14% of the interviewed people are not producing any content for social media.



Tip: Consider the time when you post your social media content. At certain times of the day users are more likely to interact with you.

Read more about the topic “time-dependent posting” (e.g. on Facebook) on the amiando blog: <http://bit.ly/jKhJyw>

What goals do social media activities have?

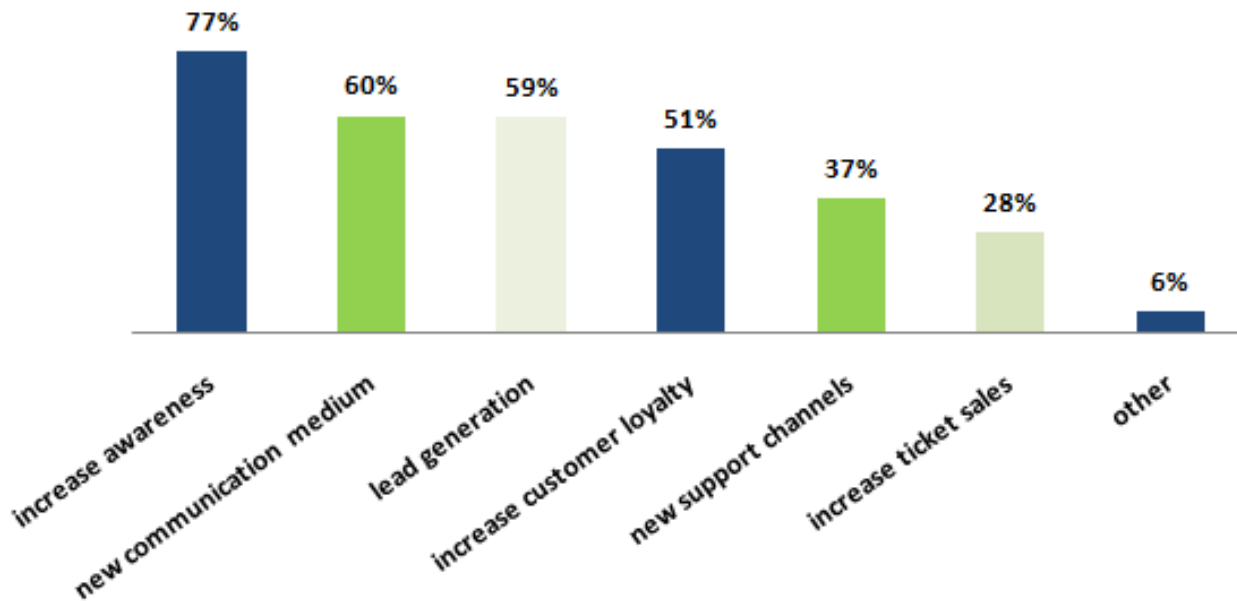


Figure 5: defined social media goals

Defined goals are one of the most important parts of a social media strategy. They can vary from the increase of awareness to the motivation of employees. We asked our participants what goals their social media activities have. Multiple answers were possible.

“Increasing the awareness for the event is the main goal”

77% of the respondents said that increasing the awareness for their event, program and speakers are their goal. 60% of the survey participants said that one of their main goals is the creation of a new information medium. 59% of the survey respondents said that lead generation is one of their defined social media goals, whereas increasing customer loyalty is a goal of 51%. Favored by 37% is the development of an additional customer support channel. It’s surprising that only 28% of the participants want to increase their ticket sales with the help of social media marketing.



Tip: Define precise goals and adjust your social media strategy and activities to it.

Which goals could be realized so far?

