



Tips and Best Practices in Social Media for Meetings Pros

Most companies recognize the value of using social media, not only to promote events in advance, but also to share content, insights and testimonials during, and post-function. There is tremendous short- and long-term value in using social media to share and amplify the conference brand and messaging through a network of ambassadors and influencers.

We spoke with Michelle Mobley, Account Director of Marketing & Events at [VRS Meetings & Events](#), to discuss tips and best practices of utilizing social media in relation to conferences and special events.

Planning for Social Media

Michelle's first recommendation was to plan your use of social media well in advance. Consider your short- and long-range goals. Are you using it to raise awareness, initiate a call to action, and/or promote your event and brand? Does everyone on the social media team understand the goals so it is used consistently and effectively? Does the venue currently have the capacity to handle your needs or will upgrades to technology be required?

"You also need to determine which platforms are most effective in reaching your audience. For example, if most of your attendees are over 30, you probably wouldn't use Snapchat," she noted.

Michelle recommended that, during speaker recruitment and the attendee registration process, social media handles be captured for prospective use during the event.

Use Hashtags and Identify Social Media Ambassadors

She also suggested identifying which attendees and speakers are the biggest social media influencers and inviting them to be the conference's social media ambassadors. This is a win-win for both the ambassador and the organization, especially if the ambassador is given enhanced recognition in collateral.

It's important to determine event hashtags prior to the event, so these can be shared in advance conference materials, in the program, on the website, and on signs at registration and throughout the event.

She also commented, "It's a good idea to have a backup hashtag to open the conversation. For example, you might use an event-specific hashtag, but also select one with a broader scope that targets the industry."



Michelle Mobley, Account Director of Marketing & Events at VRS Meetings & Events

Capture Video for Multiple Uses

VRS Meetings & Events typically contracts a videography company to shoot video during the day, then work overnight, editing six to eight videos. Some are used onsite the next day to reinforce the prior day's events and activities, and some are specifically designed for social media use.

Another advantage to capturing video is that the audio can be stripped from the video for later use as podcasts, a technology that has achieved high popularity. The creation of podcasts serves to extend the life of the content.

When asked if she's ever had speakers who were reluctant to be featured in social media, Michelle explained that the release speakers must sign to participate in a conference encompasses broad usage, including print, video, audio, web, photography, social media as well as any prospective uses in the future. This is sent to speakers as part of a kit they receive in advance.

Onsite Technology

One of the most common practices for today's conferences is to utilize a twitter wall. The tweets that attendees post to the wall before programming starts and during breaks can be replicated on screens throughout the venue, creating an immersive social media experience. Michelle pointed out that it is vital to have a moderator monitoring content of the wall *before* it appears. She points out that the cost of the twitter wall can be easily offset by a sponsorship.

"We've also found that our tech studio is very popular," she added, and went on to explain that the tech studio/learning lab offers programming "modules," separate from the main conference content. It is programmed in 20-minute segments by a technology company, using a small space, with a monitor that can accommodate around 6 people. The company brings some of the latest technologies to demo, such as Google glasses, and also gives short tech-oriented tutorials. The content is repeated throughout the conference.



An onsite "Tech Bar"

VRS Meetings & Events has discovered that these tech studios are popular across industries and appeal to all level of attendee.

Conclusion

Social media is no longer simply a *trend* at conferences. It has become a mainstream communication tool that would be sorely missed by attendees, if it were absent. In using social media, your organization has control over the way your brand is perceived, the promotion of your event, and the delivery of your message. Social media has become so ubiquitous and popular that it will happen with, or without your organization's involvement and oversight, so it is far better to take the helm and steer its course, to your organization's benefit.

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