

PMI Region 7

Southwest North America

GOOD TO KNOW

The Next Generation of Meeting Marketing: Smart Strategies and a Comprehensive Mix

Marketing Insights, July 2011

By: Paige Cardwell

As the role of meetings and events continues to evolve along with the needs of our attendees, our marketing strategies must evolve as well. In today's world of transparency, unlimited access to information, and online networks, we need to find new ways to engage our attendees and persuade them with specific messages that our meetings are relevant and worth their time. We need to prove that what they'll experience at our meetings is unique and can't be found anywhere else, and that as a result they'll grow both personally and professionally.

So what elements of our marketing plans and strategies are affected in this current environment? Try messaging, tactics, timing, delivery channels—in fact, almost every aspect of your marketing program. The marketing mix has become far more comprehensive, and the channels have all become crowded with more noise, which makes it harder to get your message heard. So, breaking through with the right message is key. Here are some fundamental insights and strategies that will help your meeting promotions be more effective and relevant and yield better results.

Make Your Meeting a Must – Attend Event

It's your job to keep our meetings chock-full of not-to-be-missed and see-it-here-first content that effectively positions your event as high value and "must attend." As meetings compete with the plethora of readily available online information and networking opportunities, your messages must clearly demonstrate that attending your event is a far superior and dynamic experience than any online interaction. Take the time to upgrade your event by enhancing the customer experience. Add something new, unique, and exciting. Bring in strategic partners to expand the offerings and the audience. Rethink your networking events to bring an element of playful fun into the mix. You may be surprised at the positive reaction. Now you have the opportunity to communicate all that's new and improved and how it will add value to the attendee's experience, making you stand out from competitors.

Give Them What They Want, Not What You Think They Want

Gone are the days of talking at your attendees. Straight-up marketing and sales speak is a thing of the past. Now we have to talk in terms of members' specific wants and needs. How do you do this? Just ask.

The most effective meeting and event organizers are taking the time to get in touch with their attendees and target audiences through in-depth research and interviews. By talking directly to the customers, you can hear in their own words why a meeting is important, how it can be improved, what will keep them coming back, and what it will take to get them to spread the word to colleagues and peers. By building an event that speaks directly to their wants and needs, it will be more relevant, valuable, and integral to their personal and professional growth. The stronger the value proposition, the stronger the messaging you can deploy. Plus, you'll get keen insights into how the attendees talk about the event in their own voices, which will make your messages resonate even more.

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Southwest North America

Get Your Attendees to Tell Your Story

There's nothing better than a true attendee testimonial that speaks to a tangible value of your meeting. Spend some time at your show doing in-the-moment interviews with your attendees to capture their experience in real time, when energy and excitement are high. Be strategic about who you interview. Make sure you hit all of the audience segments, demographics, and target markets so you have a comprehensive representation. Edit the best sound bites into a short promotional video that weaves together all of the value propositions in the personal words of the attendees. The result will be a very compelling, objective marketing tool for your meeting. Videos are a popular and compelling channel of communication and are quickly becoming the preferred method of information collection by online consumers.

Make Your Website the Heart of Your Marketing Program

Because of the availability of dynamic and digital content, static marketing programs are a thing of the past. Attendees expect to go to your website and have an interactive experience with your meeting. The most effective meeting websites feature powerful and rich content experiences using videos, attendee interviews, photo galleries, session highlights and podcasts, and more. They also incorporate their social networks so that visitors can see the content offerings across all online channels in one place, at one time. Chances are that every marketing effort and tactic will take people to your website at some point during the decision-making process. Make certain it represents.

Hail the Mail: Print is Still It

When you take the time to know your audience and craft compelling messages, you can't leave it to chance that they'll be received. With today's overcrowded communications channels, it's harder and harder to be noticed. And this is why the mail still rules. Think about it. Think about how much less mail you receive today compared to just a few years ago. What's great for the environment is also great for marketers. The need to physically touch and interact with your mail keeps it an effective and critical part of your marketing program. Just because people register online doesn't mean that it wasn't a postcard, brochure, or letter that prompted them to do so.