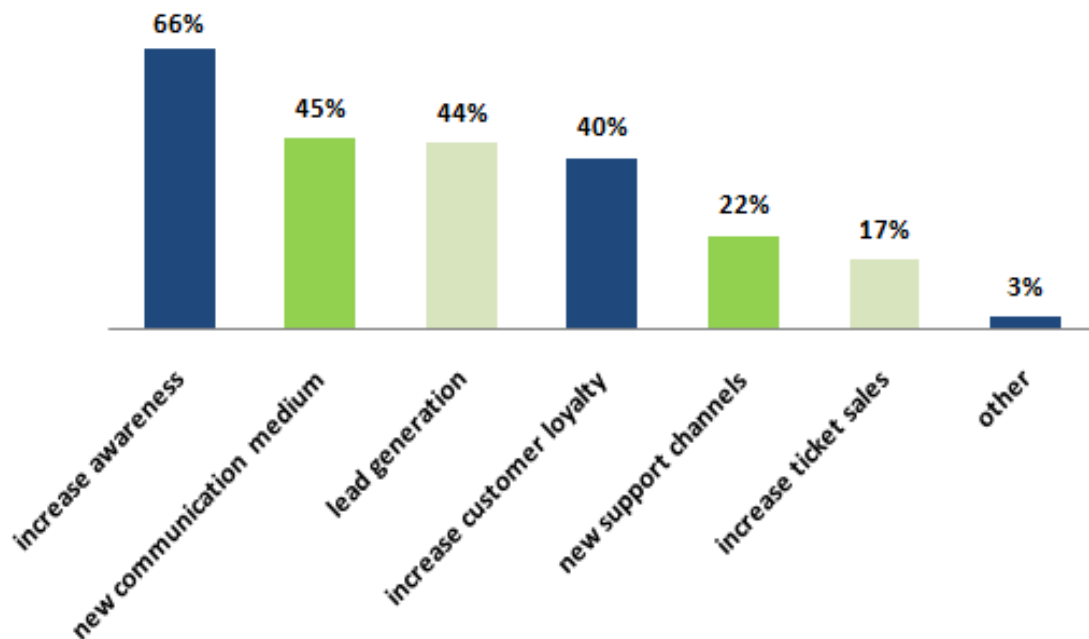


Figure 6: until now, realized social media aims

In the context of our Social Media & Events Report 2011 it was also important to find, whether the defined goals could be achieved. Multiple answers were possible.

66% could increase the awareness

With 66% the majority of survey participants have already been able to increase the awareness for their event, program and speaker. This is followed by goals like the increase of customer loyalty (45%) and creation of a new information medium(44%). The goal to acquire new customers is realized by 40%. 22% of the survey takers could already develop an additional customer support channel. Only 17% of all participating event hosts have realized an increase of ticket sales. An increase of the traffic, brand building and similar goals are equally achieved by 3% of the participants.



Tip: Carry out regular performance controls. This allows a permanent optimization and development of your goals and strategy.

