

How to help attendees maximize their time

Nancy Walsh is the highest ranking woman executive in the tradeshow industry in North America, as executive vice president for Reed Exhibitions, handling a very large portfolio for them. She's also a nice lady. One of her goals in driving Reed's business is to serve the attendees and buyers in a 'customized' way and I was interested to talk with her about how she is currently taking advantage of the latest event technology to help both buyers and sellers to save time at her events..

When we spoke earlier this year we talked about how one goes about saving time for customers:

1) Start right from registration

From registration, Reed sends out links to tools such as BD Metrics, which enables registrants to review the exhibitors and select the ones it wants to see at the event, in addition to seeing the profiles of other attendees and sessions in the conference that meet their needs. On the seller side, the exhibitor can see the profiles of the individual attendees, and depending upon the attendee preferences can contact the attendee prior to the event to deliver timely and relevant information. This personalization technology customizes the show experience around the unique needs of each individual. The result is more attendees justifying attending events, more exhibitors exhibiting at events and high customer satisfaction.

2) Computer terminals at registration

Reed also offers computer terminals at registration so that attendees can check on site to see which people of like interest are at the event, with a view to setting up meetings. This is again based upon technology such as BD Metrics. Setting up terminals for this explicit purpose is one that many event organizers usually don't do, but is very valuable to the attendee.

3) Conduct online town meetings

Reed opens up online forums covering the themes and topics that will be discussed both before and after the event on some of their events. When done correctly, this stirs up excitement for the event and helps future attendees connect and share ideas. After the event, it allows the dialogue to continue long after the doors of the hall have closed.

4) Create special sites for events

For one event, The International Security Conference and Expo, Reed created a portal (www.isc365.com) so that the community can be offered information and resources 24/7, including opportunities for viewers to network and view and participate in podcasts, blogs and news feeds. The result is that you have highly connected attendees coming to their events, and ones who stay connected long after the events.

5) Engage in viral marketing

The team for New York ComicCon (<http://www.nycomiccon.com/App/homepage.cfm?moduleid=2577&appname=100453>) actually went into the community and joined the comic book sites and also blogged there to participate in the marketplace. The effect? The ComicCon team becomes part of the marketplace and attracts more word of mouth attention than with standard marketing campaigns.

The result of all of the above? The prospective attendees have a way of planning their time unlike most standard events. They optimize what they do when they are spending that all important 'time away from the office' at the Reed events, which adds to their loyalty to those events, knowing that Reed will go the extra mile. Think about how you are helping attendees and sellers save time at your events, and let me know how you are doing!

Warwick Davies is the Principal of The Event Mechanic! 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 construction and design engineering and executive event 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 Mechanic! and past SISO The Event Doctor! columns please visit <http://www.theeventmechanic.com/resources.html> He can be reached at Warwick@theeventmechanic.com or at 781 354 0119.