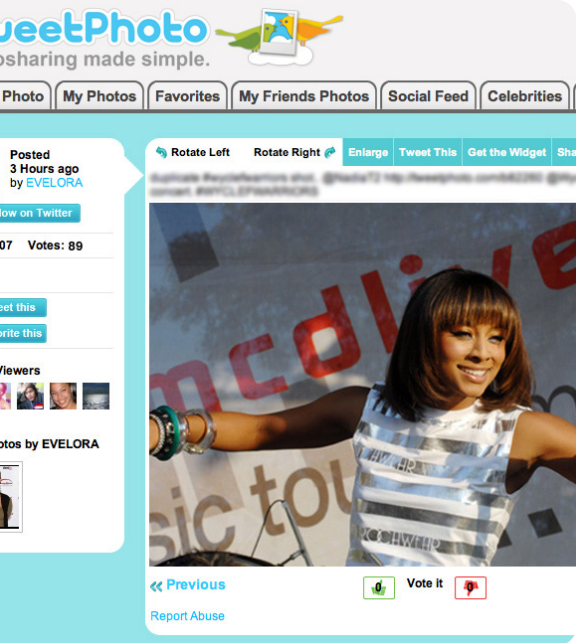


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social media whitepaper companion



The Event Marketer's Guide to Social Media

How social media marketing drives event engagement

Events provide compelling original content that drives conversation and networking opportunities. Social media is the perfect channel to promote, share and extend those experiences beyond the live event and into true engagement.

Event marketers must plan and execute campaigns with an eye on both experiential and social media marketing - combining both results in engagement marketing. What's the use of a great event if it doesn't get people talking? Social media is how people communicate and share those experiences today.

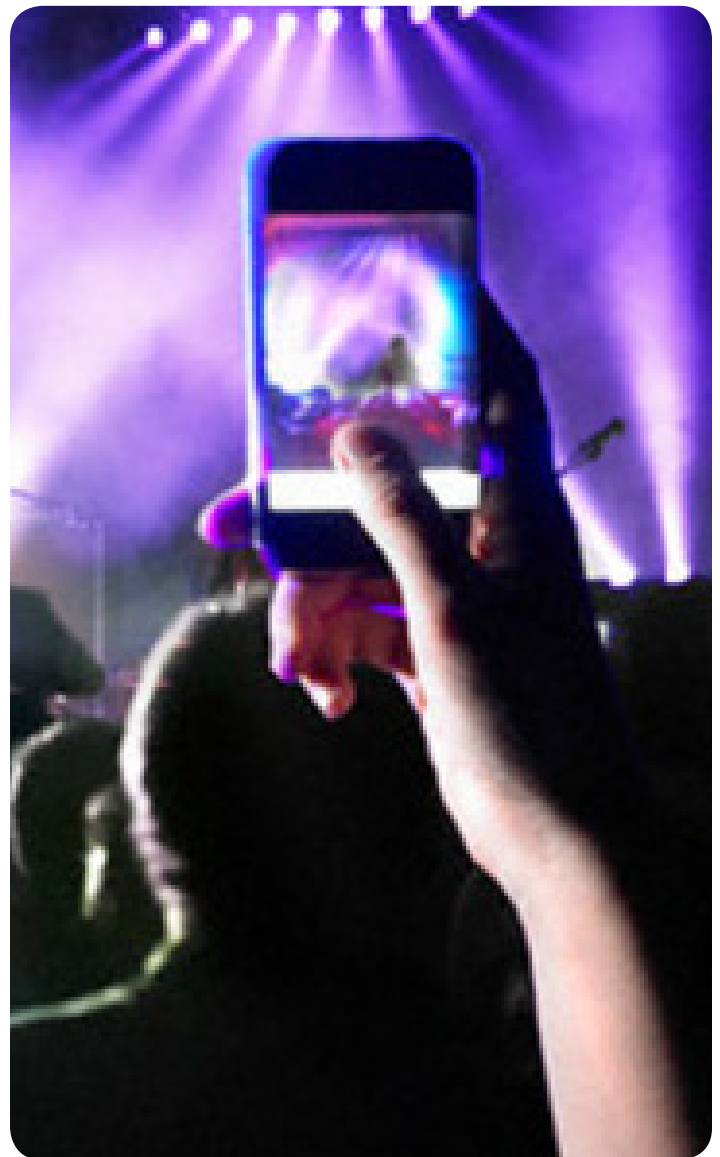
The fundamentals of experiential marketing and social media actually have a lot in common: both channels enable conversations between brands and people, and among people. Both channels allow consumers to become brand advocates. In many cases experiential and social media programs are self-selecting channels, meaning people will seek out what interests them, and ignore what doesn't.

