

PROFESSIONAL SPEAKERS, MEETINGS AND EVENTS MADE SIMPLE

**THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
EVENT PLANNING,
MARKETING AND SALES**



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The Ultimate Guide To Event Planning, Marketing And Sales

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Introduction: Planning Better Conferences, Conventions and Events

Planning meetings, conferences and special events can be one of the most rewarding and enjoyable jobs today. As industry veterans know though, it can also be among the most challenging and hectic. In the following guide, we'll explain how to successfully plot and execute must-see events of every size, from executive retreats and leadership summits to tradeshow and strategic planning sessions – including how to make professional keynote speakers, breakout presenters, and workshop administrators an essential and engaging part of these programs.

A complete look at what it takes to wow modern audiences, complete with step-by-step tips and insider advice to plotting and executing better programs and presentations, readers will learn how to rock the house from every side of the stage, whether you're behind the microphone, or in charge of coordinating who's manning it. Equally applicable to a range of organizations – i.e. associations, corporations, trade groups, universities, institutes, schools and non-profits – expect to find a wealth of expert hints, tips and strategies within. Just a few sample highlights include a look at the latest best practices, technologies and trends that can make your meetings stand out, as well as cutting-edge ways to maximize marketing campaigns, presentations and audience participation.

So what are you waiting for? It's time to dig in. No matter if you're a corporate meeting planner, special event coordinator, or simply a modern professional looking to put on an amazing show, get ready to enjoy a wealth of ways to impress clients and colleagues – and squeeze more value and ROI out of every event.

An Expert's Guide to Professional Speakers

Thinking about hiring a keynote speaker for your next business meeting, conference, or event? It may help to understand where expert presenters best fit into keynote schedules, breakout tracks or larger overarching programs, and how these individuals can maximize audience awareness and empathy. Several factors are involved in choosing and retaining the services of leading authorities, and best leveraging these practitioners, all of which can weigh into the decision of whether or not to utilize their services. Following, you'll find several hints, tips and strategies for deciding whether to retain a pro keynote speaker for your occasion, how to select the best fit, and ensure the process runs smoothly from end to end.

What Do Professional Speakers Do?

Professional speakers appear at events with the specific goal of reinforcing key program themes (i.e. providing “keynote” speeches that cement the tone and topic for the event) and driving positive change and growth in attendees. Common goals they're tasked with include engendering support and enthusiasm for specific topics or initiatives, ensuring that teams are on the same page, and showing organizations and individuals how to overcome challenges and achieve peak performance. Presenters essentially aim to provide fresh insight and perspective, and provide both a shift in mindset and actionable tools that enable viewers to embrace professional transformations and personal growth.

Able to deliver inspiring messages in the form of keynote speeches, breakouts, seminars and workshop sessions, speakers are available in every field. Programs typically touch on a variety of professional topics from change management to leadership, sales, teamwork, marketing and more. Often, speakers are subject matter experts, thought leaders, or bestselling authors – credibility is key when establishing audience trust. However, leaving egos at the door is essential when delivering presentations. Ultimately, it is their goal to help both organizations and individuals by delivering thought-provoking solutions that can help all overcome adversity and improve business practices. Common types of professional speakers include:

- **Motivational or Inspirational Speakers**
- **Corporate or Educational Speakers**
- **Industry or Community Thought Leaders**
- **Bestselling Authors and TV Presenters**
- **Brand-Name Authorities or Celebrities**
- **Training and Development Professionals**
- **Futurists and Trend Experts**

Many offer a preset range of presentations to choose from. But to maximize impact, you'll want to request a customized program that's tailored to incorporate both personalized business insights and the event's corresponding theme. Crafting programs to match your organization and audience allows presentations and messages to better resonate with attendees, provides better context, and makes it possible to provide actionable next steps for audience members.

When weighing the decision to hire an event speaker, take into account the objectives you're aiming to accomplish, role that presenters will help play in meeting them, and the shape of desired presentations. All should be carefully crafted to meet the specific needs of the audience and special occasion. As an example, a program designed to provide positive skills transfer for managers should differ greatly from one meant to inspire awareness for a brand repositioning or new organizational initiatives.

Ask yourself: Which is appropriate for the audience and program in question? Next, think about the results you'd like to achieve, and why you want to hire a keynote speaker, with common reasons including to:

- **Educate**
- **Motivate**
- **Inspire**
- **Drive Change and Growth**
- **Promote Awareness**
- **Fuel Personal or Professional Development**
- **Inform or Entertain**

Maximizing Keynote Speeches, Workshops and Breakout Sessions

All speakers possess their own presentation style, from informative to comical and arresting. In all cases, grabbing and maintaining an audience's attention is crucial during a 60- to 90-minute speech, seminar or lengthier workshop program.

However, successful motivational speakers will always listen before they speak, getting to know organizations and key stakeholders, listening to their concerns and challenges, and understanding their marketplace and corporate culture. By doing so, they can format their speech around these specifics and include stakeholder or audience feedback, thereby heightening viewer empathy and interest. As alluded above, a truly exceptional speaker is also a great researcher and consultant, and will not deliver a generic speech at each event they attend. Such experts will always customize their message to the needs of their client – i.e. you, the meeting planner – in order to provide maximum value.

While presentation styles differ between speakers, as previously noted, an effective presenter will always look to connect with their audience by pairing substance with storytelling. In addition to everyday anecdotes to which attendees can relate, it's vital to incorporate case studies or industry trends into speeches to paint a compelling business picture. But care must be taken not to bombard listeners with facts and figures as well – introducing everyday real-life examples that underscore featured points allows presenters to connect with a wider cross-section of individuals, and for these viewers to better comprehend the material.

Speakers should also offer key next steps and strategies for improvement that audience members can act upon immediately on leaving. By explaining to viewers where to turn next for further research and insight when pursuing topics, an effective speaker can help attendees effect ongoing change and circumvent perceived limitations. Ergo, the best keynote speeches simply serve as a professional stepping stone that help encourage viewers down a path that they'll continue to follow for weeks, months and years hence.

