

Virtual Events:

A Vital Component of Digital Marketing

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Marketing has changed drastically – shifting to online and digital, moving away from simple banner ads, and looking to capture a distracted audience’s attention. There are many approaches to marketing in the online world, but to truly succeed, you need a comprehensive strategy that incorporates a myriad of approaches. With this in mind, successful marketers have turned to online events to round out their own plans.

Virtual events – which include virtual conferences, online expos, webcasts/webinars, and online courses – can be a very strong tool when utilized as part of an overall digital marketing plan, emphasizing your message and strengthening your reach.

These events usually will include video presentations, which can be broadcast either live or pre-recorded, and include additional information and materials for those attending, such as downloadable documents or quizzes. The sessions can include things like the presentation slides, supporting materials that can help the attendee in applying the information presented.

These events can be pre-sales or post-sales-type events. The messaging is powerful because the viewer will have full access to video options – slide presentations and even video of the presenter if you like. These are great tools to use to get your message across to the viewer with a personal touch.

As great as this all sounds, there are even more options that can add leverage to your messaging.

In a pre-sales role, there are some key areas to make sure you’re covering in your presentations.

Event Considerations

First, make sure you’re providing real, usable information that the viewer can use. This may seem to run counter to the idea of *making the sale* but it’s important to show the viewer that you can help them and that you are an expert in the topic at hand.

This carries over to the entire event if you’re doing a virtual conference, which will include multiple presentations and even more materials. Make certain that the session contents are focused on helpful ideas, tips, tricks, and how-to information on whatever topics you’ll be covering. This helps the viewer make the most of your materials. This allows the viewer to develop confidence in you and to trust that you will be worth their future time. While you may not be focused on *sales, sales, sales* in these presentations, you can certainly still talk about how your product or service answers the call and helps the viewer.

Many times, these types of sessions are referred to as “white horse” sessions; this is when a problem is presented, some solutions are given, then the product or service you want most to convey to the viewer is shown as the solution – riding in on the white horse, so to speak – to save the day. These are powerful uses of the technology to get your message across, without breaking the trust of your viewer.

While this is still focused on benefits and unique qualities – just as your marketing materials may be – by showing how your product or service saves the day after you’ve already helped the viewer, they are able to see that you know your market and that your product is based in wanting to help, rather than just make a sale.

Setting Up Your Event

The second thing to consider as you put together your event, is to give the viewers a clear and obvious path through the event. If possible, consider starting with more basic sessions and include materials that viewers can use outside of the event.

Putting together your event can seem like an exercise in herding cats. From arranging content with speakers, to finding possible sponsors, or even just enlisting the help of different departments or products to show off in booths, the biggest challenge is the collection of these materials. Start early and try to be as clear as possible about deadlines. Communication is key – on both sides. Set early deadlines so that you have a little leeway for the unexpected.

As you create your event and things start coming together, it can help to approach your event from the outside, in. What this means is to start with the public pages that people will use to register, find out about the event, check on presenters, etc. Then when those pages are up and working for you, you can start to focus more on the event pages – the sessions and perhaps exhibitors. This lets you get the registration up and running as quickly as possible, and be taking registrations as you set up the meat of the event: the presentations.

Be sure to put together a marketing plan for your event, just as you would an in-person event. This may include email campaigns, newsletters, editorials, blog posts and other social media. Putting together a simple worksheet that shows the dates and items you want to include will help make sure all of the pieces are coming together.

Final Thoughts

There are huge advantages to online events. You won’t have to worry about room blocks or catering costs or transportation, for example. Having a successful online event does take some planning and footwork, however. A successful event is typically gauged on attendee numbers and happy sponsors/exhibitors. Be sure your plans include promotion to attendees, as well as promotion of your exhibitors and sponsors (even if it’s your product/service that’s the sponsor of the event) and your event can be a huge benefit.

Lead generation, making knowledgeable fans of your work, and awareness all should come from your event – these are all excellent outcomes to a solid online event, be it a virtual conference, a webcast or webinar or even an online course.

Bio info

Stephen has been designing and building virtual event platforms for nearly 10 years. The platform has been extensively used to support a community of more than 650,000 IT professionals, and has hosted events for events in other industries from physician education to product and service launches to accounting education. Stephen can be reached at swynk@bitsonthewire.com.

About vConferenceOnline.com

vConferenceOnline.com is an online event platform that supports webcasts, virtual conferences, online courses and combinations of these. The team behind the platform helps in the setup and management of events and actively works with speakers, event teams and exhibitors to produce outstanding, interactive online events. If you'd like to find out more, or brainstorm how online events might help in your own digital plans, contact us at 520-760-2400 x1030 or swynk@bitsonthewire.com.