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EXTENDING YOUR REACH THROUGH

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Extending Your Reach Through User-Generated Content

Event teams are often stretched thin, and marketing budgets aren't what they used to be. One way to reconcile higher performance expectations with fewer resources is to employ your community base. Here's how.

Rising costs and ongoing staffing challenges mean that event teams often find themselves striving to meet higher expectations within ever-tighter budgets. Finding innovative ways to maximize reach and engagement is a critical survival skill.

One strategy that gains more traction the more social-media-savvy an audience gets is leveraging user-generated content. By harnessing the power of your audience, you can not only extend your event's reach but also generate genuine interest from a source your audience members trust – their own peers.

This article will delve into how you can make the most of user-generated content to support your event marketing efforts.



The Benefits of User-Generated Content

1. Inherently Higher Credibility

Perhaps the most significant advantage of user-generated content is its inherent credibility. When content comes from peers or fellow attendees rather than the event organizers, it carries a level of authenticity and trust that traditional marketing tactics often lack. People are more likely to trust recommendations from individuals they know – especially if they have no personal stake in increasing registrations. Peers are also plugged into their networks and are maximally well-positioned to create content and messaging that will resonate with the target audience.

2. Relatively Low Lift

Having to consistently create fresh and engaging content while putting on an event can be a strain. User-generated content alleviates this burden by engaging the audience itself in the content ideation and production. You may have to invest some energy in creating the spaces / infrastructure; the rules, conditions and moderation; and the prompts, questions, or discussion topics – but once you successfully motivate your attendees to participate, the bulk of the lift is taken voluntarily by them. This allows you to focus your resources on other critical aspects of event planning while still maintaining an active and engaging online presence.

3. Automatic Temperature Check on Your Audience

User-generated content provides valuable insights into your audience's preferences, interests, and engagement levels. By observing the type of content they create and share, you can fine-tune your event's theme, marketing messaging and overall content strategy accordingly. This real-time feedback loop ensures that your event delivers value and your communications resonate with your audience.

Strategies for Leveraging User-Generated Content in Your Event Marketing



1. Foster Community to Increase the Disposition to Share and Discuss

Create a sense of community among your attendees by facilitating connections and interactions both online and offline. Encourage networking, facilitate discussions, and provide platforms for attendees to connect and share their experiences. A strong sense of community can foster a desire to contribute and share, leading to a wealth of user-generated content opportunities.

2. Curate and Amplify to Incentivize Participation

Curate the best user-generated content and recognize your most engaged attendees by offering advocate elevation and platforming perks. This could involve featuring their content on your event website or social media channels, providing VIP access or exclusive benefits, or even inviting them to speak. For example, stimulate discussions in owned community groups and allow the audience to upvote contributions. Then, feature the most popular contributors in a dedicated panel within the event program.

Showcasing the most interesting discussions, testimonials, photos, and videos not only sets a higher bar for user-generated content quality, but will help to generate more interest in user-generated or controlled channels. In this way, user-generated content acts as social proof to demonstrate the value and excitement surrounding your event, enticing others to join in on the experience.

3. Capitalize on Ancillary Experiences by Making Them Shareable

Designing your event with shareability in mind is not just about the day of. Incorporate elements into your pre- and post-event messaging that are visually appealing, interactive, and inherently shareable. If you have ancillary events, consider virtual photo booths, immersive or group activities, unique experiences or unique locations. Encourage attendees to capture these moments and share them on social media using event-specific hashtags, and incorporate this social activity into your event marketing by highlighting/reposting favorites or by centralizing them into a feed on your website.

4. Use Challenges to Boost Participation

Consider hosting challenges related to your event theme or objectives to gamify the experience and add a little good-natured competition to the mix. For example, challenge attendees to share their most creative interpretation of the event theme, or a story that relates to the destination. These challenges not only generate excitement but also provide valuable content for your marketing efforts. Utilizing a unique branded hashtag is an effective way to make user-generated content on social media easily trackable, and challenges can also help to boost its adoption.



5. Leverage Influencer Content Partnerships

Partnering with influencers within your industry or niche can significantly amplify your event's reach and generate high-quality content that is also highly shareable. Identify influencers who align with your event's values and target audience, and collaborate with them to create content that promotes your event. This can include sponsored posts, live streams, or behind-the-scenes content. By leveraging the influencer's existing following, you can reach new audiences and inspire them to participate in your event and share their experiences.

This can also be combined with point 3 above. Have notable figures within the industry moderate sessions or act as an MC to attract a larger audience for ancillary events. Asking them to cross-promote those events on their own networks can greatly amplify their reach, and potentially increase the audience for your main event.

6. Allow the Community to Nominate Speakers

Invite your community to nominate speakers or panelists for your event in order to give them a say in the event's content and generate valuable speaker recommendations. Attendees can nominate individuals they admire or whose expertise they value, and then you can showcase these nominations on your event website or social media channels.

7. Turn Your Community Into an "Ask an Expert" Resource

Create opportunities for selected community members to become the experts by offering "Ask an Expert" sessions or forums. Invite attendees to submit questions on various topics related to your event theme or industry, and select a few community members to answer these questions based on their expertise. Alternatively, you can take a 'creative commons' approach that allows any user to contribute to the response and others to upvote the best answers.

Once again, these Q&As can be curated and then featured on your event website or social media channels to showcase the expertise within your community and encourage further engagement.

Conclusion

As event marketers continue to cope with tighter budgets and stretched teams, user-generated content offers inherent credibility while requiring minimal effort. By incentivizing participation and curating the most interesting user-generated content, organizers gain unique insights into their audience's interests and disposition to engage. Design shareable experiences by incorporating visually appealing elements and respected industry figures. Challenges can help boost participation and adoption of defined hashtags that lend themselves to easy tracking.

User-generated content provides a means for event marketers to extend their reach and empower their audience to become active participants even with limited resources. If you'd like to learn more about how to cultivate and curate user-generated content within your event tech stack, contact us.

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