Ways to Best Utilize Speakers

As a major part of the decision to retain a professional speaker's services, consider the role that you wish presenters to play at your special event. Many potential options are available, as are choices with regard to preferred methods of participation. Looking to achieve myriad objectives, meeting planners and executives will often opt for a combination of presentation methods (i.e. keynote and breakout, half-day workshop and master class, lunch speech and panel discussion) as well, allowing them capitalize on their exclusive on-site access to these authorities.

Common goals that professional speakers aid with frequently include:

- **Setting a positive tone for new programs or ventures, and reinforcing event themes in ways that ultimately prove empowering.**
- **Providing authoritative insight into new markets, trends, and topics.**
- **Inspiring organizations, teams and individuals to heightened levels of performance, and driving ongoing growth and development.**
- **Engaging and inspiring attendees, helping engender enthusiasm, provide fresh perspective and insight, and offering incentive to overcome perceived limitations.**
- **Raising awareness and support for topics, trends and ventures of rising interest throughout the industry and organization.**
- **Educating audiences and delivering positive learning and skills transfer.**
- **Conducting training workshops and seminars that impart new skills, talents, and insights to the organization and its staff, partners, customers, or members.**
- **Offering expert insight into evolving trends, opportunities, and issues that impact both individuals and corporate enterprises, giving audiences an advance long at what the future will bring.**

Possible program options you might retain speakers to assist with include, but are not limited to:

- **Keynote speeches**
- **Breakout sessions**
- **Workshops**
- **Seminars**
- **Question and answer sessions**
- **After-lunch or after-dinner presentations**
- **Training programs**
- **Master classes**
- **Panels**
- **Meet and greets**
- **Case studies**
- **Book signings**

Speakers might also be asked to provide additional value-adds in the form of:

- **Newsletters**
- **Tip sheets**
- **eBooks**
- **Podcasts**
- **Videos**
- **Articles and blog posts**
- **Promotional takeaways and value-adds**

Why Choose a Motivational Speaker?

Are you rolling out new programs, initiatives or business ventures, or looking to promote heightened awareness for specific topics? A keynote presenter can help solidify and secure organization-wide support for these efforts through inspirational stories and expert advice, or provide crucial insights that allow teams to overcome challenges like never before. Therefore the choice of professional speaker you add to your itinerary can be a decision that's every bit as vital as the theme, venue and setup for the occasion.

Wondering where to find a pro keynote presenter, and how to select the best fit for the program? Start by clearly defining a purpose, topic and vision for your event, then asking professional colleagues and connections for speaking references and recommendations. Don't just inquire about professionals who routinely give talks on these topics either – specifically look for individuals whose presentations best fit the shape of your programs. Consider audience demographics and the type of speaker most likely to connect with them – e.g. motivational, inspirational, insightful or otherwise – as well.

It's also important to align speakers and topics with stakeholders' overall visualizations and expectations for the program up-front. To ensure the best fit, you may wish to consider which types of speakers have been successful with these audiences in the past, and contemplate which speakers service both your industry and area. Note that in many cases, a speaker's bureau (i.e. broker) can aid with selection, and help you manage the process from beginning to end.

Once you've chosen the right motivational speaker for your meeting or event, embrace their words of wisdom and advice and encourage your employees to do the same. Think of their services as an investment in your organization's future. By adopting new ideas and advice from these thought leaders, your business can reach new heights and potential – a partnership made possible through your direct support and effort.

Points to Consider When Hiring a Keynote Speaker

You'll want to keep in mind the following when planning your next convention, tradeshow or meeting as well:

- **Clearly establish the purpose, topic and vision for the event up-front**
- **Consider audience makeup and demographics, and the type of speaker most likely to resonate with them**

- **Ask professional colleagues and connections for key note speaking references and recommendations**
- **Think about which types of speakers have been successful in the past with similar audiences**
- **Make sure you align keynote speakers and topics with key decision makers' vision for the program**

How to Get More from Keynote Speakers

Between planning compelling programs, plotting event logistics, and juggling back-end operations, meeting and event planners often have their hands full long before ever getting down to the business of selecting featured speakers. But if properly leveraged, these experts and authorities can actually make your job much easier – and lend considerable weight to efforts to package, promote and derive more value from any event. Strategic partners whose reach extends far beyond actual day-of activities, ample ways exist to tap their potential, and create win-win scenarios for all parties involved. Want to stop settling for basic bookings, and start building powerful relationships that can drive countless added benefits for your audience? Here's how you can work together with speakers to earn a standing ovation from your meetings and events in more ways than one.

Partner to Raise Awareness

Often popular public figures and noted authorities, speakers can frequently help drive awareness for events with extended audiences by providing articles, public appearances and/or media mentions. Forms of support may include (but aren't limited to) blog posts, mentions on social networks, jointly-issued press releases, videos, podcasts or authorship of original thought leadership pieces for sharing with trades, online communities, and association members. Frequently key influencers with their own following, speakers should be actively engaged and partnered with to promote appearances and drive community awareness prior to the day of the event.

Collect and Share Relevant Data

Partner with speakers to conduct polls and surveys, or provide audience questionnaires, prior to your event – not just after presentations have been given. Research and input gleaned can be used to craft more insightful programs (or, even better, in the case of especially newsworthy findings) debuted as part of on-site reveals and announcements. You can even ask speakers to interweave the process into the program itself and/or put out a call for audience participation as staffers leave feedback forms on seats. However you choose to garner it, data collected prior to, at, or on the back of your event can then be used as part of press releases, white papers and other value-adds.

Get Audiences Involved

As alluded above, presentations should be customized, not canned. To provide maximum value for association members, actively connect speakers with representatives from your organization who can provide informed commentary that helps steer the shape of presentations to address topics of paramount interest. Likewise, consider putting out a public call for questions or comments to your membership to increase audience participation and engagement with programs. Submissions – whether sent in the form of videos, podcast recordings or text – can all be interwoven throughout, or actively

screened during, presentations to boost empathy and ensure your audience's voice is heard.

Build Original and Exclusive Content

Seek ways to drive added-value from on-site appearances: Question-and-answer sessions, meet-and-greets, book signings, breakout sessions, and panel appearances can all help audiences enjoy further access to these luminaries. Have a video camera, smartphone, or spare audio recorder handy as well? You know what they say about free press – make a point of creating and archiving clips with them on topics of interest for sharing online via social channels, your website, blogs, newsletters or eLearning archives as well. Consider asking speakers to share each with their own audience too, helping increase your reach, and potentially generated more publicity ops.