Comparison: Defined social media goals vs. realized goals

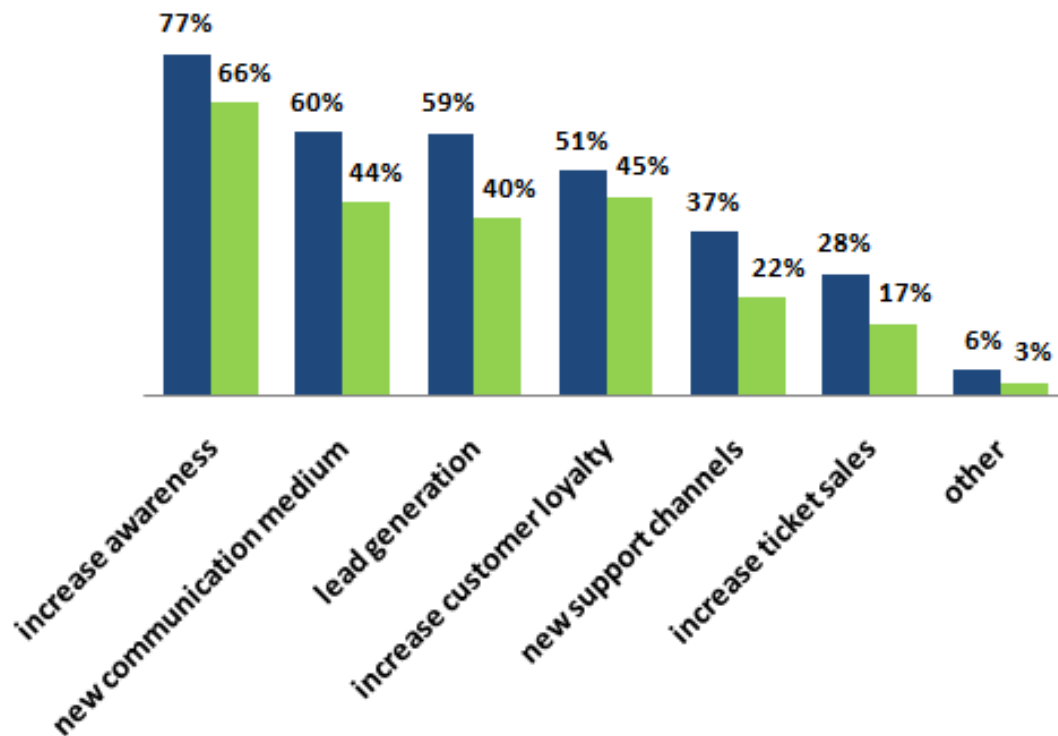


Figure 7: Defined social media goals vs. realized goals

If you compare defined and achieved goals you can see how successful the previous work was. This allows you to adapt and optimize defined goals in order to maximize the success in the future.

Average deviation of set targets and real results amounts to 13%

The average deviation of set and realized goals is 13%. However two goals show a “lead generation” seems to be harder to realize than other goals, whereas “increasing customer loyalty” can be realized relatively well.

Increasing the awareness is still the most realistic social media goal. The smallest difference between the set and realized goal shows the expansion of customer loyalty. There we can see that almost every event organizer can realize this goal.



Tip: It does not matter which goals you set, the key to success is relevant content. Share content and information that fits your strategy.

Which reasons prevent event hosts to use the potential of social media?

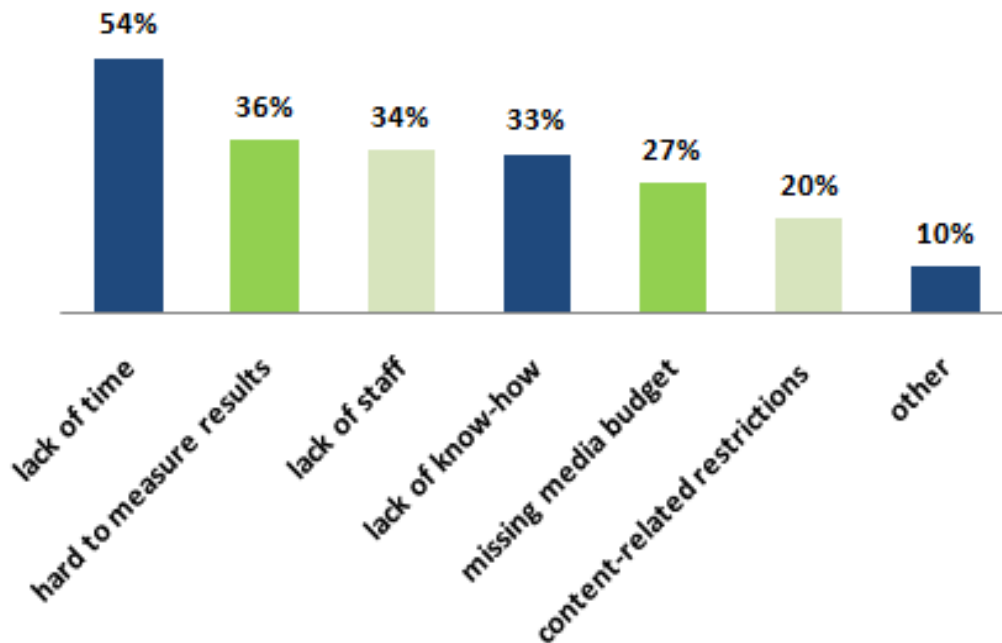


Figure 8: Reason for not using social media potential

Social media marketing offers a variety of possibilities to promote your event. In spite of the increasing popularity there are reasons, which are responsible for the fact that our interviewed event hosts cannot use the full potential. We asked about these restraints in our Social Media & Events Report. Multiple answers were possible.

