



The Importance of Branding Your Event

Many organizations underestimate the value of creating an event that has its own branding that also aligns with the organization's brand. The most successful events – whether galas, tradeshow, or high-profile meetings – are experiential and are designed to drive engagement. Depending on goal, the event should inspire thought, action, loyalty and/or learning.

A properly-branded event will evoke an emotional response. That branding is infused across all elements of the event, including print, promotional giveaways, and online materials. Equally important in the branding is the ambiance created through décor, lighting, sound and entertainment. Customer service and onsite experience are also intrinsic parts of that branding.

Successful branding of an event reflects positively on, and even enhances, the organization's own brand.

To collaborate on this article, we turned to our valued partner, [Dixon Schwabl](#), an agency that specializes in creative services, media production and creation, content marketing, social media, special events and more. We work closely with the DS Events team to create highly-branded events for clients. Jenna Van Thof, Associate Vice President of Special Events, spoke about Dixon Schwabl's vision for creating branded events. She also shared insights using client case studies.

"Events offer the perfect opportunity to showcase your *organization*. If done well, they create a lasting and memorable experience, and they are actually the *ultimate* expression of your organization's brand," she noted.

She went on to explain that events provide an opportunity for your customers or consumers, prospects or donors to engage with the brand and the product or service it represents. One of the most important aspects of an event is that it allows your organization to maximize face time with attendees. It is invaluable in that it offers them a memorable, personalized experience that they'll find at no other event, and that they'll connect to your organization's brand.

Because an event is a completely controlled environment, there is an opportunity to place brand ambassadors and/or influencers among the general audience to inform, educate and motivate support. In addition, that face-to-face exposure to your brand lasts much longer than with any other form of communication. Most other forms of communication are received by the individual for 30 seconds max, while with an event, you have a captive audience for up to three hours.

Below, we share two profiles that demonstrate how branding contributed to the success of the event.

Allendale Columbia School's 125th Anniversary

Allendale Columbia School is a leading independent co-ed college prep school for students, nursery through grade 12, located in Pittsford, NY. The school is known for its innovative, experiential style of education that promotes curiosity for learning, self-discovery and leadership through real world experiences.

In 2016, Allendale Columbia School hosted a fundraising gala to celebrate its 125th Anniversary. It was critical to tie the essence of the school to the event, highlighting the deep roots and history of the school, while at the same time featuring the progressive education and forward-thinking opportunities provided to students. The rustic-chic ambiance, that included soft lighting, natural fibers and fresh-cut flowers represented Allendale Columbia's cherished campus and traditions, while the unexpected visual elements reflected its innovative school of thought.

Dixon Schwabl recommended the gala include many diverse groups from the Allendale Columbia community, ensuring parents, students, alumni, and faculty would all be engaged, demonstrating the close-knit ties nurtured by the school. The event was called "Make Your Mark" signifying how Allendale Columbia makes a mark on the lives of its students and how the students and alumni, in turn, make their mark on the world.

The event included performances by Allendale Columbia's Girls' Ensemble and a jazz duo from the school's band. A signature 'AC 125' cocktail was designed for the event. Attendees signed their names on tablets upon checking in, and toward the end of the evening, those names came together on screens around the room to form '125' signaling how important each person was to the school's heritage.

In the end, the gala excited and invigorated students, staff, parents and donors, and far exceeded goals, with 460 attendees rather than the anticipated 300; the event raised a net of \$264,000 surpassing the fundraising goal of \$100,000.



Annese, A ConvergeOne Company – SightLine Conference

Annese, A ConvergeOne Company integrates technology solutions by implementing the tools of today and designing for the emerging technologies of tomorrow.

Annese enlisted the support of Dixon Schwabl to create a cutting-edge large-scale technology conference that would position the company as a thought-leader and ultimately expand its reach. SightLine was designed to showcase Annese's commitment to innovation, the company's focus on thought leadership, and its passion for making connections.



Every element of the conference, from sleek promotional materials to online registration, and from the selection of keynote speaker, to corollary events such as the “Whiskey and Wisdom” kickoff party, were designed to underscore Annese's commitment to innovation and a forward-thinking approach to business. Attendees received live information and updates through the SightLine customizable mobile conference app.

The event exceeded goals by expanding the company's new connections while enhancing relationships with current customers. It also advanced relationships with current partners and vendors that supported the event through major sponsorships. Additionally, surveys distributed to attendees via the mobile app indicated that content successfully delivered on attendees' expectations and needs.

In Conclusion

A key benefit of branding your event in the 21st Century is the opportunity it offers for social marketing. This is critical as millennials and subsequent generations make decisions based on word of mouth. Presenting shareable moments at the event helps enhance the brand's presence and reach new and diverse audiences.



Jenna Van Thof cautions, “An event experience doesn't start the day or night of the event. The attendee journey begins with the first piece of communication received, and extends through the final one, whether that is a thank you, or a post-event survey. Branded pre- and post-event communications are very much a part of the success of the event and organization's brand.”

So, whether you are hosting a gala, developing a conference, or participating as an exhibitor in a trade show, it is critical to take the time and make the investment to determine your event's unique brand and to align it with your *organization's* brand in terms of vision, quality, delivery and content.

by Carol White Llewellyn

For Cheshire Audio Visual, in collaboration with Dixon Schwabl

With thanks to Jenna Van Thof