Open Channels of Communication

Numerous social media platforms (see: Google's Hangouts feature or try Twitter chats) let experts easily participate in online chats or live videoconferences with association members wherever a high-speed Internet connection is available. Give each the chance to interact before, during and after events to ask questions of interest, share pointed observations, and get to know each other better. Similarly, you can also provide attendees with deeper insights by interviewing speakers for hints and tips, or excerpting recent works and sharing results online before, during or after events. Most will happily participate or provide material gratis in exchange for the added exposure.

Leverage Experts' Authority

Being program participants, speakers are uniquely positioned to provide an insider's view of event proceedings. As part of ongoing coverage – your team members should already be actively reporting news and insight as it breaks – regularly check back in with them throughout the occasion for expert commentary and input. Whether providing snappy quotes for daily recaps, play-by-play analysis of presentations, or further thoughts on peers' most pointed comments, encourage each to interact with and reflect on proceedings even while off-stage.

The Secret to Giving Successful Presentations

Corporate audiences are among the most sophisticated, demanding and well-informed groups of spectators a keynote speaker can ever present to. Happily, business executives are also among the most receptive to and interested in hearing your message... Authoritative insight, fresh perspectives and innovative solutions are often prized amongst company leaders as a vital wellspring for business growth and transformation.

The good news for presenters hoping to make a mark with the executive crowd? Despite commonly-held misperceptions, you're not there to solve anyone's problems overnight – merely steer those closest to the situation towards asking better questions. Following are several ways you can do just that, and provide a powerful presence from the podium whose benefit to clients continues to reverberate long after the physical echoes of any speech have faded.

Understand Your Audience

No two businesses are alike, nor operating realities – coming to know and understand corporate clients, the products and services they offer, and changing industry landscapes within which they operate is crucial.

Presentations should always be customized to individual firm and audience level, taking into account attendees' day-to-day challenges and concerns, and incorporating stories or learning which address or parallel viewers' hands-on experiences. Where multiple stakeholders, departments and initiatives are involved, it further helps to couch presentations in terms that are universally applicable – what matters is context and strategic takeaway, not granularity.

Taking time to truly understand each organization to which you speak, the area in which it does business, and shifting shape of the professional playing field not only helps establish trust and empathy. It makes you a more capable speaker on the platform, and better-equipped to both realistically frame points of concern and provide tailored insight and learning that allows attendees to gain new perspective on them.

Participate to the Fullest Extent

Events incorporating outside speakers are often designed to offer motivation, inspiration, authoritative input, fresh perspective, underscoring of key themes, a rousing kick-off for new initiatives, or some combination of each. All situations imply a positive sense of growth, change and momentum – points which should be reflected in the passion and verve you bring to the stage, and reflected in actions taken even when outside the spotlight.

Where appropriate, speakers should make a point of arriving to meetings, conventions early, staying late and speaking with attendees: If it helps, consider yourself as much a participant as any stakeholder. By truly taking the time to listen to others on-hand, not just talk at them, you empower two-way dialogue, gain in insight, and receive valuable feedback that should be incorporated you're your presentations, presenting a sense of timeliness and dynamism.

The problem with canned talks or cookie-cutter speeches? They feel as if you're talking at an audience, not with them – and (especially in the case of sessions which occur in the middle of event programs) look at best indifferent if salient points made in earlier sessions aren't addressed. Whether by participating in conference calls and putting questions to on-the-job experts prior to day-of programs, or making a point of attending panels you're not featured on, always go the extra mile – it reflects in the end-result.

Get Audiences Involved

Being on the day-to-day frontlines, attendees and key stakeholders are better-attuned to the reality of their own scenario. They also have a vested interest in seeing you succeed – so why not get them more involved in presentations?

Many simple strategies can help you boost engagement, awareness and takeaway, e.g. inviting observers to participate by submitting questions and suggestions prior to your presentation. Alternately, you might ask them to tape and send you commentary in the form of videos, podcasts or testimonials – all of which, like the above, can be incorporated into your programs. Not only can feedback and input help more effectively inform and steer the direction and content of your speeches to provide greater value for the end viewer. Hearing from colleagues or managers within one's own company also helps programs hit closer to home for attendees and demonstrate how the topics you're speaking on impact organizations on a more relatable and personable level.

Even an act as simple as requesting questions from your audience up-front and touching upon them when presenting shows that you've taken the time to better address key points of concern. It all adds up to more compelling, relevant and well-received presentations – and reinforces that you both value your audience's contributions, and have gone the extra mile to ensure that their voice is being heard.

Draw on Real-World Experience and Research

Inspiration and motivation are key elements of running a successful business – but so are a sense of hard-nosed practicality and eye for operational detail. As important to executives as the raw facts and figures associated with any scenario are strategic considerations and real-world context: Accordingly, case studies and practical examples can prove powerful touchpoints in any presentation.

Many businesses, and business owners, are dealing with commonly-recurring issues such as managing growth or change, attracting and retaining key talent, and juggling shifting consumer patterns. Few may possess insight beyond their specific vertical or industry as to how other organizations are successfully adapting to and addressing similar challenges, faced by leaders across the board.

To this extent, underlying themes and metaphors can help you paint a broad overarching framework – however, concrete examples and comparable situational analyses should serve as the rungs which more effectively tie messaging together. That doesn't mean anecdotes need to be dry or boring: All can provide helpful storytelling devices that underscore key points and drive sustained audience attention. Merely, that it pays to support your claims with facts, and show how they apply in context – and can make powerful statements when designed to better resonate or ring familiar.

Present a Clear Call to Action

The outcome of a successful corporate speaking engagement shouldn't simply be providing the motivation and inspiration needed to overcome the challenges an enterprise faces. It should result in attendees walking away with the knowledge needed to capably and immediately act upon both.

Note that even a single 60- to 90-minute session is enough to provide audiences with a wake-up call, shift in mindset, and the basic tools needed to begin putting new insights into practice. While opportunities such as seminars, master classes and workshops certainly provide extended forums for driving positive learning and skills transfer, it doesn't take hours to spark audiences' interest in researching and exploring subjects further. Brief though they may be, even passing presentations provide an opportunity to provide powerful tools for driving awareness and embracement of new models or methodologies. Often, all it takes is a starting point and subtle nudge in the right direction to prompt further self-guided research.