“Lack of time” is the biggest obstacle to social media marketing

According to 54% the biggest restraint to use social media marketing is the lack of time. 36% of the participating hosts said that the bad measurability of the social media ROI (return on investment) plays a big role, closely followed by lack of staff with 34%. Also the lack of know-how (33%) is one reason for not using the full potential of social media. Missing financial resources (27%) and content constraints (20%) are also stated as obstacles.

Beside these main reasons there are other issues (10%), like uncertainty regarding the range, and the target audience (e.g. only B2B), the fear of making mistakes and a missing internet affinity.



Tip: Take the time! Already 1-2 hours every day can be enough.

Are social media monitoring tools used?

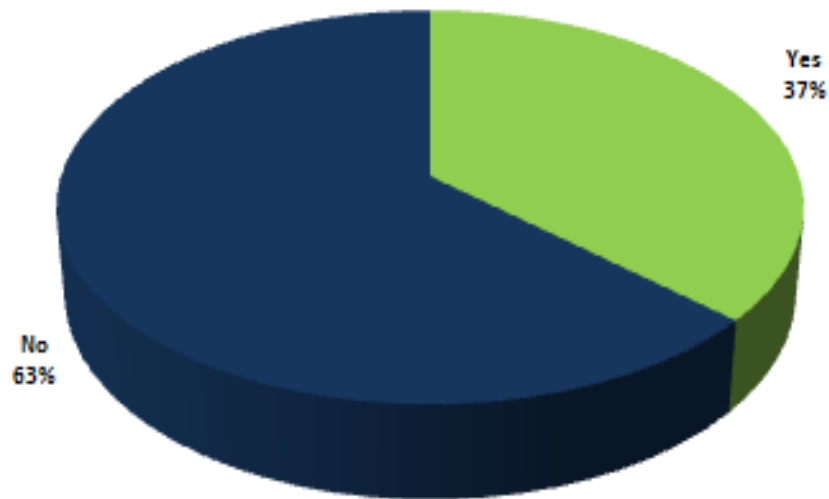


Figure 9: Usage of social media monitoring tools

For achieving social media goals monitoring is essential, and therefore an essential part of a social media strategy. Social media monitoring contains the real-time observations and analysis of user-generated contents in social networks, blogs and other channels. However, are monitoring tools being used by hosts at all?

The majority of respondents are not using monitoring tools

As much as 63% of event hosts are not using social media monitoring tools. Only 37% of the survey participants observe social media platforms.



Tip: Monitoring is an important part of a successful social media strategy and enables a fast reaction and a continuous performance measurement.

What kind of monitoring tools are being used?

