

## **How to plan the foundation for a great conference**

Dan Rayburn is the Executive Vice President for StreamingMedia.com, a content provider in the streaming and online video industry. Of all the people I have spoken with so far, he was by far the most passionate about the value of content as an anchor in events. In doing these interview with people who work in the events business, there seems to be two camps on the content side, those that say that you can run events in multiple markets without have to live day to day in them, and those like Dan who feel you need to be a stakeholder in the market for which you provide content, i.e. 'be a mover and shaker' in that market. Dan fits into the latter camp.

We had a chat of how the foundation of a great event is created, here's what came up:

### **1) Don't be greedy with attendance fees.**

Especially when building an event, don't charge too much for an attendee to come to an event, especially when building an audience. \$1500? Too much!

### **2) Focus on quality of quantity of people**

In building events as part of a total content strategy, focus on the higher quality attendee first and cater to it, and only then on the numbers of people.

### **3) Build other content vehicles around the event**

Build newsletters and blogs focused on the content contained in the event, rather than just event updates. Developing this content will enhance your reputation as a high value content provider rather than just an event organizer. Of course this can become expensive, but in the minds of many, 'world class content' is worth it.

### **4) Archive conference sessions**

Unlike a number of event providers, who charge for the archives of conference sessions, Streaming Media provides them for free on their website after the event. Doing this gives a sense of being part of the group for those who couldn't attend, and can be used as a promotional vehicle for future marketing efforts.

## **5) Love your market**

Unless you have a passion for what you are doing, you're not going to put your best effort forth. Dan recommends selecting a market that you are extremely passionate about and start an event on the subject, rather than being events company that selects topics on which do events. The love comes through with Dan as he speaks of the pride of helping the market grow through his efforts.

## **6) Understand your market**

Assuming that you are passionate about your market, it is likely that you will understand the market, or learn it quickly. It is particularly important to know the buy-sell relationship in the market (what you content you need to develop to bring the people you need in item 2) with whom the exhibitors and sponsors are looking to interface) and how you can make a 'watering-hole' of all the market's stakeholders at your event.

## **7) Put your direct home phone number of your home page**

When Dan mentioned this, I immediately put this on the end of this column and a bunch of other places. Why does he do it? To create the reality that he is immediately accessible to the marketplace to assist with those who have questions about the subject and to get immediate feedback. I actually got a new client recently from someone who had read one of my articles and called me directly, so I can attest to the fact that it works...

## **8) Spend money on event research**

I already mentioned 'world class content' above. In order to provide a strong foundation for the event you'll need a good grasp of what your audience wants to know from your event is one of the keys to developing a long term sustained event. This can be expensive but is worth it...

## **9) Partner with competitors**

This one doesn't seem as obvious until you think about it. Dan approached NAB (the National Association of Broadcasters) and asked to be able to provide content for their annual event. In this way, Dan's show got a bigger forum for their market, and NAB got top class streaming media content in their event. Doesn't always work but worth a shot...

I left the conversation with Dan very energized, and can see why he's driven a lot of success through his event. I think the underlying message is 'take care of your content and your content will take care of you'! I think it's a message we should be able to get behind. Send me your comments if you disagree!

*Warwick Davies is the Principal of The Event Doctor!, a consulting company which helps event organizers realize greater revenues and profits by fixing 'broken' events and launch new ones both in United States and internationally . His clients include event organizers in the information technology, healthcare, biotechnology and executive events markets. Previously, Warwick was responsible for internationally recognizable event brands such as Macworld Conference and Expo, LinuxWorld Conference and Expo, and the Customer Relationship Management Conference and Exposition worldwide. For more information on The Event Doctor! and past SISO The Event Doctor! columns please visit <http://www.theeventdoctor.net/resources.html> . He can be reached at [Warwick@theeventdoctor.net](mailto:Warwick@theeventdoctor.net) or at 781 354 0119.*