They are channels where entertainment, "edutainment," or the engagement factor reigns supreme. If the content isn't interesting, people won't participate in the first place. Or, if you don't deliver the experience you promised, they'll leave. And if the content is boring, people might not share their experiences at all, which wastes money and effort. Worse yet, they categorize it as a bad experience, in which case they might be very likely to share it for the wrong reasons. Yikes!

As marketers know, word of mouth (WOM) helps drive sales. Several industry estimates put the amount of traffic arriving at brand websites via shared content and promotions at upwards of 20% today. That means a fifth of traffic to brand websites comes not from clicks on paid search or banner ads, but through influencers sharing their brand experience with one another live or online. Social media is the great enabler of WOM marketing.

Brands need to work hand-in-hand with their agencies to create, distribute, and encourage the sharing of branded content that engages audiences in an impactful, ongoing dialogue. Live events provide the perfect content to push through social channels in order to engage in a

year-round conversation with your customers that builds long-term engagement and drives a lasting increase in sales. Unlike scripted presentations or talking points, social media takes advantage of, and leverages, a team's ability to "think on their feet" and communicate real time responses to comments and questions from the audience.



Here's a 7 step process to integrate live and digital experiences, and start conversations:

1. OUTLINE GOALS

This is a basic premise but should always come first. Outline your goals. Who do you want to reach? What do you want them to know? What do you want them to do – buy something, visit somewhere, participate in a promotion, give you feedback, or otherwise engage with your brand?

While you might be tempted to assign target numbers, your goal is not about how many clicks, views, impressions and “friends” you may have, but the combination of the combined “share rate” where people are engaged enough with your brand, content, product or services to leverage their own brand equity to get the word out.

Technology and platforms change every day – but a good engagement strategy does not. Make sure your content is created to provide the most shareable experiences and sound bites possible – that add value to the relationship.

2. CHECK YOUR AUDIENCE

Find out WHERE your audience is online and WHAT they are already saying about your brand. Having 10,000 friends on Facebook may not be as valuable as having the right 1,000 people who are ready to become evangelists for your brand because they like your product or solution. It's the quality of your “friends”, not the quantity, that's important.

Work with your agency to use social listening tools to get a clear reading of the audience sentiment already floating around the web about your brand, products, or services. Listen carefully to what your customers are saying, tuning into their interests,

concerns, and opinions to get an idea of what type of social content you should start creating.

3. DEVELOP CONTENT

The big idea doesn't necessarily need to be “big.” It needs to be right. It also needs to be designed for the medium that you choose to deliver it with. Just repurposing your standard messaging into a social media environment will not do the job. With Twitter posts and Facebook updates, brevity is king. Not only because of the platform requirements, but because it is what's expected and is easily “shareable.”

Social content that contains compelling offers, entertainment, information relevant to the audience, or social interaction features will generate the most sharing. For consumers, content needs to be meaningful, either aligning with personal passions or beliefs or delivering an entertaining experience. For business audiences, content can be more educational, informational or even a free service.

In both cases, the experience must be considered by the audience to be entertaining.

Types of content that drives social engagement

- ↪ How-to videos and educational content
- ↪ Interactive contests and games
- ↪ Music downloads tied to promotions
- ↪ Sponsored entertainment videos
- ↪ Advertorials
- ↪ Branded blogs
- ↪ Shareable online offers or coupons

4. DEVELOP DISTRIBUTION PLAN AND ADAPT CONTENT

There is an explosion of content out there, so where you distribute your content and how you continue to encourage the sharing of it are crucial elements in your social strategy. Although a new social channel might be the ‘flavor du jour’, it won’t be as effective if your audience hasn’t already started using it. Fish where the fish are. If you’re not prepared to invest significantly, it’s far easier to go find the audience that already exists for your message (and there is always one) than to create, market, promote and drive traffic to a new destination or portal. Even in the B2B space, there is probably a Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter page that is already talking to the internal or business audience you want to reach.

You must lightly modify your social content to fit the channels of communication you choose. The tone and type of conversation you will want to encourage varies depending on the channel and your content will have to take many shapes

such as short text messaging (for SMS, Twitter and status updates), videos (for YouTube), photos (for Flickr) and even “advertorial” (blogs and paid placements) to truly connect with your audience and where they live.

You will want to include a “share this” button on all social campaigns – making it easy for people to share the links to your videos, promotions, contests, and other content via email, Facebook, Twitter, Digg, or other social platforms. It will also increase your search ranking as most successful SEO optimizations strategies rely on cross linking to improve your ranking.