Opt-In for Email Success

Email has become a commodity marketing vehicle. It's cheap, it's easy, and everyone is doing it. But that is exactly why response rates continue to decline. The keys to effective email are the quality of your list and how you treat that list. Your email subscriber list is one of your most powerful assets. To keep those subscribers from opting out, use your lists with care and caution. Give them news. Give them information. Turn your marketing messages into insightful content and editorial. Personalize whenever possible, test subject lines, do a text-only version. Coordinate deployment of your emails with other departments to make sure that as an organization, you are not bombarding your members. Then, watch your open rates climb.

It's a new world of meetings and event marketing. Attendees want to know now, more than ever, what's in it for them and specifically how your event will help them succeed. Take the time to know your meeting attendees, their wants, their needs, and all the ways your event delivers value to them personally and professionally. Use that information to craft compelling messages that resonate with the target audience. Send those messages via a comprehensive marketing mix to assure your event breaks through and connects with your audience wherever they are. That's the recipe for meeting marketing success.

Paige Cardwell is president of CSG Creative in Alexandria, Virginia.

PMI Region 7

Southwest North America

PROGRAMS

PMI Tools & Resources for Chapter Board Elections

This is commonly the time of year when chapters run chapter board elections. Boards should reference their chapters' bylaws, as well as, any process or operations guides to ensure that proper procedure is in place for electronic ballots, if applicable.

From the call for officer nominations to secure election results, PMI has tools and resources for the chapter to conduct elections:

Volunteer Resource Management System (VRMS): PMI chapters can use the VRMS to post, manage, and track volunteer opportunities, **including elected board positions**, with ease, and quickly recruit volunteers that meet your established criteria. The VRMS enables a volunteer to create a profile that illustrates skills, qualifications, and experiences. For access and questions, email PMI's [Volunteer Programs and Services](#) department.

VoteNet: This electronic tool, facilitated by your chapter administrator, enables chapters to securely and seamlessly execute elections minimizing the amount of effort by volunteers. The chapter needs to provide required information as specified by your chapter administrator and PMI will run your election and forward the nominations committee lead the results once the ballot has closed.

Chapter Role Delineation Study: This reference includes full descriptions of ten important volunteer roles that support effective chapter management. You can access copies in [PMI Learn](#) by logging in using your PMI.org credentials and searching for "chapter role delineation."

Component System (CS): The central location for chapter data and records including chapter bylaws, charters, and Data Exchange Program (DEP)/real time membership reports.

Using these tools and resources ensures that the chapter's nominations and election process is easy, transparent, and void of any perception of conflicts of interest. Please contact your chapter administrator or chapter partner or email PMI's [Chapter Development](#) department for further assistance.

GOC CONNECTION

Strategy Before Technology

ASSOCIATIONS NOW, July 2013 Technology

By: Katie Bascuas

With so many technology advances disrupting business strategies, tech improvements are often viewed as a quick fix for what are more likely deeper, underlying issues within an organization. And when organizations supplant the need for a cultural change with a new website or email system, they're merely targeting symptoms, says Kyle Vickers, CAE, CIO at National Quality Forum (NQF).

"That's where, ideally, a CIO can be sort of the canary in the mine, saying, 'Hey, we've got a bigger issue here,'" Vickers says. Whereas other departments are "eyeball deep in their own issues," technology leaders often have a bird's-eye view of an entire organization and can help bring about discussions that lead to better business solutions.

Take for example, the recent need for NQF—an organization that brings together industry professionals to improve the country's healthcare system—to implement more virtual meetings given budget constraints on federal employees attending meetings.

"We literally exist to meet," Vickers says. And the obvious solution—virtual meetings—is posing challenges for the organization.

"The natural inclination is to kind of shoot the technology, [to say] it's a technology problem," Vickers says. "It really has very little to do with technology. It all has to do with how we run our meetings." The kind of work that goes into planning and implementing a virtual meeting is different from what's needed for a face-to-face event, so behaviors have to change, he says. So how can a CIO or CTO help identify the organization's deeper issues?

"You have to take every opportunity to shift the discussion, because the problem is people put the spotlight on what they think about, what they know, and they don't necessarily look beyond that beam," says Vickers, who compares IT staff to traffic cops. "We're at the scene of the accident. We're at the crossroads where all the different departments intersect."