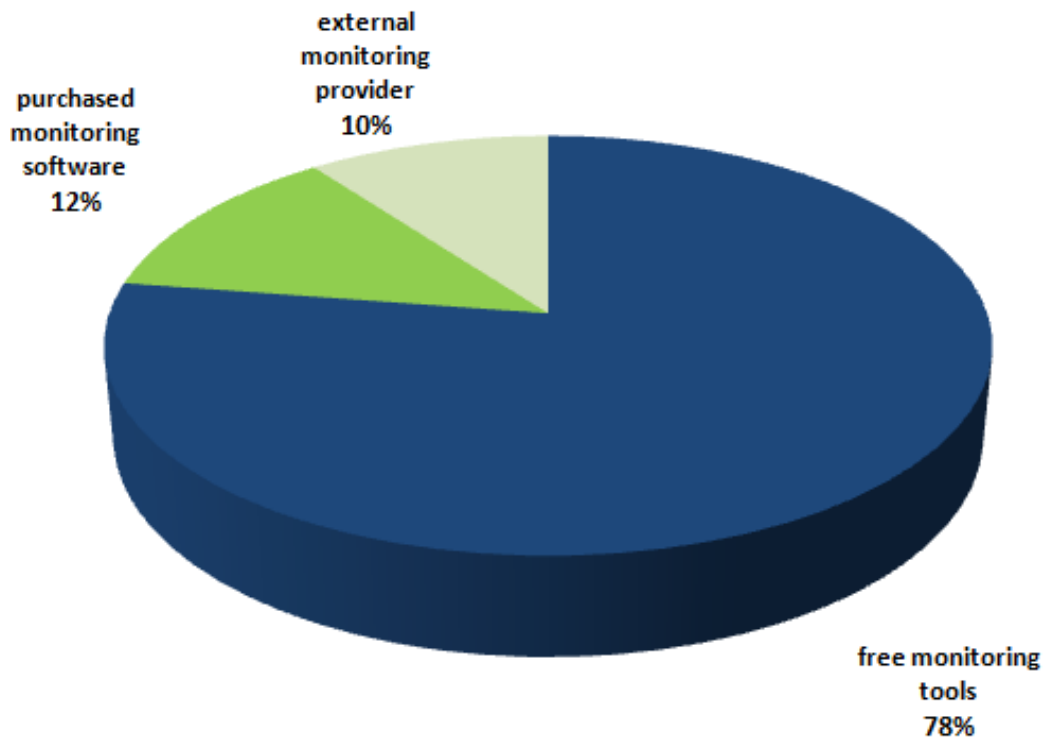


Figure 10: Usage of different social media monitoring tools

Our survey shows, that the usage of monitoring tools is not common in the event industry. However, meanwhile there are a lot of possibilities to observe and control social media activities. What kind of tools are being used?

Free monitoring tools are clearly favored

The chart shows that a clear majority (78%) of event hosts, which are using monitoring tools, work with free instruments. 12% of the interviewed hosts said they use purchased monitoring software. Only 10% of the participants said that they use an external monitoring provider.



Tip: In many cases monitoring tools for free are sufficient. For example amiando uses TweetDeck, Google Alerts and Google Reader with RSS- Feeds as part of the social media monitoring.

Which social media channel has the most marketing potential for events?

	High Potential	Low Potential	No Potential
Facebook	78%	17%	5%
Twitter	47%	40%	13%
XING	38%	37%	25%
LinkedIn	26%	42%	32%

Table 1: Potential of the different social media platforms

According to the respondents the majority of event organizers want to expand their social media activities. This shows the potential of social media as a marketing tool. But where does the event industry see the most potential? Which channel is expected to have the greatest potential?

Facebook is apparently the most promising channel

All in all, the survey participants see more potential in private networks like Facebook and Twitter than in business networks like XING and LinkedIn.

Facebook is the only platform that is expected to have high potential by far more than half of the respondents (78%).



Tip: Define the main topic of your event and then decide which networks you will use. In general Facebook works better for entertainment events whereas Twitter and the business networks can be very helpful for events with a business focus.

The 8 most important results

When summarizing the answers of the event hosts, the following statements can be formulated:

High relevance

- Social media marketing has a high or very high relevance in the event industry.

The big 3

- Facebook is by far the most used social media channel, followed by Twitter.

Expand activities

- The majority of the survey participants **will increase their social media activities** in the future, which then can be seen in the produced social media contents. Currently, 3 - 10 contributions are produced on average for different social media platforms every week.

Goals and reality

- Event organizers define social media goals, which are realistic. "**Increasing the awareness for an event**" is still the most important social media goal in the event industry.

A lack of time and staff are main obstacles

- **Lack of time and staff**, as well as difficulties in **measurability** prevent the event industry to use the potential of social media.

Monitoring?

- The majority of the survey participants **are not using any social media monitoring tools**. This has many disadvantages, for example goals cannot be controlled and there is no chance to intervene as fast as sometimes necessary.

Monitoring!

- The event hosts, which are monitoring their social media activities, use mainly free tools.

Facebook

- The event industry sees the highest potential in Facebook as a marketing channel for events.

The results of the Social Media & Events report show that a tendency to social media marketing for events already exists. Existing uncertainties and obstacles must, however still be reduced or eliminated. One thing becomes relatively clear: Facebook is and will be the platform which is seen as most promising for the event industry.

Below you will get some easy to put into practice and effective tips for event marketing in social networks, like Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, we inform you about general social media recommendations and dangers.

How to: Social media tips for the event industry

To promote an event with the help of social media it needs a holistic social media concept. This includes network specific aspects and general criteria. Next we have arranged the most useful tips and tricks to increase your general knowledge of social media and to show some of its dangers.