Your goal in every case: To better the client and audience's condition, and provide viewers with the means of driving forward progress and momentum. Specific and actionable advice is most highly sought-after by practically-minded business audiences – every presentation you give should aim to provide practical tips, training and advice to accompany core messages. But simply presenting a roadmap to success isn't enough... you've also got to provide impetus and incentive. To maximize value, don't let audience members leave the room without recognizing the value of undertaking the journey, and how to take their first steps down its path. The way forward is seldom hard for well-educated and -experienced audiences to see -- rather, they simply need a reminder why it's vital one pursue it to its ultimate destination.

Needless to say, executive audiences may seem among the most imposing and intimidating you'll ever face in your professional speaking career. But they're secretly on your side – a win for your program is a win for the entire organization.

It may also help to remember that you don't need to connect with every individual in the room: Just the handful of stakeholders that can serve as champions for supporting ideas, and help them take root throughout the enterprise. As ever, big things start with small steps.

Having used the techniques above to better connect with audiences, communicate the value of key messages, and drive positive momentum, you'll be well on your way to climbing the corporate ladder.

How to Increase and Sustain Audience Participation

Planning and orchestrating a successful event is hard enough without having to worry about how presenters are going to consistently sustain interest and buzz for large and often diverse audiences over extended timeframes. Thankfully, you don't have to schedule 87 networking breaks, provide each registered guest a custom coffee IV drip, or hire fire-eaters and dancing horses to keep attention and conversation levels consistently high throughout any program. Here's how to drive more audience interest, enthusiasm and participation around special occasions while keeping viewers both engaged and glued to the edge of their seats.

1. Invite advance contributions. Long before delivering live programs, invite observers to participate via online channels such as via the Web and social media by submitting questions, suggestions, comments or feedback prior to your occasion. Submissions can be used to shape event programming (e.g. when weighing trending topics to feature), incorporated into presentations (i.e., by putting queries that participants have sent to featured experts), and used in supporting materials (e.g., video reels filled with testimonials, insights and real-world frontline commentary). Each presents a great way to heighten empathy, boost audience attachment and ultimately make attendee voices heard.

2. Request creative input. Want to better underscore organization-wide support for various initiatives and programs? Ask participants to share their enthusiasm by submitting photos, slideshows, video commentary and more – all of which are easily posted to your event's website, social network page or online community to raise audience interest and involvement. Crowdsourcing (read: requesting creative contributions from your community) can also be a powerful way to invite attendee participation, bolster internal resources, and heighten contributors' emotional investment and takeaway. Consider this: "Submit your best designs for our new fundraising campaign's logo: Winners will be featured in our national ad spot!" Not only can such techniques improve contribution rates — they also can ensure that messages resonate better and hit closer to home, coming straight from an audience's peers.

3. Crunch the numbers. Partner with your speakers and/or sponsors to conduct surveys, polls and studies, or provide audience questionnaires, both prior to and during your event--not just after presentations are delivered. Research and input can be used to craft more insightful programs, incorporated into call-and-response segments, or potentially debuted as part of special onsite announcements. Findings may even be used as unique value-adds: "All who attend will receive a copy of our new industry awareness survey!" Data collected prior to, at or following your event can further be used as part of press releases, white papers and other novel takeaways--all built by and for attendees with their active input.

4. Surprise and engage. Since when in the connected age does conversation work one way? Rather than delivering canned 60-minute speeches, consider stopping at regular, preset intervals during presentations to invite audience questions, conduct

informal polls or source offstage input--all techniques that can help re-ignite interest and discussion. Reaching out to known experts in attendance (“I see marketing V.P. Jane Smith is here today: Jane, what challenges do you see this trend presenting?”) also can help heighten programs’ sense of dynamism and engagement. Talking with an audience, not simply at it, makes for more must-see sessions, and helps enhance participation, engagement and retention rates.

5. Add guest appearances. Want to really shake things up? Use videoconferencing services to source live input from surprise guests wherever high-speed Internet connections are available. Via these platforms, top authorities including notable community members and organizational leadership can pay events unexpected visits that keep viewers on the edge of their seats. Similarly, you also can beam in thoughts, opinions and live updates from events occurring simultaneously in other parts of the world. The next time international sales, marketing or management teams convene at distant locations, consider using these platforms to bring all closer together--and illustrate your organization’s global impact.

6. Promote running commentary. Courtesy of online connectivity, every smartphone-, tablet- and laptop-wielding audience member is now a potential broadcast announcer or program participant. Running streams of questions and feedback from viewers can be projected live on screens for speakers and viewers to see throughout events, thanks to Twitter and other services, helping guide ongoing discussion. Attendees also can be given tools, links and access to share live blog streams, chats and event highlights via their own websites or social channels, helping all promote and drive conversation around presentations as they unfold--and allowing your efforts to reach a wider target audience. Invite sharing, streaming and ongoing online discussion, and you instantly boost interactivity and impact.

7. Better leverage speakers. With so many hard-to-pin-down experts onsite and available for audiences to engage with, why limit their exchanges to cookie-cutter keynotes alone? Question-and-answer sessions, meet-and-greets, book signings, breakout sessions and panel appearances can all help attendees enjoy further access to these luminaries. Have a smartphone or spare audio recorder handy as well? You know what they say about free press--make a point of creating and archiving film or podcast clips with them on topics of interest for sharing online via your website, social or digital channels to boot. Consider asking speakers to share each of these assets, and additional insights, with their own audiences, too. The practice can help increase your reach, add value for viewers no matter which channel they discover you through, and potentially generate more publicity ops for your event or organization.

8. Create unique takeaways. Everyone loves seeing his/her name in lights. Letting you capture and record onsite learning as well as audience insights or reactions, a video camera can be an event planner’s best friend--always keep one handy. Make a point of interviewing attendees to get their thoughts on programs or key takeaways, and setting aside space where they can share stories or expert tips, hints and advice on primary event topics. Material can then be edited into standalone segments or short

packages (“5 Reasons Great Customer Service Matters”) for sharing during or after the gathering via online networks or video learning archives. Alternately, contributions can be transcribed and used in newsletters, eBooks or blog posts that help highlight your community all year long.

