

How to Maintain a Connection With Attendees

If you're like us, you spend 10 months planning an event that lasts for two or three days. Those days are abuzz with frenzied activity, but before you know it, the event is over and your attendees are gone. How do you keep the buzz going? Here are a few things we do to keep our attendees engaged all year long.

Source: <https://alliedpra.com/how-to-keep-attendees-engaged/>

Introduction

- 1. Keep posting long after the meeting is over.** Whether it be on Social Media or through an internal mechanism, keep your interactions top of mind to keep those meetings and objectives fresh for attendees.
- 2. Provide meaningful surveys.** Yes, asking if the attendees enjoyed themselves is important, but make sure there are equally important questions on the quality of the content and how you can improve each year. Give your guests a moment to reflect and they'll be sure to stay engaged.
- 3. Bring back a personal touch.** As planners, our attendees are our clients. Write Thank-You notes, personalized emails, or even mail a few photos from your photobooth to your offices to remind them of all the fun—and education—they had during the program.
- 4. Podcasts – Recordings are a tried and true medium to get information out in digestible, truncated bits that can be shared internally.** Make it memorable with case studies, side notes, and anecdotes from the meetings to keep people interested while they listen on their drive to work.
- 5. Show your impact.** If you had a CSR component to your event, have a follow-up piece go out a few months after your event of how your goodwill helped those in need.
- 6. Ask for post-communication participation** – Whether it be an attendee writing a blog post or cultivating a few noteworthy quotes for a press release, have your team engage with the audience to make their impact reach a wider audience.
- 7. Tailor internal communications to common themes for the meeting.** Was your program Western themed? Maybe your newsletter has a touch of cowhide to the design for a couple months. Attendees can recall information more readily with visual cues.

Tasks (cont)

Share the success of an event, make it a point to tell them that by coming to our events they are doing good things. Remind them frequently.

4. Share Updates on Social Media

Post on social media regularly, looking for those follows and shares we all covet. Balance outreach between direct email communication and the more passive avenues of social media. We send out a monthly e-newsletter that provides basic event updates and event-specific e-messages at crucial milestones, such as registration deadlines. For social media, we identify the key hashtags for our demographic group (one of our survey questions), then we include these hashtags in our messaging. There is no better way to expand your reach and engage your customers than to have them do it for you. Social media is here for the foreseeable future, so use it. **5.**

Invite Them to a Midyear Event

Each of our annual events has a planning meeting or mixer of some type for our most engaged sponsors and attendees. Whether in person or via an online chat, these gatherings are meant to inform, excite and enlist our event's best supporters to continue to spread the word. Planning meetings generate great ideas and give us a sense of how our attendees are feeling for the next cycle. We have found that if our attendees participate in the planning process and feel some ownership in the event, they become your biggest cheerleaders. Social mixers are a good way to get attendees together again to re-establish connections made at the last event and start making plans to meet again. They're also a good way to introduce potential sponsors to the event. A few strategic invitations could lead to a great new relationship.

Tasks

1. Send a Thank-You Note

Once an event is over, the communication for next year's event is already starting. How? Mostly through email, though sometimes with written notes for smaller events, thank the delegates for attending, remind them of the dates for next year and let them know a survey will be on its way shortly.

2. Survey Them

Let attendees know that you love feedback, even if negative. If you don't ask, you won't know how successful the event really was? Send out surveys a couple weeks after an event. Let attendees know their answers are anonymous so that they feel free to "tell it like it is." Ask about food/beverage, venue, speaker quality and session content. Provide space for open-ended comments. Be warned: You may get more bad comments than good ones. We have found that unhappy attendees are usually the most vocal. Any comment is valuable, so pay attention and address the issues that come up.

3. Tell a Success Story



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