First define the strategy, and then act

Without a social media strategy and a defined procedure, the success will be left behind the opportunities. Also you run the risk that your work is inefficient, and therefore you will waste money and time and lose your goal perspectives

Important: Synchronize goals and resources

A social media strategy should contain:

- ✓ Clearly defined goals
- ✓ A target audience
- ✓ Selected social media tools
- ✓ Monitoring framework

Reasons:

- ✓ Facilitates your work
- ✓ Lets you compare goals with actual results
- ✓ Monitoring allows you to track activities and react instantly if necessary



Content quality and defined strategy

Content is king! Define guidelines for your social media content; a content strategy. Interesting and relevant content make it possible for you to speak to the user. At the same time you motivate him to take part in the discussion.

The main considerations should be: What's interesting for the customers, event participants and the online community? And which topics attract the users to take part in the conversation in the social web?



Advantages of social media monitoring

There are many reasons for using social media monitoring, because social media monitoring is...

- **A warning system:** Social media monitoring allows you to recognize the problems of your customers early and solve them before greater damage emerges.
- **A possibility for watching the competition:** Social media monitoring makes it possible for you to follow the activities of your competitors and to recognize the competitive advantages. So, temporal advantages could be used to be a step ahead.
- **A feedback system:** The customers or participants talk about your event in social networks and give feedback. You should use this free and valuable feedback of customers to optimize your future events.
- **A general possibility to have a say:** Social media marketing is known as a dialogue. Social media monitoring makes it possible for you to take part in the discussion, to find and to have a say.

So: No other medium of communication on the internet offers such a high range, fastness, and actuality. Because of that, social media monitoring offers you always actual knowledge about your customers, their needs and wants, and your competitors.



Some tools for free

Seismic	http://seismic.com/
Hootsuite	http://hootsuite.com/
SocialMention	http://socialmention.com/
TweetDeck	http://www.tweetdeck.com/desktop/



Some tools with monthly costs

UberVU	http://www.ubervu.com/
Trackur	http://www.trackur.com/
HootSuite Pro	http://hootsuite.com/pro
Alterian SM2	http://socialmedia.alterian.com/
Radian6	http://www.radian6.com/

Learn more about social media monitoring: <http://bit.ly/lf6ht8>



Enter the discussion in the social web

Try to make it as easy as possible for your customers and participants to take part in the social media dialogue and the online community around your events. You can implement for example the so-called social plugins into your event website. Facebook offers to easily integrate the send and like button. Twitter offers the Tweet button and now also the Follow button and the business networks have similar options.



Track social media activities

Besides comprehensive web analytics tools that help you track visitors of your website, you can also use so-called redirection services or link shortener services like bit.ly or ow.ly. Those services not only allow you to shorten your links but also to track the clicks on those links. You should use different links for each platform so you can easily track the performance of your different channels.

Network-related tips

Facebook

According to our survey results, Facebook shows the greatest potential of all platforms. With more than 750 million users worldwide, Facebook offers the greatest reach and a lot of possibilities to market your event.

Facebook Page

First of all you should create a Facebook page for your event. Consider that you have to register a company account and not an account for a private person. The Facebook accounts for private person are limited to 5000 friends and have additional disadvantages for companies. Use the logo of your event and give relevant information. This Facebook page will serve as the center of all your activities on Facebook.

It's important that you announce your presence on Facebook on your website or in your newsletter, therefore you should be able to get some "likes" very quickly.

Especially, the relevance of your content, which you share on your Facebook account is determining the interaction of your „Facebook fans“. Only if your fans „like“ or comment on your posts, you can use the viral potential of Facebook. Publish information about the event location, special ticket offers, information about speakers and press articles about your event. You should communicate every change to the program and update immediately.

Facebook Event

In the next step you should create a Facebook event. Here, you enter the basic data for your event. Do not forget to include a link to the ticket shop or registration page of your event. Motivate your participants to communicate their registration on Facebook. This helps to increase the reach of your event.