Extending the Value of Meetings and Events

From event programming to setup and transportation, meeting professionals have no shortage of concerns that constantly demand their attention. With so much effort routinely poured into crafting compelling programs and delivering powerful experiences for attendees, it's therefore all-too-easy to overlook opportunities to engage audiences both ahead of and beyond actual day-of activities. Happily, with each presenting sizable opportunities to create value for your constituents, a few straightforward strategies can help you engage and activate participants more effectively. The following hints, tips and solutions can help you squeeze more from meetings, extending the value of events far beyond their actual duration--even to the point of providing lasting benefits for those who can't attend.

Source Contributions From Your Audience – Invite observers to participate in programs via official channels (e.g. Web, word-of-mouth, email, social media platforms, etc.) by submitting their questions and suggestions, or showing support for programs and initiatives via comments, videos or podcasts prior to your occasion. Submissions can be used to shape event programming (e.g. when weighing trending topics to feature), incorporated into speeches (i.e. by putting queries that participants have sent to featured experts), and used in supporting materials (ex: video reels filled with testimonials, insights and real-world frontline commentary). Note that all are fair game for posting on your website, sharing online, or incorporating into current or future programs, takeaways and promotions. Each presents a great way to acknowledge your community, and make its voice heard.

Film and Distribute Programs – As many resources as meeting planners invest in offering attention-grabbing activities and speakers, many neglect the exponential gains videotaping provides despite its only incremental expenses. Where appropriate, always keep a camera on-hand during events to capture learning and insight, and ensure that insights gained from challenges and team-building activities are preserved for others to learn from and enjoy. Lessons and program highlights can easily be uploaded to sites like YouTube or Vimeo (where they can be promoted, shared or embedded into other websites), or incorporated into exclusive members-only archives. Inside tip: Setting aside a space at your event – e.g. a quiet room where users can talk to the camera – allows them to comfortably share personal insights, anecdotes and testimonials, thereby boosting engagement rates while simultaneously building your library of potential assets. Can't afford a professional camera crew? Skip fancy setups and have a volunteer man a budget-friendly portable HD camcorder – dozens of models cost just \$100-\$200.

Live Stream the Proceedings – You can also beam panels, keynotes and training sessions straight to viewers' offices using live video streaming solutions. Numerous live streaming services let you share video to computers, the Web or social networks from smartphones, tablets and more. A number of off-the-shelf, budget-friendly filming tools can also help you stream or record the excitement as seen through the eyes of attendees themselves. Just because audience members can't be on-hand doesn't mean that they can't tune in remotely, or enjoy proceedings as time presents itself between daily tasks.

Provide Running Coverage – In the same way that radio announcers offer running play-by-play sports coverage, you can also provide live recaps, feedback and commentary on event proceedings on your website over the Internet. Case in point: Numerous live blogging tools let you share text, audio and video updates as presenters reveal new research or provide key takeaways from case studies. Several apps and plugins further make it possible to embed real-time commentary into preexisting websites completely free of charge. Letting you share news, insights and analysis as they're delivered from the podium, all provide a handy way to cover event highlights and happenings, and aid with providing event recaps or ongoing coverage.

Capture Advice and Insights – Continuous content marketing and publishing efforts should be a part of every organization's outreach programs. Events provide the perfect venue at which to tap high-ranking officials, experts and thought leaders for learning, insights and advice which can be used to generate added value and help raise awareness for organizations and causes all year long. As part of your programs, workshops and events, ask all to share stories, provide hints and tips, and offer support or feedback. Quotes and commentary can then be incorporated back into newsletters, mailers, trailers and more. With so many great resources on-site, why not utilize them? Consider assigning volunteers to play journalist, or setting up an event area reserved for video- or audio-taping viewers' or speakers' thoughts, and encouraging all to participate in such programs.

Appeal to Audiences' Creative Side – Want to better highlight what's happening within an organization, provide feedback from the real-world frontlines, or underscore enthusiasm for various initiatives and programs? Invite participants to share their spirit, thoughts and ideas by sharing photos, slideshows, videos, suggestions, and more – all of which are easily posted to your event's website, social network page or online community. Tight on resources? You might also consider expanding your army of volunteer recruits overnight by pursuing crowdsourced campaigns. (Submit your best designs for our annual off-site's new logo: Winners will be featured in supporting assets, and enjoy on-stage recognition at the event!) The more creative, the more engaging programs will be – and the greater the chance you encourage more widespread participation.

Collect and Respond to Fan Feedback – Now that your event's done, don't be afraid to ask: How we make the next one even better? Go beyond simple surveys and questionnaires by reaching out participants and speakers via your Wiki, webpage, email newsletter, surveys, or social channels to find out what they loved, and would like to see more of in coming months. Encourage them to suggest future topics and programs, provide feedback on their experiences, and brainstorm even better ways to share event highlights and learning. As a key part of any winning events team, it bears reminding – it's never too early to get audience members involved.

Top Meeting Mistakes: Five Items You May Be Forgetting

Frantic as CMPs and corporate meeting specialists often find their day-to-day working pace, it's all too easy to overlook simple value-adds that can radically enhance any gathering's impact. But if properly leveraged, these cost-affordable and easily-implemented initiatives can help maximize attendance, boost audience learning and takeaway, and dramatically improve return on investment. Following are several ways to get more from your conferences and executive summits, none of which require huge added expenditures, yet all of which can maximize value for any organization.

1. Community support. Want to increase audience participation while maximizing value for all in attendance? Get attendees involved in meeting programs up-front by inviting them to help steer programs, submit comments and suggestions, or contribute multimedia content via internal, online, social media, strategic partners or other readily available distribution channels. Submissions can be used to help select program and track topics, questions and insights incorporated into speeches and presentations, and content easily saved and repurposed for other initiatives. Similarly, conducting advance surveys and polls, then revealing surprise findings at your gathering, can also be a great way to heighten interest while incorporating participants' input. All present a wealth of potential opportunities to secure greater audience contributions, and make sure their needs are being met.