5. GET IN THE CONVERSATION

That’s right, you can participate. And you should. Instead of “selling” to customers, brands must encourage people to share opinions on their products and services, listen to feedback and, when appropriate, answer questions and provide direction.

Not only should you kick off conversations, monitor the buzz and chime in at the right time, but this is the crucial time to really hear your target audience. You’ll get insights into likes and dislikes (which you’ll see via the share rate of content) and you’ll hear directly from them about their frustrations. On event day, this is especially critical. Is there an unnecessary holdup at the security line? A problem with parking? You can address these right away if you are paying attention.

6. MEASURE

Your agency should use social media monitoring tools to find out exactly who is sharing your content, on which sites, and how much traffic this sharing activity is driving to your website or campaign sites. Is YouTube driving more pass-alongs of your videos than your outbound email campaign with embedded links to your videos? Are there certain blogs where people are talking about and sharing your content? Is Twitter or Facebook driving the most traffic to your site? Have mobile text messages played a role in content sharing?

7. OPTIMIZE

Winston Churchill once said, "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results." Social media is an evolutionary medium. Your audience develops the tone and content (as well as context) as much, if not more, than you

do. Use that to your advantage, by refining and optimizing your engagement with them in real time.

Make sure your content and site are optimized for the viewing medium, and choose the right social networks and platforms to reach your audience.

Review your statistics and feedback daily (if not hourly) and refine it accordingly. Make sure that your SEO and content are evolving to stay in step with how and what search engines and platforms are scanning for in regards to relevance to your topic and audience. Design your content with mobile in mind and understand the viewing optimizations and delivery platforms your audience is using to engage with your brand.

Not all sites and services are cross platform and if you know that your target is mostly on the move – mobile as opposed to traditional websites may be the way to go.

The image shows a Twitter interface for the account WURandomActs. At the top, there's a yellow banner with the text "Hey there! WURandomActs is using Twitter." and a green "Join today!" button. Below this, there's a tweet from @mattsunday: "@mattsunday no worries Matt! but we ARE looking forward to getting them and putting them up onto our FB page!" followed by a tweet from WURandomActs: "Spread One Love with a customized @Wyclef gift card in any amount from @westernunion available at www.westernunion.com/wyclef". The profile information for WURandomActs is shown on the right, including their name, location, bio, and statistics (35 following, 51 followers, 4 listed). The background is red with green ribbons and gift boxes.

Social Media Checklist for Event Marketing Pros

Pre Program

- ✓ **Identify:** Review where your audience is to determine the right distribution channels for social content.
- ✓ **Integrate:** Jumpstart registration using social tools like email, Facebook, Event Bright, LinkedIn, custom invites, Twitter and traditional media.
- ✓ **Create:** Facebook page, Twitter account and event hashtag (Note: these tactics will change over time).
- ✓ **Promote:** Feature and tease new content and let people share their ideas. Continue to use the same multichannel approach.
- ✓ **Buzz:** Help your influencers (speakers, artists) share content and promote your program in advance.
- ✓ **Listen:** Your audience will help you create content. You may hear this referred to as 'crowdsourcing'. Find out what they want to experience at your event and tweak your program accordingly.

During

- ✓ **Optimize:** Make sure all your content is findable and shareable.
- ✓ **Facilitate:** Have free wireless onsite and plenty of power stations. Make sure there is a strong signal for major mobile carriers.
- ✓ **Listen:** Have someone onsite monitoring, and responding to posted comments. Anything that is affecting the experience can be immediately adjusted.
- ✓ **Photo Op:** Provide your live audience with a fun photo op featuring your brand in the background – and watch the share rate climb.
- ✓ **Share:** In addition to live streaming for those who can't attend, be ready to share on demand video, audio, blogs and interviews.

Post Program

- ✓ **Ask:** Pose questions to get audience insights.
- ✓ **Convert:** Take your fans and make them followers of your other social channels.
- ✓ **Encourage:** Promote the sharing of media and stories.
- ✓ **Develop:** Create new forums to continue the dialogue.
- ✓ **Measure:** Measure, measure.
- ✓ **Promote:** Next year's event!



We connect brands and people.



TBA Global

Think ▸ Believe ▸ Act

TBA Global is an award-winning engagement marketing and communications agency that connects brands to people. TBA Global helps brands reach employees, business audiences, and consumers through a wide range of effective digital and live experiences that drive engagement and revenue. TBA Global is ranked among the Top Promotion and Event Marketing Agencies by Advertising Age magazine (April, 2011). The agency is headquartered in New York City, NY with 9 offices in North America.

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