

How to reverse declining attendee numbers in your event

As someone in charge of the strategy and profitability of your events, your main tasks are to keep your brands profitable in long term and your attendees happy.

But let's say you have just taken over an event that has declining attendee numbers, how do you start and repair a situation in decline?

Unfortunately there are no quick fixes to reverse declining attendee numbers. If you are in it for the long haul, however, here are five things to consider:

1) Change who programs your event.

Do you depend on in house project managers who use outside help (Chairmen, etc) or have you hired subject experts to do the programming? The closer your staff are to the market the better, if you can afford it. In either case, decide if you want to change who plans the program.

2) Use the information you get from your attendee surveys and post show analytics.

Do you know how many attended which sessions and why? How happy are the attendees with the quality of the sessions? Every organizer performs evaluations, but you should take a look at how are you using them, and create questions for the attendees that are impactful. Learn if you need to use new sources of prospects for your marketing plan, and which marketing channels worked in your past programs.

3) Make sure your staff are 'future minded'.

Are your conference staff following the market trends or just running a similar program time after time. Many staff are only trained to run events, not to ensure their longevity. Find mentors within your company who can help staff think of future directions and how to align the event to those directions.

4) Make your business plan dynamic.

Do you write a business plan noting the direction of the industry and how the conference will serve the needs of the target audience? Make sure you are not just putting the plan 'in the draw' after it has been written, make sure it is a working document and reflects the changes in the market, and how to tailor the event to them.

5) Strengthen your stakeholderships.

Do you have an active advisory board? How helpful are the members and how is it managed? Make sure that your outside help knows how to help and is directed by a knowledgeable employee. Is the advisory board helping you find new sources of leads?

None of the above are quick fixes, but if you look at the elements of what made your event successful in the beginning, together with some of the changes above, it could help you to reverse a decline in attendee numbers. Good luck in your quest!

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