At NQF, Vickers and his team created an interdepartmental group that meets every couple of weeks to discuss the organization's ongoing IT projects. Everyone can hear what's going on, and the IT department is better able to manage staff expectations.

"You have to clarify those expectations and get that alignment with expectations and reality," he says. "And when those things begin to align, then things really start taking off."

Katie Bascuas is associate editor at Associations Now in Washington, DC.

PMI Region 7

Southwest North America

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From Your Chapter Partner



Pulse Report Reveals Strategic Competencies for Navigating Complex Projects

A new report from PMI explores the steps that organizations are taking to improve the success of their complex projects and programs. Among other findings, *Pulse of the Profession™ In-Depth Report: Navigating Complexity* reveals that standardized project management practices, effective communications and a strong talent base are necessary, regardless of the degree of complexity in projects or programs.

Organizations need to address complexity. Information cited in the Pulse report notes that the complexity of operating in an increasingly volatile and uncertain environment is the primary challenge of CEOs, and that effectively navigating complexity delivers a competitive advantage. Additionally, the average budgets for highly complex projects are twice as large as those for other projects.

The critical factors related to navigating complexity have to do with whether an organization is high performing or low performing. High performing organizations have mature project management practices, align their talent with organizational strategy and are highly effective communicators.

To turn complexity into dexterity, organizations need to create a culture of project and program management with engaged project sponsors; assess and develop talent, focusing on fostering leadership skills; and communicate effectively with all stakeholder groups.

Leadership skills are key: 75 percent of organizations rank project managers' leadership skills as most important for the successful navigation of complexity in projects.

The report reveals specific techniques and approaches on how organizations can assess and develop their talent to optimize assignment of resources to complex projects.

The 2013 Pulse of the Profession™ In-Depth Report: Navigating Complexity is the latest follow-up study to PMI's benchmark 2013 Pulse of the Profession™ report, which charts the major trends for project management. To access PMI's *Pulse of the Profession™* and the [report](#), please visit www.PMI.org/Pulse.

From Your Region Mentor



NA LIM Update

Attendees at this month's PMI North America Leadership Institute Meeting (LIM) in New Orleans are invited to attend a regional social to network with your regional colleagues and enjoy some relaxed hospitality, Nawlins-style. The region has reserved a private patio space at The Rusty Nail (<http://www.therustynail.biz>), a few short blocks from the convention center, from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 24. Refreshing drinks, free food, lagniappe, and perfect evening weather are on the menu! Guests of regional LIM attendees are welcome, so bring your spouse or significant other (or invite someone you met earlier in the day)!

PMI Region 7

Southwest North America

UPCOMING EVENTS

LI Virtual Courses

Please be aware that those dates are tentative and are subject to change.

Chapter Reporting System (CRS) Chapter Leader Training

- 29 October 2013 – 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM EST
- 30 October 2013 – 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM EST

Chapter Events

- Southern Nevada Chapter will be hosting the Las Vegas Project Management Symposium on 7 – 8 November 2013 at the Tuscany Hotel & Casino. The theme will be “Changes in Project Management Today.”
- PMI Phoenix will be celebrating International Project Management (IPM) Day on 7 November 2013, by hosting Arizona Project Management Week. There will be many events throughout the valley during the week, culminating in the chapter’s 35th Anniversary professional development day on Saturday, 9 November 2013.
- New Mexico IPM Day event being jointly hosted by the Otowi Bridge and Rio Grande Chapters on 7 November 2013.
- 10th Anniversary Event for the California Inland Empire Chapter event will be occurring on 16 November 2013.
- The Honolulu Chapter will hold its Annual Awards Dinner on 22 November 2013.
- The Sacramento Valley Chapter will host its annual Professional Development Day on 15 November 2013. This year’s theme is “HealthCare – Change is Coming”.

Chapter Partner Teleconference/Meeting

Teleconferences with most chapter board of directors still need to be scheduled to discuss in what specific areas PMI can provide support. We can also schedule to meet in New Orleans at the NA LIM. Please contact me at darryl.jackson@pmi.org to discuss.

DID YOU KNOW?

PMI San Diego Chapter sponsor BEYOND20 won the People's Choice Stevie® Award.