Figure 12.1: Facebook-PageLeWeb 2011
<https://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/leweb>



Abb. 12.2: Facebook PostLeWeb 2011
<https://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/leweb>

At amiando for example the participants get the possibility to inform their network with one click after their registration.

Facebook Social Plugins

Use Facebook social plugins and add like buttons or a comment box to your website. This increases the probability of spreading your event/event website on Facebook and that more people will take notice. amiando already integrated this Facebook function, and thus allows to exploit the whole potential for your event.

Facebook Places

Another interesting Facebook feature is „Places“. It allows you to share with your friends where you are (bars, restaurants etc.) with the help of your smartphone. Especially interesting is the possibility to check into events. Therefore, people can share that they are physically attending your event within their network.

On our blog you can find further tips to market your event with Facebook: <http://bit.ly/bcV7RY>

Twitter

Twitter offers many possibilities to market your event and with up to 160 million users worldwide the potential reach is also impressive.

Twitter Account

If you don't have one, create a Twitter account for your event. Use the name of your event that makes it easier for interested people to find it. Now you can start to share your content and spread the word about your event



Figure 13.1: Twitter Profile LeWeb 2011
<http://twitter.com/#!/leweb>

Hashtag

Creating and establishing Hashtags (initiated with #) for your event is very important. A Hashtag is a keyword which you can use to assign a twitter-post to a particular topic. As a rule it should be an abbreviation of the event name. For example re:publica, the leading event for bloggers in Germany, uses the Hashtag #rp11. Twitter users who want to publish a post related to the event, use this Hashtag in the text of their messages. So it's relatively easy for interested readers and participants to follow all relevant messages of an event by searching for the Hashtag. Set a Hashtag for your event early and communicate it actively on your website and social media channels. It is also really valuable for your monitoring, because an established and commonly used Hashtag „bundles“ the communication around your event.

Relevant Content

Offer online information and material for free. Our first study „Twitter for events“ showed that much more Twitter users actively followed an event than only the participants. Those are potential customers of future events. Offer information and insights and let them take part online. Especially, before and after the event you should offer free online material (videos, pictures, and interviews).

Twitter Monitoring

The activity on Twitter is especially high during the event. Therefore, monitoring is very important to find out about problems and to receive valuable feedback for future events. Pay special attention to your power users. Power users have a lot of followers and are very active on Twitter. They can become valuable multipliers for your event. So try to establish a relationship to them.



LeWeb will be 3 days this year! dec 7-8-9
and 2010 wrap-up video
<http://see.sc/HJgsFt> registration at -50%
open

7 Feb via Seismic Web ☆ Favorite ↻ Retweet ↩ Reply

Figure 13.2: Twitter Post LeWeb 2011

<http://twitter.com/#!/leweb/status/52558182354137088>

On our blog you can find more tips to market your event on Twitter: <http://bit.ly/aIDAJU>

Other networks

- **YouTube**

The first step to market your event successful on YouTube is to create a so called “YouTube Channel”. Similar to other profiles in networks, it serves for publishing your contents in form of a video. By creating an account you get the possibility to upload your videos and to share them with the rest of the world.

The more often your videos are clicked, the more often you will be suggested to other users. The so-called “Channel- Tags” also help users to find your YouTube Channel. The advantages of using YouTube to market your events are the interesting and easy presentation of your company or event with the help of videos.



Abb. 14.1:LeWeb YouTube Channel
<http://www.youtube.com/user/LeWebParis>

YouTube videos can be easily shared on Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, you can reach more potential customers and use your content across multiple platforms.

- **Foursquare Tips**

Furthermore you can use geolocation services, like Foursquare¹ for event promotion. Therefore, you should create a special venue on Foursquare. More promising is the creation of several sub-event venues, like conference rooms, lobby or the bar. Additionally a co-operation with Foursquare to create special event badges and offer specials to reward people for check-ins can be great for event promotion.



Figure 14.2:Foursquare Check-Ins re:publica 2011
http://buzzrank.de/wp-content/uploads/republica_monitoring_13.04.pdf

On the amiando blog you can find more tips of event promotion for Foursquare: <http://bit.ly/9MjjBn>

¹Registration on Foursquare for free: <http://de.foursquare.com/>

- **XING**

On the business network XING you can actually create events and promote them. With 10.8 million active users XING offers a great reach and allows you to target just the right audience. Since it is a business network it works best for business events.