2. Partner with program speakers. As noted thought leaders and industry personalities, speakers can frequently help drive event awareness and boost your audience reach. Don't be afraid to ask them to share blog posts, spread mentions on social networks or provide videos, podcasts and original articles for sharing with guests or publication and promotion, e.g. in industry trades. Always look for ways to connect presenters with audience members and drive added learning for all parties prior to actual presentations as well. Meet-and-greets, breakfasts, teleconferences group videoconferencing sessions, and other live or online programs present ample opportunity for speakers to engage with audience members, share expert insights, and gain feedback that can help better shape and inform presentations. All provide a forum for experts and attendees to ask vital questions, interact, and get to know each other better before the big show, boosting takeaway and making for more compelling on-stage programs.

3. Record and redistribute programs. Always keep a video camera, smartphone, or – at the very least – spare audio recorder on-hand to capture learning and insights. Highlights can be easily shared or live-streamed online, distributed via corporate website, social network or newsletter, or incorporated into online learning libraries, helping you extend the value of programs far beyond day-of attendance. Note that any captured material can provide a ready source of content for year-round inbound marketing or audience outreach programs and be enjoyed and digested at viewers' convenience. Events provide an ideal venue at which to tap into audience members' as well as experts' insights: As part of your programs, ask all to share hints, tips, stories and inspiration. That way, you needn't limit learning to only those on-hand during actual

festivities and can extend the value of corporate meetings and retreats for weeks, months or years to come.

4. **Encourage audience input.** Smartphones, tablets and an array of apps and social networks make it easy to poll audience members, post trending topics, or share conversations live on projection-size screens for emcees, speakers and attendees to enjoy. Give viewers the tools to ask questions or provide feedback through these vehicles, and you can quickly improve program engagement and dynamism while helping create more timely and relevant discussion. Sharing links and tools with audience members that allow them to promote live streamed coverage, online chats and event highlights via social channels can also help extend reach and awareness. All make it possible to boost audience involvement, reach larger audiences, and potentially secure added interest or publicity for your programs while also gaining deeper insights into your community.

5. **Create unique value-adds and takeaways.** Enough with the pens and key chains. Instead, consider creating more unique giveaways incorporating audience members' names, faces, and unique contributions to help heighten recall and event takeaway. For example: You might assign team members to act as journalists who interview, photograph and tape attendees to get their thoughts during programs, or set aside space where visitors are invited to share their thoughts on camera. Material can then be used to create eBooks, brochures, websites or video segments (i.e. The Future of Destination Marketing or 50 Tips for Providing Great Customer Service) featuring your business' employees, clients, and strategic partners. Don't want to get that fancy? Transcribe contributions and use them to create blog posts or newsletters that highlight your community, creating opportunities to connect and re-engage audiences while promoting social sharing year-round.

In short, a little advance planning and creativity combined with everyday off-the-shelf technologies, tools and solutions can help you squeeze more from any corporate event. Best of all, there's more than one way to skin a cat: Mix and match ideas, and you'll find many that many can combine to create benefits before, during and after your special occasions. Meeting planners are encouraged to experiment with any and all of the above ideas – when it comes to keeping an audience on the edge of its seat, you may find many of the most effective solutions hiding in plain view.

Make Technology Work for Your Events

Technology has permanently and profoundly impacted the way that the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions industry does business. From advertising and marketing to social media and customer relationship management, virtually every spectrum of day-to-day business functions is being impacted by apps, online services, and the shift to mobile devices. Luckily, the power to leverage all to create more positive results for your business is just a single click or tap away. Following are among the key technology trends to keep in mind going forward as you plan, execute, and market your events--as well as ways into the power of all to more effectively connect with colleagues and clients.

Connected and Mobile Computing--Among today's biggest high-tech themes: 'Smart' (Internet-connected) and mobile devices, all supporting on-demand downloads, apps, and options to create or share media amongst each other. With billions of mobile devices now the primary way users connect with brands, event and venue websites shouldn't just be optimized for these platforms (think smaller screens and more immediate user access), among attendees' new primary research tools. Ongoing programs and promotional content – i.e. videos, podcasts, online learning libraries, etc. – should also be built that support corresponding display sizes and bandwidths, a higher frequency of delivery and viewing consumption patterns, and one-touch sharing capability. Often a first point of contact with customers, and key channel for ongoing communications efforts, more important than specific devices utilized is how you're reaching and engaging buyers who are growingly found upon them.

Hardware and Technology Performance Gains – Thanks to chipmakers like AMD, Qualcomm, Intel and NVIDIA, all growingly concentrating on such mobile solutions, set-top PC horsepower and graphics performance is also increasingly available from pocket-friendly devices in a variety of screen sizes, formats and price points. Combined with broadening access to cloud computing solutions including SlideShare, MightyMeeting and Prezi, this means pitching sponsors and strategic partners is suddenly easier than ever – assets and presentation materials can now be shared via portable screens. Nowadays, your desktop not only travels wherever you do, making doing business easier than ever. Whether focused on engaging end-users or B2B clients, it's relatively painless to provide attendees with 3D floor plans or (via virtual or on-site video demos) offer advertisers a firsthand tour of featured venues without hopping an international flight. Added bonus: Using online storage, real-time collaboration and transfer solutions such as Dropbox or Hightail, there's no more having to worry about accidentally packing outdated versions of your latest PowerPoint deck or seeing sales reps accidentally leave key files behind at the office either.

Video and Content Sharing Solutions – As an outgrowth of devices' rising power and portability, a skyrocketing array of smartphones, tablets and low-cost HD camcorders now make it possible to quickly capture learning or announcements and create and share broadcast-quality video at little cost. Businesses and venues of every size can now assemble learning libraries, build evergreen promotional assets, or even live-

stream convention content at-will at minimal cost. Best of all, such initiatives pay lasting dividends by letting you easily extend the value of events and campaigns far beyond actual day-of activities and attendance. Note that casual face-to-face and group videoconferencing solutions tailor-made for boosting client empathy are also readily available via free downloadable apps and social networks.