The “Event with ticketing” feature allows you to create an event and sell tickets directly on the platform. This is possible thanks to the integration of the amiando’s event registration software.

Create your event, invite people and start selling tickets. This takes only a few minutes.

Another great marketing channel within XING are the XING-Groups. Identify relevant groups and start promoting your event. Additionally, if your event is public it will be recommended to members, which might be interested according to their profile information.

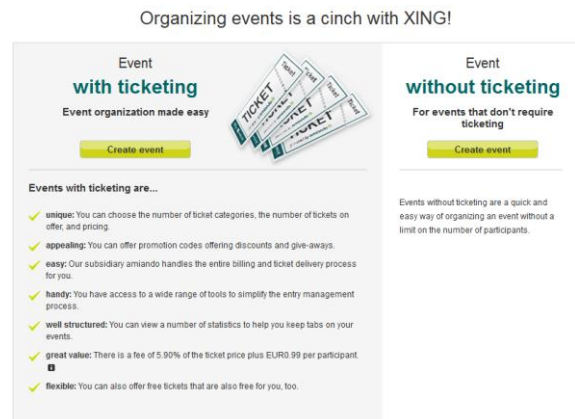


Figure 15.1: XING create event page
<http://www.xing.com>

Attention! Social Media dangers

Besides social media “do’s” there are a lot of “don’t’s”.



Monologue instead of dialogue

One of the main dangers in social media marketing is to fall into a monologue, instead of searching the dialogue. Speeches and monologues are not what social media is about and should be avoided. Instead you have to activate and encourage fans and followers to take part in the dialogue.



Aimless

Every successful campaign underlies a strategy. The same applies for social media marketing campaigns. So don't start by simply using social media tools. First, define a concept and then start to follow it. Set your goals and target groups, choose the necessary tools and define your content strategy.



Take no risks

Social media marketing is relatively “young”. Therefore, there is no defined “How to”- formula. Additionally, every market, every event and every online community is different. You have to develop your strategy and adjust the content you are sharing and the tools you are using.



Wasting chances

Due to a lot of possibilities you can easily lose the overview. Make it relatively easy for your customers and participants to take part in the conversation. Use the possibility to integrate social networks along the entire event lifecycle. Because of the integration of social media networks and functions, like ViralTickets, amiando offers a comprehensive set of features that help you to use the full potential social media platforms.

Finally

Based on the Social Media & Events Reports 2011 we wanted to show the relevance of social media in the event industry, find out about future potential, identify common problems, as well as provide tips to market events in the social web. With this report we were able to collect valuable information, which clearly proves that social media already is and will even more become an important marketing channel for the event industry.

Our tips and suggestions for the effective usage of social media tools include the most commonly used platforms Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Foursquare. The results and conclusions, however can also be applied to other communication channels. For a holistic social media strategy it is absolutely necessary to consider other platforms like Flickr, Stumbleupon or Blogs.

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About amiando - event registration & ticketing

amiando (<http://www.amiando.com>) is a pioneer for online registration and ticketing. Since its founding in 2006, amiando has become a leading software-as-a-service platform for professional events.

amiando's products help event organizers to reach a professional level of event organization that was only reserved for large corporations and event agencies. All tools are online-based and immediately available for usage, no software installation required. Over 100,000 events worldwide use amiando for invitation management, participant registration, online promotion and payment handling, these include prestigious names such as Facebook, BMW, UNESCO, and Telefónica O2.

amiando has been awarded numerous prizes for its innovative products, for example the "Technology Pioneer of 2010" at the World Economic Forum, and the „eco Internet Award" as the best business client portal. Since December 2010 amiando is part of XING AG, operator of the business network XING.

Information, Links

amiando: <http://www.amiando.com>

amiando features: <http://www.amiando.com/features>

amiando press: <http://newsroom.amiando.com>

amiando blog: <http://blog.amiando.com>

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