Social Participation and Feedback – With social media now baked into so many gadgets and second-nature to consumers, and therefore paramount to any promotional strategy, it bears remembering: Today, corporate communications are a two-way street. Among today’s most effective marketing techniques– inviting audience participation using creative initiatives designed to drive fan engagement and group collaboration, which can help boost audience empathy and awareness while simultaneously slashing advertising costs. Case in point: When promoting events or destinations, consider asking observers to participate via Web, word-of-mouth, email or social channels by submitting questions, comments, video commentary or even new logos for consideration. (“Winners to be featured in our next national ad campaign!”) Not only do such techniques heighten engagement and potential pass-along. Submissions can also be used to shape event programming (e.g. when weighing trending topics for consideration as panel topics) or used in supporting materials – all fair game for posting on your website, sharing online, or incorporating into future takeaways and promotions.

The Content Marketing Boom – Another key recent development: Search engines have become the new initial frontline for customer interaction, causing sales funnels to shrink. And in a world where businesses are growingly defined by their online footprint, industry pros must realize – suddenly, today, we’re all in the publishing business. Given content’s growingly disposable nature, an outpouring of the Web’s explosive growth and the boom in mobile devices, content marketing efforts should be an ongoing part of every organization’s promotional efforts. Happily, not only is your own enterprise filled with subject matter experts who can serve as ambassadors via blogs, newsletters, podcasts or similar outreach channels. Events provide the perfect venue at which to tap experts, executives, and community leaders for learning, insights and advice which can be used to generate added value and help raise awareness all year long. As part of programs, workshops and events, ask all to share best practices, hints and tips, and offer support or inspiration. Quotes and commentary can then be incorporated back into newsletters, mailers, trailers and more, providing year-long benefit.

How to Give Your Special Occasions an Upgrade

Dozens of new high-tech advancements promise to impact the meetings, destinations and event planning fields, both from the perspective of industry insiders and everyday working professionals. Looking to give your special occasion or promotional campaign an upgrade? Here are five ways to better connect with audiences and tap into these solutions (sometimes quite literally) in coming months.

Design for Mobile Devices – The future belongs to mobile devices, with more currently in circulation than there are people on the planet. Business, venue and

destination websites should be optimized for these platforms – now among users’ primary research tools. Mobile designs need to fit smaller screen sizes, present key information or callouts with fewer clicks, and feature more media designed for rapid search and sharing.

Leverage Cloud Computing Solutions – Online (a.k.a. “cloud) computing apps now let your business travel wherever you do. Solutions like SlideShare, MightyMeeting and Prezi allow you to screen presentations for clients on portable screens, while tools including Google Docs, Dropbox and Zoho allow for remote group sharing, storage and/or collaboration. The good news: All growingly liberate road warriors from their desktop.

Capture and Share Content – Not routinely recording program highlights or promotional spots on video? Stop selling your events and destinations short: Smartphones and tablets with HD camcorders now make it possible to quickly share broadcast-quality clips online at little cost. You can even live-stream the sights and sounds of dream vacations using various apps free for customers to enjoy.

Capitalize on Inbound Marketing – Search engines represent a cost-effective way to reach prospective attendees and compete for visibility with larger rivals. To boost ranking and awareness, routinely publish photos, videos, podcasts and more – every organization can share attention-getting hints, tips and advice, or information on tours and destinations, including evergreen pieces (“5 Ways to More Effectively Plan Events”) reusable for future customer reference. Feeling sneaky? Consider also buying Google advertisements (online classified ads) based on rivals’ names or associated keywords (popular search engine terms) that shoppers will see while research competitors.

Invite More Audience Participation – Boost audience engagement and awareness by using creative social outreach campaigns that invite audience participation. Example: Next time you’re running a contest, try asking customers to submit photos, videos or stories of favorite convention experiences, or designs for your next ad campaign, in order to win. All contributions can be shared or featured in ongoing promotional efforts, and provide added incentive for pass-along.

5 Ways to Maximize Content Marketing Campaigns

Content marketing--the practice of producing articles, videos, podcasts and other compelling assets--is among the most powerful ways to promote meetings, events and destinations today. But are you really getting the most from your campaigns? Here are several ways to take creative material you have already invested in and extend its value to drive added promotional value and website traffic at minimal cost.

Create an eBook. Already been sharing hints and tips or ways to plan more powerful events on your company blog? Compile it into an eBook or guide as a unique takeaway that also cements your business' expertise. PDF files suitable for reading on computers or mobile devices can easily be created by graphic designers, or exported from Microsoft Word, while services like Lulu.com and CreateSpace provide affordable print-on-demand capabilities. For added impact, consider updating material and adding new chapters to prior works, then promoting media awareness around the launch of new editions.

Design a Podcast Series. An HD webcam (available under \$100) or smartphone with audio/video recording capabilities is all it takes to start your own virtual radio or TV show for online distribution. Currently find yourself speaking at events or constantly providing advice to customers? Record sound bites and remix them into downloadable programs featuring highlights as well. Where possible, dovetail with other promotions, e.g. piggybacking off your newly-published eBook to create an audio series on similar topics, to help raise awareness.

Break Content Into Parts. Have a lengthy brochure or whitepaper that contains tons of great info? Consider breaking it into a set of standalone articles for online sharing. Running groups of posts can be themed and linked together via a master page, and promoted as a running series. Couple these programs with community and PR outreach efforts, and you can both advertise key themes and keep dialogue and awareness levels high for weeks at a time.

Repurpose Visual Assets. Got a ton of great photos and images handy? Look for ways to bring all together, whether as a picture gallery ("Year's Hottest Special Events"), montage ("5 Destinations to Watch"), social media series ("Best Places to Hold Your Meeting") or infographic ("The Year's Top Technology Trends") that quickly conveys useful information. You might even create microsites designed to showcase all, or pair visual materials with corresponding articles and videos, creating the online equivalent of eye-catching brochures.

Repackage and Represent Content. Sitting on a mountain of preexisting online material? Try creating a master round-up post that serves as a one-stop reference. Likewise, updating past content with new information and opinions can help you create an expanded director's cut. You can also enhance and revise previously published material, providing fresh insight or adding a new spin on prior observations. Making

things easy to find and routinely refreshing the presentation of popular articles or posts can help keep audiences coming back for more.

5 Social Media Myths Debunked

Social media has literally changed the face of marketing and promotions for MICE industry businesses, meeting planning organizations and events of every size. Small businesses benefit from its \$0 price tag and see it as an easy way to participate in industry conversations and stay in front of clients. Big businesses are well aware of the benefits too, and according to research by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research, 73% of Fortune 500 companies were active on social media long before it became a must-have. Fast-forward to today and the number of businesses participating is even higher, especially with the numerous advances in social media services, apps and online tools.

Yet despite social media's potential to be a powerful resource for destination and event management providers, it requires in-depth understanding, strategic planning and constant management to successfully aid your business and build your brand. In fact, there are several things social media simply can't do, proving that tried and true business strategies and tactics are not to be forgotten in the wake of this technological phenomenon. Below are five social media myths debunked.

Social media can act as a your only marketing channel

As effective and interactive as social media can be for your brand's exposure, reputation and market position, it should be treated as a piece of your social marketing strategy – not your entire plan. "Social media has provided most businesses with amazing opportunities for branding...but if the brand is not managed at a strategic level, these social media efforts can lead to brand chaos and confusion in the marketplace," said Stephanie Hackney of Branding Masters in a BusinessNewsDaily.com article.

If social media is the only component in your strategy to reach your customers, you're missing out on attaining a whole segment of customers who are not active online. Likewise, how will customers know to tune into your online accounts if you're not promoting them anywhere else? Effective marketing strategies are a combination of several publicity methods, including traditional advertising efforts.

Social media will make you an overnight success

The right post or tweet can certainly bring loads of attention by going viral, but true success isn't defined by the number of followers, retweets or likes you gather. Rather, it's defined by user engagement. Meaningful, measurable results can take time to achieve. Furthermore, unless your brand is already successful, well respected and well known, it's hard to attract the attention of new followers. You must pass consumers' initial "why should I care?" test in order for your efforts to strike a chord in your audience.

Bayard Winthrop, CEO of American Giant, states that by cultivating fans that feel an emotional connection with – and eventually love for – your brand, you will build a following of loyal, incentivized and willing brand evangelists. For more on how to do so,

please see companion guides *Social Media Marketing and Management* and *Influencer Marketing: How to Build a Winning Brand and Inspire Social Influencers*.

Social media will fix inconsistencies

Social media can actually highlight the flaws between what a company says and what it actually follows through on. You may be active, compassionate and engaging online, but if this doesn't echo your true business nature, it will be only a matter of time before someone posts a comment or tweet to that effect. For example, if an airline company boasts about never losing passenger luggage on their Facebook site, this gives the consumers the opportunity to post - for all to see - if they do. Social media allows you to build relationships and broadcast your brand, but neither of those objectives can be met if you are inconsistent.

Social media will directly drive sales

Social media can increase your awareness, improve customer service and introduce you to new customers. However, one thing it can't do is directly sell for you. According to research into online retail performance conducted by market research experts Forrester Research and GSI Commerce, less than 2% of all orders were driven by shoppers on social networks, while search results and email marketing converted the most.

That being said, social media is great for indirectly helping you sell your product. A great example from the Wall Street Journal used toy company Step2 as an example of how adding loyalty icons and badges for reviewers and buyers lead to a 300 per cent boost in revenues. Most of these new buyers arrived at Step2.com through the Facebook Connect button after seeing the badges and loyalty icons.

These customers most likely did not actively look to buy something online, but because of a social media campaign that drove awareness of their products, demonstrated authenticity and displayed satisfied customers who made past purchases, people became curious. Once they clicked the Facebook link to visit the website and made a purchase, the company received a massive sales bump indirectly.

Social media is a substitute for offline interactions

A customer will learn a lot more from your emails or phone calls than they ever will in a 140-character tweet or Facebook post. Social media cannot replace a customer's experience with a company since a large part of building connections and trust comes from face-to-face interaction, voice inflection/tone during phone calls, personal emails and more. Plus, social media content is public or email based, so real meaningful connections with key stakeholders are rare using just social media.

The Wall Street Journal notes that face-to-face interaction has become even more valuable. As Harvard economist Edward Glaeser also points out, business travel has dramatically increased since the invention of email. Attendance at business conferences has spiked since the invention of video-conferencing. Therefore, because of the increase in social media, cities have increased their need for personal communication in business.

It is undeniable that advances in social media have aided in business marketing; however, the key to effective usage is remembering to use it strategically and often. Sometimes, sharing a cup of coffee or networking with a prospective client will reflect your business in a much more positive light than a tweet or Facebook post.

CONCLUSION

As you've seen, even in a world of constant connectivity and social media, the value of meetings and events cannot be underestimated. Among organizations' most effective tools for building relationships, and driving audience support and awareness, special occasions remain one of the most promising implements in your professional toolset. No matter if you're looking to kick off new corporate initiatives, provide colleagues with continuing education programs, or simply serve up a great excuse to kick back and enjoy team-building activities, we hope that you've enjoyed the insights and information presented. All should serve to provide inspiration and actionable insight for future programs, and ensure your meeting or conference's success. We invite you to share your own success strategies and experts tips with others via our website at www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com. As rapidly as the industry changes, it's always a pleasure to hear from the experts – especially the field's most qualified professionals, individuals operating on the frontlines such as yourself.

About Scott Steinberg



Hailed as The Master of Innovation by Fortune magazine, and the World's Leading Business Strategist, award-winning professional speaker Scott Steinberg is among today's best-known trends experts and futurists. A strategic adviser to four-star generals, government leaders, and a who's-who of Fortune 500s, he's helped craft dozens of business strategies and product designs for the world's top brands, and is the bestselling author of 14 books including Make Change Work for You: 10 Ways to Future-Proof Yourself, Fearlessly Innovate, and Succeed Despite Uncertainty, The Business Etiquette Bible, and Millennial Marketing: Bridging the Generation Gap.

The President and CEO of BIZDEV: The Intl. Association for Business Development and Strategic Planning™ and founder of travel + lifestyle trends magazine SELECT: Your City's Secrets Unlocked™, his website is www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com. Named one of America's top futurists by the BBC and a "top trendsetter to follow" by the Fortune 500, this leading business insider and analyst has covered consumer, business, and lifestyle trends for 600+ outlets from CNN to Rolling Stone.

"One of the best gurus on innovation and competitive advantage strategies to accelerate growth."

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"If you really want to know about business, you should refer to Scott Steinberg."

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